

December Newsletter - Welcome

As we reach the end of another busy (and long!) term, I wanted to introduce this term's newsletter by expressing my thanks to every member of our school community for the commitment, enthusiasm and support you have shown since we returned to school in September.

Congratulations to our students on a successful term and well done for getting involved in so many activities and events (and a big shout out to year 7 who have settled in so well!) Thank you to all their parents and carers for all your support of the school and your children's learning, to our Governors for all your support and involvement in the school and its procedures, and to our staff for your tireless commitment to your teaching, assessment and pastoral support roles which have never been more important.

We are delighted that we have managed to provide so many opportunities for students to develop their interests and skills, and to engage with the wider community. Many of these things are reported in this newsletter and we hope you enjoy reading about them as you relax over the Christmas break.

Whether you are celebrating academic success, reminiscing over the school's trip to Iceland, anticipating skiing with us in the Spring, reliving this year's outstanding production of 'legally Blonde', or enjoying the new 'Curriculum for Wales' in Year 7, we hope that you have found something to motivate and enthuse during this term.

There have been so many impressive achievements, it is difficult to list them all in this newsletter, but I congratulate you all for your part in such a successful term and hope you have a good holiday over Christmas and enjoy a well-earned rest!

Nadolig Llawen!

Mr Gerrard
Headteacher

Ps. We look forward to welcoming students back into school on
Tuesday 10th January 2023!

More important dates for your diary can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

Y Ganolfan

Ysgol Aberconwy has recently undergone the refurbishment and development of the building at the front of the school. This now houses 'Y Ganolfan' and is a modern environment that includes the County's provision for students with ASD and neurodevelopmental difficulties as well as other areas.

The calming and comfortable surroundings have been designed to meet the needs of children with complex social, communication, emotional or behavioural difficulties, enabling students to feel safe and to help them achieve their full potential whilst at Ysgol Aberconwy.

Y Ganolfan currently has four main areas as well as a suite of sensory spaces. It has been expanded to include 6 classrooms as well as 5 sensory/decompression pods that are furnished with sensory lighting and equipment including weighted chairs to help students regulate and enable them to return successfully to lessons.

We have an acoustic POD that children are able to use for mentoring sessions with our experienced and caring staff. It may also be used by students as a quiet space to work whilst remaining within the classroom. As well as this, we have a series of intervention rooms that specifically cater for the development of key skills such as literacy and numeracy, emotional literacy and social communication difficulties.

Y Ganolfan now offers a nurturing environment that supports our students in a holistic way and offers a range of interventions to meet students' needs and support their difficulties. We offer bespoke packages, where needed, working closely with school staff, to support students so that they are able to access and immerse themselves into mainstream education successfully. Our aim is to ensure that every student at Ysgol Aberconwy feels supported and meets or exceeds their full potential.

Medwen Brookes, Assistant Headteacher, said, "The expansion of this provision has enabled us to support a greater number of students in an inclusive and supportive environment. We have already seen a marked difference in engagement within the new provision and it has only been a few weeks! I'm very excited to see how these changes will impact on progress and the development of the provision over the coming months."



Dance World Champions!



Four Ysgol Aberconwy students who are part of a street dance group based in Colwyn Bay have become world champions after competing at the United Dance Organisation (UDO) World Street Dancing Championships during the Summer holidays!

Congratulations to Keiyarna (year 10), Evie and Aleah (year 11) and Coral who has recently left after completing her GCSEs, who competed in team 'Autonomy' to win the Under 18 Novice division!

These championships saw thousands of dancers from across the globe come together to compete for a number of World Champion titles at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, in front of the world's best Hip Hop and Street Dance celebrity judges.

The team of eleven, all aged 13 – 17 from local secondary schools, who belong to a street dance team, based at Step One Performing Arts School, had to first make it through regional qualifiers in Stoke back in May, to enable them to compete.

Not only did they come first in the regional qualifiers in May, they also came first in round one of the competition in Blackpool, which afforded them immediate qualification to the grand final. Then, against seven other international teams, they scored the highest, claiming victory and the world champion titles!

The routine may have only been two and a half minutes long, but it took hours and hours of studio time during the last twelve months to perfect. A fantastic and well deserved achievement for the team who stuck together through COVID, often practising via video link when they couldn't get together to rehearse.

[To watch their superb performance, please click here.](#)

A trip to Iceland



Over half term, the Geography department ran an incredible trip to Iceland with 30 wonderful students.

Lead by James Moran and supported by Colin O'Rourke, Amy Grimward and Jennifer Ohlsson, the group spent four days exploring glaciers, swimming in the secret lagoon, walking to (and through!) waterfalls, witnessing the eruption of geothermal hot springs, and collecting lava rocks at the site of a recently erupted volcano. They were even lucky enough to witness one of the most spectacular sights in the world: the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights.

