

Parent newsletter:

Middle school

Letter from Mrs Retallick, Headteacher

As we draw to the close of the second full term as a new school, it is my enormous pleasure to write to you regarding the developments, challenges and successes of the year so far. We have had the privilege of celebrating many successes and commend the many achievements of our pupils in all aspects of school and outside-school life. We regularly share these achievements on our social media pages and with pupils in school assemblies and other events, such as 'Hot Chocolate with the Head'.

This term we have celebrated outstanding academic, sporting and performance achievement across the school and pupils talents and experiences always amaze me- when they set their mind to achievements, they really do reach for the stars.

Our recent Eisteddfod, concerts and a wide range of sporting events and competitions, echo the aspirations we have for all of our children. We are incredibly lucky to be surrounded by so many talented and dedicated individuals, who are a credit to us all and should be congratulated for the great work they have done, not only for themselves but for other pupils and our school community as a whole.

In this end of term letter, we have carefully selected pieces of information to share with all families and parents to act as a reminder and to support information and that we share via ParentMail, Facebook and increasingly via our school website.

Thank you for continued support and feedback in our joint commitment to make our school the very best it can be. This year will not have been without bumps in the road, but our honesty, openness and action will ensure we continue to improve to ensure the best outcomes for all of children. We have travelled a long way in a short time, and I am incredibly proud of the journey so far, together we can make this the very best school for our children to be happy and thrive within. A part of this communication from RCT has also been shared with a link to the RCT consultation on proposals to develop the school further are included and can also be accessed via this link: www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultations.

Have a wonderful Easter

Letter from Mrs Danielle Lewis, Head of Middle School

As we approach the end of the spring term we have lots to share, celebrate and congratulate all pupils on their hard work and efforts at school. We are so proud of each and every pupil and we look forward to many more exciting times at Ysgol Nantgwyn.

During this term, we were fortunate enough to be asked to participate in the first All age schools' Pupil Conference in Cardiff. Six year 6 pupils and six year 9 pupils attended the conference in Cardiff Bay on Monday 18th and Tuesday 19th March. Pupils from Ysgol Nantgwyn joined nine other Welsh and English medium all age schools.

The pupils worked hard prior to the conference to prepare a presentation to deliver to the other ten schools invited. In addition to presenting at the Senedd and responding to challenging questions from the audience, they also participated in a variety of carousel activities associated with Art, music, poetry and learning about children's rights.

This was a residential trip which also resulted in us becoming a part of the Grand Slam celebrations in Cardiff Bay on Monday evening and an evening of bowling. I am sure the pupils will agree that it was a fantastic experience. The pupils were a credit to themselves and to the school and they should be extremely proud of their achievements over these two days.

