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COMMUNITY SCHOOL

PARENTS' NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2014

CYLCHLYTHYR RHINI RHAGLEN 2014

Dear Parents,

As we come to the end of another busy term I am delighted to bring you our latest newsletter, highlighting school events and the many successes of our pupils. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Finally, I'd like to wish you all a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year. Have a relaxing break and I look forward to welcoming pupils back to school on Monday, 5th January.

ANNWYL RIENI,
Ar ddiwedd tymor prysur arall mae'n bleser gennyf gyflwyno ein cylchlythyr diweddaraf sy'n tynnu sylw at ddigwyddiadau'r ysgol a llwyddiannau niferus ein disgyblion. Rwy'n gobeithio y cewch fwynhad o'i ddarllen.

Hoffwn hefyd ddymuno Nadolig Llawen a blwyddyn newydd lewyrchus i chi gyd. Hyderaf y byddwch yn ymlacio dros yr Wyl ac edrychaf ymlaen at groesawu disgyblion nôl i'r ysgol ar ddydd Llun, 5 Ionawr.

Yours sincerely
Mr. C. L. Hitchings
HEADTEACHER / PRIFATHRO



Photo courtesy of Football Association Wales

Scoring success for Wales

Wales' under 16s football team won the Victory Shield for the first time in 66 years.

The annual tournament is a competition between the youth teams of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Three of our pupils, Liam Cullen (Year 11), Dan Jeffries (Year 11) and Joe Lewis (Year 10) were members of the squad, with Liam and Dan playing the full 90 minutes in the three games.

Indeed, Liam was one of the stars of the tournament, scoring three goals.

STAFF NEWS / NEWYDDION STAFF

A number of male members of staff have been participating in Movember, growing moustaches and beards to boost funds for charity.

Congratulations to Mrs. Caroline Thomas (Technology department) on the birth of her son, George, at 9lb 1oz. Both mum and baby are doing extremely well.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

DYDDIADAU AR GYFER Y DYDDIADUR

18th December	Year 11 Gower College Transition Day	13th February	INSET Day
19th December	Year 11 Neath College Transition Day	16th-20th February	Half term
19th December	Last day of term for pupils	23rd February	First day back for pupils
5th January	Start of Spring Term	25th February	Year 9 Parents' Evening
7th January	January GCSEs start	27th February	St David's Day Eisteddfod
13th January	PTA meeting - 5:30pm	27th February	Year 11 History Trip to Cardiff
21st January	Year 10 History trip to Cardiff	5th March	Year 7 RS Trip
28th January	Year 11 Parents' Evening	13th March	Year 8 and 9 Science Trip to Birmingham
28th/29th January	Year 9 Immunisations	19th March	Year 11 Drama Practical Exam
3rd February	Year 9 Options Evening (FGLSWEP)	24th March	Year 8 RS Holocaust Trip
4th February	Year 9 Options Evening (CBH)	25th March	Year 10 Parents' Evening
6th February	Year 9 History trip to London	27th March	End of term
12th-20th February	Ski trips - New York and Austria	30th - 10th April	Easter Break
12th February	Last day for pupils	13th April	First day of Summer Term

Pupils give their all for Charity Week

Staff and pupils got heavily involved in a variety of sponsored events and activities during Cwmtawe's annual charity week. £8,000 has been raised and we are supporting a number of local charities - Mr. X, Senior Citizens, Goedgedacht Trust, Pastoral Fund, Alfi's Charity, Wales Air Ambulance, Hope and Homes for Children, Size of Wales, Polio and the Teenage Cancer Trust.

The ingenuity of the pupils in devising ways of raising money knew no bounds. Amongst the diverse activities were a mud slide, leg waxing, X Factor, staff versus pupils sports matches, raffles, cake stalls as well as lots of other sponsored activities.



Pupils judged at Bar Mock Trials Competition



Year 11 pupils have been busy taking part in the Bar Mock Trials Competition at Cardiff Crown Court.

The competition saw pupils take up different roles within a court room and 'moot' a criminal case. Pupils were judged by experienced barristers as well as circuit and recorder judges on how realistically they conducted the trials.

As part of their preparation, pupils spent lunch time and after school sessions looking at the facts of two cases, visited Swansea Magistrates' Court and had a visit from Mrs. Collins, an experienced barrister.



Pupils prove their point at Wales Debating Competition



Harri Evans-Mason and Caoimhe Murphy (Year 11) competed in the quarter finals of the Wales Schools Debating Competition in Newtown.

They debated against sixth form pupils from all parts of Wales and should feel very proud of their achievement.

Year 10 pupil Caitlin Tems has had work published in Roundy House.