It was an incredibly successful and memorable trip, and an extremely exciting learning experience for all.



GCSE, BTEC & A Level Success!



Ysgol Aberconwy Year 11 and 13 students achieved outstanding GCSE, BTEC and A Level results in a wide range of academic and vocational subjects.

We are extremely proud of all our students and are also delighted to see so many of our year 13 students securing their places in their chosen universities to study a wide variety of exciting courses.

We are also delighted that a record number of the year 11 group have chosen to return to our sixth form to study a A levels and Vocational courses.



Honey Fair

On Tuesday 13th September, students from year 7 visited the Honey Fair in Conwy where they studied the history and the importance of the 700 year old Royal Charter fair as a part of the new curriculum. During the visit they also completed a survey, explored the market and of course, bought some lovely local honey.

When they returned to school, during their Welsh lesson, they used the 'command form' to write instructions on how to make a delicious honey sandwich in Welsh, which they then had to follow. They had a lot of fun, especially when some had forgotten to include instructions like 'get a plate' etc!



European Day of Languages



On Monday 26th September we joined schools across Europe to celebrate the European Day of Languages. All departments tried to include elements of European languages into their lessons, we had 'Kinball' in PE, problem solving in maths using numbers from different languages, a flags of Europe and capital cities quiz in geography, just to mention a few.

Students and staff enjoyed a European themed menu in the canteen which included delicious dishes like Lasagne, Spanish Empenada, Vegetable Paella, Croissant, Pain au Chocolat, Pizza slices, Croissant with ham and cheese, Baguettes with various fillings and Gelato.

There was also a fact-finding treasure hunt at break and lunch times, a Bake off competition and the chance to do some pebble painting with a European theme for students after school.

Lesley Sewell kindly offered her judging services in the Bake Off competition, and although the competition was tough, managed to narrow it down. Congratulations to Aleena in year 9 who took first place, Pryce in year 11 who came second and to Amy and Alyssia in year 7 who shared third place.

Any cakes that weren't collected were donated to the MacMillan coffee stall to help raise funds for Macmillan during our Open Evening.

Jamie McAllister, head of International Languages said, "It was so nice to be one of hundreds of schools across the continent celebrating languages diversity today. The staff and students did the school proud with their efforts!"

London Legal

Year 13 student Ethan, took an amazing opportunity to attend a Summer Scheme in London organised by Lord Edmund Davies Legal Education Trust to experience at first-hand what a career in Law could look like.

In just one week, not only did Ethan shadow solicitors, barristers and judges, he attended the first ever broadcast criminal trial at the Old Bailey and won a debate on suffrage for 16 year olds presided over by a High Court Judge.

Ethan was grateful for the experience, he said, "It was amazing to see the legal system working up close; this has helped me decide on my future career in Law".



Human Nurture

Ysgol Aberconwy's Year 9 students attended a performance of *Human Nurture* in the school's Drama Studio. This hard-hitting play was performed by actors from the London based Theatre Centre. It explores the breakdown in the friendship of two young men and uncompromisingly approaches issues of racism and identity.



Children in Need

Staff and students did a brilliant job fundraising for Children in Need this year. We had a bake-off competition, stalls and games, a car wash, raffles and sponsored events that took place throughout the day.

This year we have raised over **£3100** for Children in Need!

A huge thank you to all our staff and students for their fantastic efforts, especially our top 50 fundraisers who recently enjoyed a reward trip to Cheshire Oaks. Thanks also to the wider school community for your continued support.



Year 7 Expressive Arts Showcase



Four classes of students in year 7 held their first ever Expressive Arts Showcase on Thursday 10th November. Having only started the New Curriculum for Wales in September, the students were excited to showcase their work and share what they have learned with family and friends.



Marvellous at Mandarin

Congratulations to Olivia in year 8 and Nell in year 10, who have both earned qualifications in WJEC QCF Mandarin.

Olivia began attending weekly Mandarin lessons when she was in year 7, and in April 2022, her teacher Jie Chen decided she was ready to sit her first exam. Olivia achieved a Pass in Spoken Mandarin Entry 3.

Nell has been studying Mandarin for just over 2 years with a large proportion of her study completed online during the Covid pandemic. Nell sat her exam in April and achieved a Pass in the Spoken Mandarin Level 1 award.

Languages teacher, Nia Williams said, "We are very proud of their commitment and achievements, particularly considering both girls have been attending lessons after school. We hope they will continue to enjoy their studies in Mandarin and wish them luck with any future exams."



In Remembrance



Ysgol Aberconwy sixth formers, Sebastian and Lewis, were proud to represent the school with Headteacher Ian Gerrard in laying a wreath at the Conwy Remembrance service in Bodlondeb on Sunday, 13th November.