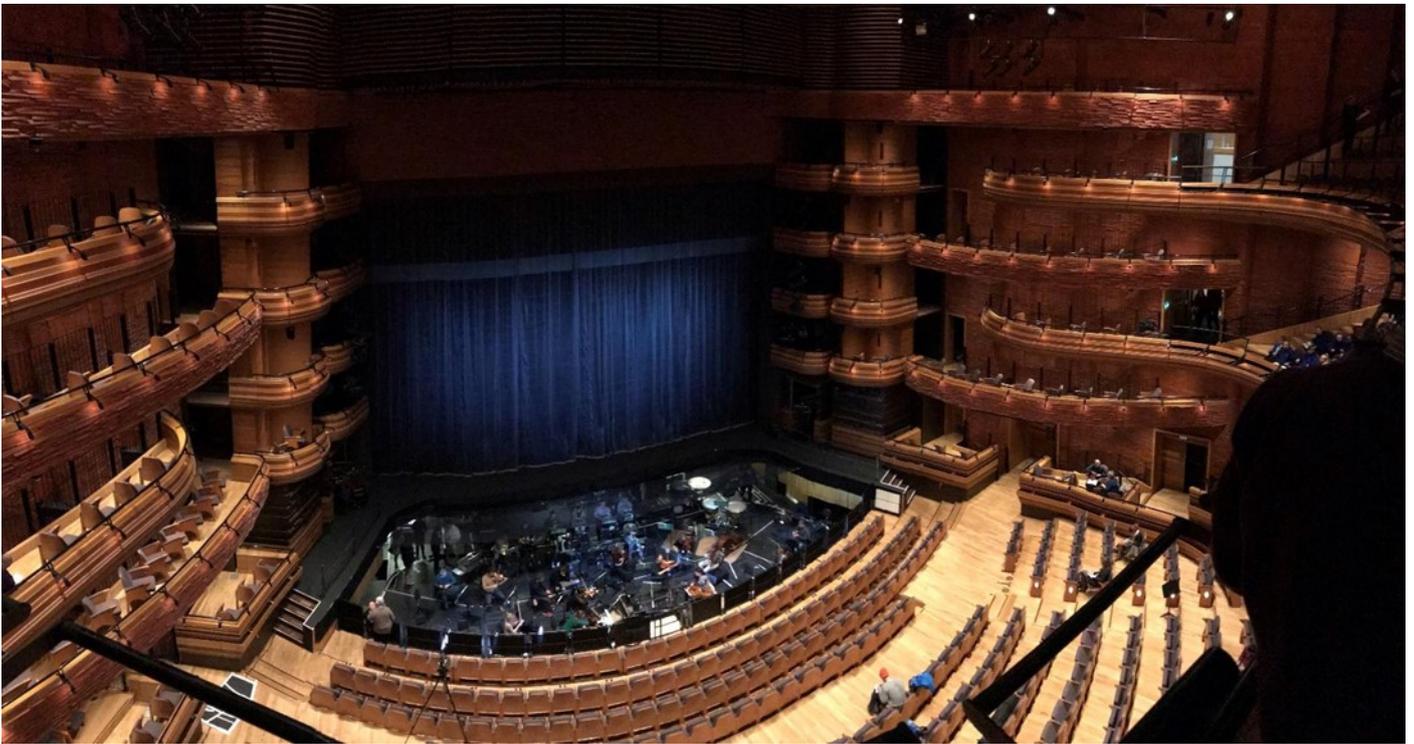


The school continues to participate in the Lead Creative Schools' Project with two classes in year 5 and year 8 have been working exceptionally hard over recent months as they continue to plan, design and create their own pupil led school website, Nantgwynonline.uk. Pupils have been fortunate enough to be working alongside two experienced creative practitioners, a website designer and photographer, Lee Aspland and an actress Anwenn Carlisle.

The pupils have become photographers and presenters and have taken on a wealth of other roles. These roles will continue as the year progresses as they will help to lead other pupils within the school to become web experts! With their superb guidance and with the dedication and support of Mrs Holmes and Miss Morse, the pupils have been working incredibly hard in order to become prepared to launch the website. The launch of the website will be held on the morning of Friday 5th April with further information to follow very shortly.

In addition to curriculum based lessons, many pupils within the Middle school have started to learn to play instruments, extend their art skills and have actively been participating in creative activities. The Expressive Arts Faculty took 100 Year 6 and 7 pupils to the Wales Millennium Centre to see the Dress Rehearsal of Welsh National Opera's 'The Magic Flute'. The week before the trip, a member of the Welsh National Opera Chorus came and did a series of workshops with the children to prepare them with interactive drama and music work on the story and the general structure of the opera. The children were a pleasure to take on the trip! They behaved impeccably and showed real interest and awe in how all the elements of the arts came together to make an opera. Many loved the music, lots were fascinated watching the orchestra play whilst others loved the staging and costumes. A fab experience for all!