Roundy House is a poetry journal, sold and distributed in Wales by Mr. Brian Smith, who retired from the English department after many years of service in 2011. Caitlin's poem is entitled 'Repetitive Life' and was on an environmental theme.



A taste of charitable giving

On 17th October we held a 'Breakthrough Bake Off' to raise money for Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

Pupils from all year groups, as well as staff, brought in cakes to be judged by Mr Hitchings and Miss Edwards. The standard was so high it was difficult to pick just one cake in each of the categories - best individual cake, best large cake and best bought cake.

The cakes were then sold at lunch time, with help from year 10 pupils. Along with 'Guess the weight of the minion cake', which had been made almost life-sized by Mr Blevin, we raised around £350.



An Xtra Special Christmas

A group of year 7 pupils who made a significant contribution to the fund raising activities during Charity Week accompanied Mr. Crane and Miss Ardolino to Swansea to buy presents for the Mr. X Appeal.

Year 7 pupils donate to the appeal every Christmas which helps to spread gifts to more than 4,000 underprivileged children every year. Mr. X, now in his 90s, has been running the appeal every year for over half a century. He has commented "the appeal is about buying a gift, however big or small, and showing a little bit of kindness and Christmas spirit."

The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the experience and valued the opportunity to help such a worthy cause.

Three Wise Men follow the star to Cwmtawe



In the true spirit of Christmas members of Neath Round Table recently followed in the footsteps of the Three Wise Men and paid us a visit on their journey.

Walking more than 60 miles from Neath to Bethlehem in Carmarthenshire in just three days, Jethro Withers, David Willis and Jamie Owen raised funds for the British Red Cross and Macmillan Cancer Care.

The wise men also showed their support for local school children by stopping at various schools on their route to give out gifts, including iPads.

If you would like to make a donation to the cause you can visit: www.justgiving.com/teams/threewisemen



Pupil musicians are music to the ears



The school choir performed in concerts in Newport and Neath in celebration of Black History Month. The event remembered the Caribbean soldiers that were involved or killed in battle.

The brass band is currently bringing some Christmas cheer to the elderly by performing at old people's establishments in Pontardawe and the surrounding area.

Talented clarinetist Jordan Lewis has won the first round of the Young Rotary Musician.



Dreaming of a Green Christmas



Pupils from Year 7 were among hundreds of others from all over Wales, visiting the Botanical Gardens of Wales to take part in the annual Christmas tree decorating competition.

They decorated using recyclable decorations inspired by Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales". Egg boxes, old leather, buttons, wool and paper were among the materials used to decorate the tree.

After this, pupils went on a forest trail with Welsh Water, made potted plant decorations and visited the Apothecary to experiment with Christmas scents.



Sampling a slice of European cuisine



On European Day of Languages (26th September) a staff coffee morning was held to raise money for Macmillan.

In the canteen at break time, snacks from European countries were provided for pupils to sample and the set lunch menu had a European theme.

Staff and pupils greeted each other in different languages, pupils dressed up, participated in quizzes and tasted some European cuisine!

It raised pupils' awareness of the 6,000 languages spoken around the world and promoted a greater appreciation of cultural diversity.



Muddy in Margam



The ASD unit pupils had a thrilling time on their residential trip to Margam.

They enjoyed a camp fire with marshmallows, undertook map reading and orienteering and walking through a waist deep river. They then completed a mud challenge, wading waist high in mud pools.

All pupils involved had a fantastic time and developed a wide range of worthwhile skills whilst working as a team.



National Youth Orchestra



Eve Jones (Year 9) and Jordan Lewis (Year 10) are both on the reserve list of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales.

This was the first national youth orchestra to be established in the world and has 65 years experience in providing a first class training experience for Wales' young musicians. It is a flagship for youth music in Wales and constantly delivers performances that are full of energy and passion. It is a remarkable achievement to pass the auditions at such a young age.

School production of 'Peter Pan' is a fly-away success



DRAMA
DRAMA

Cwmtawe School's annual school production was staged during the first week of December.

Following in the footsteps of previous highly acclaimed school productions, this year's Peter Pan show lived up to expectations – indeed, it was a spectacle which tantalised the senses.

The part of Peter Pan was played by Year 10 pupil Mollie Sheppard with Nia James from Year 8 acting the part of Tinker Bell. Hannah Thomas and Caoimhe Murphy from Year 11 performed the part of Wendy with the other main characters being played by Year 11 pupils



MUSIC
CERDDORIAETH

Finley Topping, Dylan Williams, Leah Sell, Ben Williams, Sophie Gowen, Taylor Brett and Jon-Connor Head as well as Year 9 pupil, Joe Griffin.