No Trespassing on The Railway



Ysgol Aberconwy students recently worked with Andy Birch (Dime One graffiti artist) on a project to design a mural that highlights rail safety and the dangers of trespassing on the railway.

The project, in partnership with Transport for Wales, British Transport Police and funded by the Conwy Valley and North West Wales Community Rail Partnership, aims to try and reduce trespass and anti-social behaviour at railway stations. British Transport Police Wales engaged with students in the school, and PCSO Suzanne Hall visited our school to explain the project and to discuss the dangers of trespassing on the railway to our students.

After being shown how to create graffiti style lettering and designs by Andy, our students then worked together to create a design for the mural. The vibrant, striking image was spray painted in the shelter at Conwy Railway Station by Andy Birch and the students, with Bethan Russell, Art & Design teacher and PCSO Suzanne Hall also having a turn with the spray paint! The students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and are very proud of the final result. We think the completed design looks amazing!

Ian Gerrard, Headteacher said, "Congratulations to everyone involved and thank you for all your hard work. As a school we were delighted to be asked to participate in this important initiative that could help to save lives."

Andy Baker, Transport for Wales Station Manager (North West Wales) said, "It's important to engage with young people in a way that they understand, this project was a wonderful way of engaging with the students from Ysgol Aberconwy and get over the importance of safety around railways. It is a fabulous piece of Art. I was so impressed with the students from Ysgol Aberconwy. They were engaged, they had thought about the safety subject, they were polite and pleasant - a credit to the school."



Let's Take Languages



Fourteen year 9 students recently spent a day attending a 'Let's Take Languages' fair at Bangor University, which aimed to encourage them to open their eyes to the world of opportunity and the benefits of learning additional languages.

The one-day fair offered students a range of workshops, featuring a variety of language tasters and sessions that included Modern Languages in the Working World by David Binns, Chinese calligraphy by the Confucius Institute, Galician language by the Centre for Galician Studies in Wales and a Bangor University tour given by Routes Cymru Student Language Ambassadors.

International Languages teacher, Nia Williams, who accompanied the students, said, "All the students found the event really interesting and gained some very useful information about studying languages at university and potential careers. Additionally, they also came away with a greater awareness of what it means to be a global citizen"

Christmas Market Trip



Ysgol Aberconwy's International Languages Department took over 40 students to Birmingham to experience the Frankfurt Christmas Market where they sampled the hot chocolate, bratwurst and pretzels. Some students managed to fit in a spot of ice-skating and do some Christmas shopping too!



Dissecting Owl Pellets



To celebrate finishing their first Science project, one class of year 7 students were recently offered the unique opportunity to dissect some owl pellets that a parent had found and kindly offered to the school.

The practical dissection session fitted in nicely to the 'food' project that the class were finishing that week and gave them opportunity to put into practice their learnt knowledge about food chains & ecosystems.

Our students were not squeamish at all and enjoyed the opportunity to become poo Scientists for the hour! They found it both fascinating and challenging to try and identify what the owl had eaten from the fragments they found. Benjamin Shaw, Science teacher said, "It was really great to see the students getting stuck in to the challenge of identifying the owl's diet from it pellets. It gave them the chance to practice their practical skills and they were able to find quite a lot in their pellets: beetles, bones, fur & even a beak! I now know that I have some excellent poo Scientists in my class! I'm really thankful to the parent who volunteered the owl pellets for the class to use – it provided a great authentic learning experience for the students to enjoy."



Saving Lives at Sea



Congratulations to Martha in Year 12, who has recently become the newest recruit to RNLI's Conwy crew.

She began her training on 9th November as a probationary member. Those in the Sixth Form look forward to hearing about her adventures!

Legally Blonde

Last week, a cast of 60 performed the musical *Legally Blonde Jr* at Theatr Colwyn. With a standing ovation for both performances, the production proved a huge hit with audiences.

The incredibly talented cast was led by Chloe Cartledge as Elle, and she was awarded Performer of the Year as recognition for her outstanding talent both on and off stage.

The 2023 musical will be announced soon!
Congratulations to all involved.



ITV Wales News Feature



ITV Wales recently visited Amy Grimward's Year 12 Film Studies class to report on a project they have completed on anti-racism that featured in Wales at Six on the 8th December 2022.

Students focused on the life of Enrico Stennett, a Windrush survivor who lived locally. The class also worked with Lal Davies, whose documentary about Enrico recently won Best Unrestricted Short Film at the Gogs International Film Festival.

Don't worry if you missed it as you can watch the report here:
<https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2022-07-13/catch-up-with-wales-at-six>

A career in law?