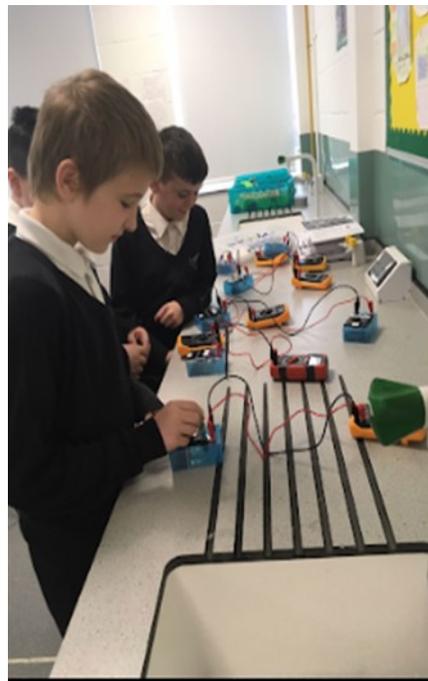




We have had great sporting success this term, with the Year 5 and 6 Netball team winning the RCT finals and progressing on to the next round of the competition against other Counties. Year 7 and 8 pupils have also won their first league matches this term and set out for high aspirations.



Middle School pupils were treated with a range of activities during National Science week with pupils having the opportunity to build and race some solar powered cars, and use their coding skills to direct them around as well as many more activities during this week.



This term saw the appointment of our new Language Ambassadors from the Middle School and were a credit to the school when they represented the school in the recent ambassadors trip. Pupils took part in flamenco lessons, had conversations in Mandarin and learnt how to promote languages in the school.



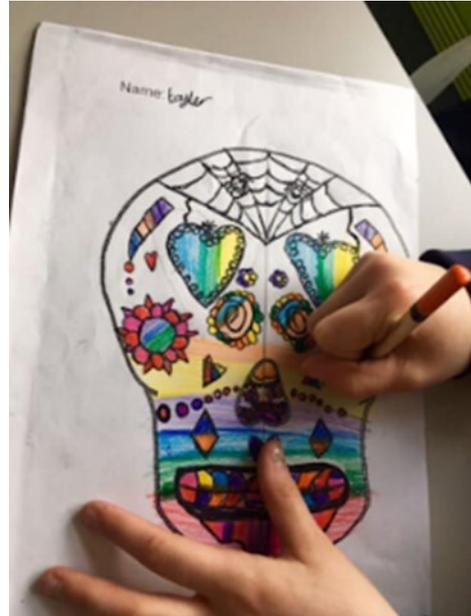
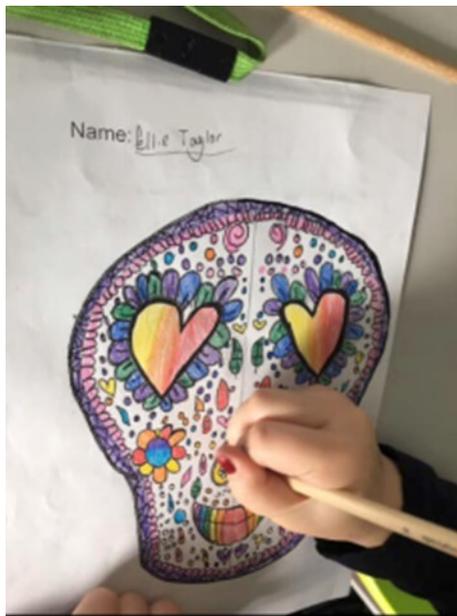
One of the fantastic benefits of our all through school is that pupils from the Middle School get to work closely with some of our Upper school pupils sharing ideas, experiences and having fun at the Languages club. Well done all!



Year 6 have also been working hard practising their Welsh phrases with Miss Mein regularly in lessons and continue to make good progress.



Year 5 pupils have produced some exceptional art work with their projects focusing on the colour theory and design work.



Year 4 really enjoyed finding out about Wales as part of their Caru Dysgu studies. Pupils thought about the Welsh culture and history as well as the role of citizens and how they can affect the future.

We really enjoyed World Book day coming in dressed as various characters from books such as Gangster Granny . As part of our celebration of books we based our work around Roald Dahl's classic book James and the Giant Peach. We thought about the theme of friendship in the book and how we can all become better friends. We also had a fruit Olympics where we found out which fruit rolled the furthest just the peach in the story. The plum won it roles 300cm!!

The Expressive Arts and Languages faculties are now working with all staff and pupils to prepare for Eisteddfod Competitions – across all year groups from Nursery to Year 11. We are also preparing an exciting evening to celebrate the talents of our pupils, a Welsh-inspired evening called 'Noson Cawl a Chan' where the audience will come and enjoy traditional cawl and welshcakes and be entertained by the musical talents of our pupils.

Year group of 8 pupils took part in an incredibly informative two days of training to learn all about the dangers of smoking and these pupils are now our designated school smoking ambassadors in which we are sure they will do a fantastic job.

We continue to recognise pupils for their fantastic efforts in school and would like to say well done to all pupils who have been nominated and received the 'Celebrate Me' awards as part of the Middle School Initiative for promoting good work and efforts in lessons.

We looking forwards to sharing more exciting news, events, photos and celebration across the middle school throughout the rest of the year.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Danielle Lewis
Head of Middle School

Consultation

During the Summer term we will be consulting with parents and pupils on a new behaviour initiative (Nant focused) which we would like to launch in the second half of the summer term. We would welcome your views and suggestions, which will also include a visit to another school in South Wales who have implemented this new approach to

Parking and traffic management

Please can we all ensure we drive safely and sensibly when entering and exiting the school site. We have issued a range of reminders and we all need to work together to ensure the safety of all of pupils, staff and visitors. I appreciate that traffic on site at the end of the day is heavy, but working safely, appropriately and within the safe driving practices the processes can be less problematic. We have to work with what we have, so your patience and continued reporting is appreciated. Work is being completed on the Gwyn

Literacy and numeracy tests

For pupils sitting the National Tests (Year 2-Year 9), preparation in key lessons continues to take place as well as a wide range of other learning activities, which have literacy and numeracy embedded into them. Normal school life and activities continue with test preparation amended and planned to ensure that pupils' normal routine and creative experience is as consistent as possible. The tests that pupils take can give us a picture of the progress that children are making, but it is important to remember that the tests are a snapshot of where children are at a moment in time and on that day, with some having better days than others at a particular day or time.

We use the tests to help guide and plan provision and to identify whole school and individual strengths and areas for development to ensure that they are making good progress as they move throughout the school. We use a wide range of other information to get a whole picture of each and every one of our children and it is this collective information that helps us ensure that we plan for their future development and success. National Tests are only one part of a much bigger picture and how they perform in the future is not tied into the outcomes of these tests, our children are more than this. Please be reassured and reassure your children that their talents, dreams, skills and aspiration are much bigger than the tests- as they are just that, a test on the part of a much bigger journey to them becoming brilliant young adults.

Literacy and numeracy tests

All pupils in Wales that are in year groups 2-9 are expected to sit three national tests per year. These are:

Numeracy: Procedural test

This tests pupils' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding.

Numeracy: Reasoning test

This tests how well pupils can apply their mathematics skills to a range of situations.

Literacy: Reading test

This tests how well pupils can access shorter and longer texts and their comprehension of what they have read.

Each test is half an hour long.



To support all pupils in doing as well as they possibly can, we will:

- Be conducting the tests in classrooms rather than in a hall
- Ensure that the 'usual' member/s of staff are administering the test
- Provide all equipment that they might need
- Cut the test into smaller sections for younger children so that they have a break
- Provide an additional room for those who need additional support to complete the test
- Ensure that pupils only sit one test in a day

We submit the marks to the Welsh Government however, from a school point of view, we

We submit the marks to the Welsh Government however, from a school point of view, we use the data from these tests to evaluate how well your child has learned and remembered parts of their learning and also use it to plan what your child needs to learn next.

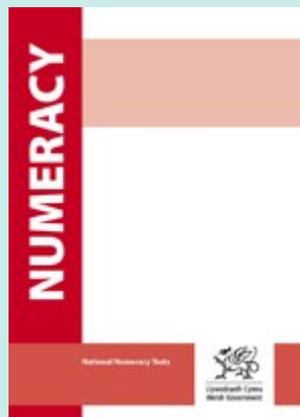
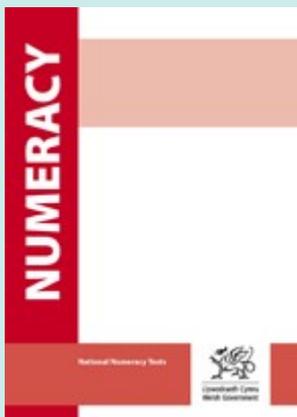
Classroom teachers will be working with pupils in the run up to the tests to make sure that they have seen test papers and practised completing them. Simple things like making sure pupils know to read questions carefully, often more than once, and write their answers clearly and in the right place can make a difference. We do not want our pupils to worry about the tests and so will work with them to ensure that they are familiar with the format, style and expectations before they sit the real one. You may wish to, as a parent, look at some of the sample materials with your child and help them to become familiar.