Students from years 10 to 13 had the benefit of attending a careers presentation about law by Alys Bratch, a trainee solicitor at Lanyon Bowdler. The students found the talk and presentation both inspirational and interesting, giving them a greater understanding of the career pathways and opportunities available in this field.

Racing Tall Ships

Congratulations to Jessica, one of our year 11 students, on being selected to participate in the Chief Constable's Challenge which involved sailing a 72-foot-long tall ship in a race from Portsmouth to the Albert Dock in Liverpool in just one week.

Jessica, who is a member of the North Wales Police Cadets, was selected for this challenge due to her hard work, diligence and dedication. She joined 9 other cadets from her Force to form a 10-man crew representing North Wales that would compete against teams from Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

Upon arriving at Portsmouth, they first had to learn how to handle the ship, raise and lower the sails and then change it to suit the different conditions, steer it on a compass heading and give orders to others. As well as all this they had to take it in turns to cook, clean, wash up, put stuff away and take care of all boat maintenance so the ship would be pristine and ready for the next day of sailing. They also had to adjust to sleeping in very close quarters, in beds that were a cross between a bunk and a hammock, and learn how to live in very close confines with each other with only one toilet, limited electricity and no Wi-Fi!

Unfortunately the weather was against them and they were unable to get out of the English Channel, with 5 to 6 metre swells forecast in the Irish Sea, to complete the journey to Liverpool. However, this didn't prevent them from practising their sailing skills in the channel and even though it was very rough out there, and many of them were seasick, even after taking medication, they were able to race in teams and also complete a Royal Yachting Association (RYA) sailing qualification.

Jessica returned having given it her all. Out of the 4 teams, North Wales were pipped at the post for the top spot by Cheshire, coming a very close second.



Festive Food, Fun and Games

The Year 11 GCSE Health and Social Care and Child Care group was asked to attend a Christmas gathering for older adults in Old Colwyn Methodist Church on Friday 9th of December 2022. This event was organised by The Conwy Well-being Team.

The girls volunteered for the afternoon and set up tables and chairs, gave out word searches, ran and joined in the Bingo session. Most importantly, the group sat and made conversation with the older adults who attended the event. Teacher Myfanwy Wilson, said "It was wonderful to see such a successful inter-generational event, and I was very proud of how the girls conducted themselves throughout."



Speakers for Schools



Our year 7 students recently enjoyed a talk from the Rt Hon David Hanson, Former Minister of State for Crime and Policing, Parliamentary Outreach Trust. Following the talk, the students were invited to ask him questions about his life and experiences.

The talk was organised through the Speakers for Schools Charity and formed part of a New Curriculum for Wales project called 'Who Are We?' that the students are currently studying in Expressive Arts

Christmas Tree Festival



The Ysgol Aberconwy Christmas tree has been on display at St Mary's church as part of the St David's Hospice Conwy Christmas Tree Festival. Our theme was 'Respect and Kindness'. Students from all year groups were involved in creating Christmas decorations with inspirational quotes about being kind and respecting each other.



An Introduction to Play

Two members of The Conwy Play Development Team recently visited the YR 10 GCSE Health and Social Care and Child Care class. The class completed an Introduction to Play course and will receive a certificate for this in the New Year.



A Christmas Celebration



Staff, students and their families joined together with the wider community to celebrate Christmas at St Mary's Church in Conwy on Tuesday 20th December. The evening was filled with festive music, with outstanding performances from our school choirs, musicians and even a dance troupe. Readings and prayers were shared to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and everyone enjoyed singing some traditional Christmas carols together.

A huge thank you to all those who took part and helped to make the evening so special. Thanks also to everyone that attended, it was truly wonderful and heart warming to see so many people wishing to celebrate Christmas with us.



Christmas Dinner is Served

Wednesday 14th December was a day of festivities! Students and staff were able to wear Christmas jumpers, if they wished, instead of a school jumper and enjoyed a Christmas lunch prepared and served by our festive Sodexo staff.



Dates for Your Diary

- Last day of term - Thursday 22 December 2022**
- Staff training Day - Friday 23 December 2022**
- Staff training Day - Monday 9 January 2023**
- Students return to school - Tuesday 10 January 2023**
- Year 11 Parents Meeting - Tuesday 17 January 2023**
- Sixth Form Options Meeting - Tuesday 31 January 2023**
- Year 9 Options Meeting - Tuesday 14 February 2023**
- Last day before half- term - Friday 17 February 2023**
- Students return to school - Tuesday 27 February 2023**
- Years 12 &13 Parents Meeting - Tuesday 7 March 2023**
- Years 10 Parents Meeting - Tuesday 28 March 2023**
- Last day of term - Friday 31 March 2023**

To keep up to date with term times and staff training days, see the calendar on our website which covers the academic year.