Year 2-6 will be sitting the tests in the period 7th to 14th May and year 7-9 will be sitting the tests during the period 29th April to 14th May. Actual dates will be sent by parentmail after the Easter break.

Numeracy sample materials <https://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/numeracy-sample-materials/?lang=en>

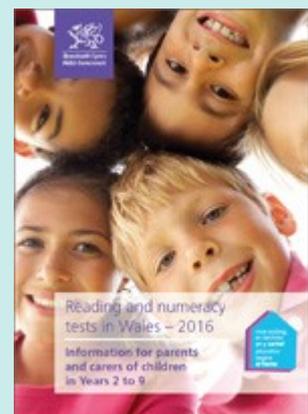
Literacy sample materials

<https://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/reading-sample-materials/?lang=en>



Welsh Government have put together a really helpful piece of parent guidance about the literacy and numeracy tests which follows here:

<https://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/reading-and-numeracy-tests-information-for-parents-carers/?lang=en>



Eisteddfod

We have been extremely privileged to have held four Eisteddfods during the past couple of weeks and have been overwhelmed by the various talents of the Ysgol Nantgwyn pupils. We saw very many excellent competition entries including poems, drawings and 3D models of varying sizes and descriptions! During the Eisteddfod itself, all pupils participated fantastically – those bravely performing and those supportively encouraging others. Gwyn was a vision of red as pupils wore national sports kit and traditional costumes and while Nant pupils stayed away from traditional costumes, they also demonstrated their support for the event by adorning various reds.

The four session event was added to by a highly successful Noson Cawl a Chan evening where pupils again performed their pieces to an audience of friends and families, who happily partook in some sampling of traditional Welsh cawl and Welsh cakes, cooked and served by our kitchen team and PTA members.

A huge thank you to pupils, parents, governors, PTA and staff for making this such a positive and successful first Eisteddfod for Ysgol Nantgwyn.

Homework

Ysgol Nantgwyn staff have been working to develop a new homework policy across the school. The new policy is based on tasks that will interest and engage pupils as well as provide them with practice that they need to become secure in their learning. Homework sheets will be coming home after Easter. We would very much appreciate your support in encouraging your child to complete all homework set.

School uniform

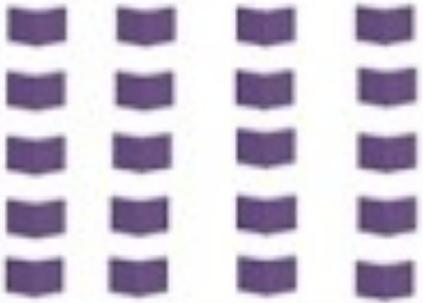
Please can we remind you of the uniform requirements for all pupils. On return after the Easter break, we move to our summer uniform (if you wish), add link to uniform. I remind all parents and families that shoes must be **all** black and worn at **all** times.

Links to details on our website are here:

<https://www.ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk/parents/school-uniform>

Literacy and numeracy pupil and parent workshop session

Thank you very much to all parents, family members and pupils that supported our literacy and numeracy session. Teachers had created a range of different scenarios for pupils and parents to explore to develop their understanding and give them some ideas for how they could do this at home. A further literacy and numeracy workshop will be held in the summer term.

Student A Reads	Student B Reads	Student C Reads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 minutes per day. • 3600 minutes per school year. • 1,800,000 words per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 minutes per day. • 900 minutes per school year. • 282,000 words per year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 minute per day. • 180 minutes per school year. • 8,000 words per year.
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores in the 90th percentile on standardized tests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores in the 50th percentile on standardized tests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores in the 10th percentile on standardized tests.

Reading with pupils

Lots of research tells us the difference a short time spent reading every day can make to educational outcomes and we would encourage you to read with your child as often as you can and support them to spend some time reading when they are independent.

Pupils in lower school will bring home books regularly. Please read these with your child and fill in the log in the pupil planner. Let us know whether they enjoyed the book, whether they found it easy or hard and any words that they particularly struggled with or indeed any words that they have previously found tricky but are now reading well. Pupils can change their books as soon as they have completed the ones that they have.

We are currently working a small project with year 10 pupils reading with pupils in Gwyn however will be looking to expand this in the summer term to enable increasing numbers of pupils reading for at least twenty minutes a day.

If you, or a family member or friend, have any time that you would be able to give to read with some of our pupils we'd be really pleased to hear from you. Please could you get in touch with admin@ysgolnantgwyn.co.uk

Volunteers do have to complete a form and a DBS check however we are very willing to help fill in the forms!

Attendance

We continue with our Challenge 95 campaign where we set a target of attendance for all pupils of at least 95%. The impact of attendance on achievement has been clearly evidenced.

As you know, good attendance at school is vital to ensure your child achieves their full potential. Where possible planned absences should be taken outside of the school day. We know that good attendance (striving for 95%+) makes a dramatic difference to progress and results, it is a challenge for all pupils to catch up on any lessons/days missed.

ATTENDANCE %	NUMBER OF DAYS LOST	IMPACT ON YOUR EDUCATION
100%	None! Outstanding Attendance! Excellent work, well done	This gives you the best chance to achieve your potential as 78.7% of students with 100% attendance achieve 5+ A*-C including English and Maths.
> = 97%	Great Attendance Fewer than 6 days of absence in one academic year You are above the school attendance target, well done!	
95 – 96.9%	Less than 10 days of absence Students are likely to achieve their targets and will be well prepared as they move through school	Statistics show that 69.1% of students in this attendance bracket go on to achieve 5+ A*-C including English and Maths.
92 - 94.9%	Up to 15 days of absence – if your attendance is in this category you will have had up to 3 weeks absent in the school year	According to statistics, only just over half (52.8%) of students in this attendance bracket achieve 5+ A*-C including English and Maths.
90 - 91.9%	You will have had up to 19 days of absence (up to 3 weeks and 4 days) Pupils in this category may fall behind and it will be difficult for them to achieve their best	Attendance in this bracket is a major concern and should be addressed quickly. Only just over half (52.8%) of students in this attendance bracket go on to achieve 5+ A*-C including English and Maths.
< 90%	Persistently Absent : you will have had more than 19 days absence (more than 3 weeks and 4 days) over the academic year This is very poor attendance and the Educational Welfare Officer may become involved	Poor attendance – this is extremely worrying Of those students with below 90% attendance, only 35.6% are likely to achieve 5 A* - C including English and Maths (according to statistics).

Curriculum

We have previously shared information on getting ready for the new curriculum and will continue to share our work and progress on this with you. Our Caru Dysgu programme embraces all four purposes -Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives. Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work. Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world and healthy, confident individuals.

Our curriculum is being developed to meet the needs of all of our pupils with the freedom that new curriculum provides us. This flexibility provides many opportunities for all of us, and while change can be challenging, the aspiration of the new curriculum is focused on the needs of future employees and for jobs that are yet to be created. Two helpful reflection questions were shared which embrace the freedom this new approach offers us- 'What did you learn in school which you never used again?' and 'What did you wish you had learned in school?'

Feedback from pupils has included:

- How they enjoy the themes that they have been learning about.
- How they recognise the importance of literacy and numeracy and working really hard to improve at this.
- How much they enjoy working with a variety of different teachers and recognise the benefits of experiencing different subjects and teaching strategies.

Key dates

We return to school on Monday 29th April with a bank holiday on Monday 6th May when school is closed. This is a short 4 week term, with us breaking up for half term on Friday 25th May. There are no INSET days in this half term.