Members of the school orchestra accompanied the whole production and the innovative poster was designed by Wallis Thomas from Year 9. A moving touch was the good luck card received by directors and cast from the author of the music and lyrics, Piers Chater-Robinson. Following months of rigorous rehearsing during lunch hours, after school and weekends, four performances were staged to rapturous acclaim.



The Merchant of Venice



ENGLISH
SAESNEG

A group of 15 Able and Talented pupils were taken to the performance of a lively interpretation of William Shakespeare's tale of prejudice and revenge.

Pupils were involved in an interactive workshop beforehand where they became a 'Jerry Springer' style audience and then contestants on an 'open the box' type quiz show. The performance itself was set in pre-nazi Germany which put a very real 'spin' on the plot and helped all pupils relate to the events of the play.

This was an excellent introduction to Shakespeare's repertoire and has served to prepare them for next year's GCSE English Literature course.



Pastoral lessons help pupils shape society



PASTORAL
BUGEILIOIOL

Cwmtawe celebrated Black History Month in October with a number of activities and lessons.

This is an international annual celebration recognising and valuing the inspirational individuals and events that have shaped black and african communities across the world. During Black History Month UK, we remembered and celebrated important events in history and the people who contributed to a more equal and progressive society.

PC Gavin Puckett visited the school as part of the "No Means No" campaign to raise awareness of personal responsibility and safety with pupils from Year 11.

Animal Aid also visited the school to discuss the ethics and issues of experimenting on animals. It was a challenging and thought-provoking session.

'The White Feather'



HISTORY
HANES

On 7th October the drama and history departments organised a day trip to the Dylan Thomas Theatre in Swansea to watch a play called 'White Feather'.

This production commemorated the beginning of World War One and helped to facilitate knowledge and understanding of this important historical event.

Told in their own inimitable style, Theatr na nóg mixed the harsh realities of warfare with moments of magic, incorporating the words of the First World War poets amongst others with beguiling Welsh folk music to tell a devastating tale of family, love and loss.

Afterwards pupils participated in a workshop in the National Waterfront Museum. This was designed to allow them to discover the true reality of living during the First World War. It was an inspirational day of learning for all.



Pupils pledge to save the planet



Environmental Science pupils have helped the EcoSchools committee investigate energy use in Cwmtawe as part of Energy Awareness Month.

They have identified ways in which energy is being wasted and staff have been encouraged to make pledges to turn lights off and not leave projectors and TVs on standby.

A group of year 7 pupils visited Cardiff Bay to see first-hand how the area has been redeveloped. Pupils enjoyed a guided tour of the bay before experiencing a boat trip across to the barrage followed by a land train ride through the docks.



Binning bad habits with the 'Bin it! Roadshow'



The Bin It! roadshow visited the school as part of Cwmtawe's Healthy Schools programme.

Year 7 and 8 pupils enjoyed a dynamic presentation with a hard-hitting message. The school is now looking forward to more recycling and less litter!

Bin it! aims to inform young people aged 11-13 about the environmental cost and social issues surrounding discarded chewing gum.

Gwenda Thomas AM attended the event and said that she "thoroughly enjoyed it" and was pleased to have another visit to the school.



Painting 100 years of Dylan Thomas



A group of pupils from Year 8 and Year 9 were chosen to work with the YMCA and local artist Simon Dark to design some of the artwork for a play called 'I'm Dylan Thomas'. Pupils experimented with stencils and spray paint to create Dylan Thomas inspired street art.

Written and performed by young people from Swansea, the play explores the life of Swansea's famous son. Rap, spoken word, visual art and music depicted the ups and downs of a famous life from a whole new perspective!

Pictured right are some of the pupils displaying their finished artwork.



STEM Day helps pupils build on success



Year 9 pupils have been participating in a fun-packed day of activities related to renewable energy sources. This is part of a series of engagement days to encourage more pupils to consider careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

During the day they made their own miniature solar cells and constructed batteries from coins and zinc

discs. One of the key aims of the programme is to encourage more girls to consider STEM careers.

They enjoyed an informative day, learning about the opportunities available to them after they leave school. The next STEM day is due to take place on Tuesday, 17th March.



A taste of triumph

The Rotary Young Chef Competition was held in school on 22nd October.

Phebe Clement and Lewis Jones represented Cwmtawe, competing against Maes y Dderwen.

Lewis won this local heat and will now be competing in the district finals in January. Both competitors were very calm and composed and produced outstanding restaurant quality food.



School Nutrition Action Group

Pupils in Year 7 brought in entries for this year's School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) poster competition which was aimed at encouraging people to exercise.

The winning poster was designed by Caitlin Denner 7ST, and runners up were Hollie Bell 7GG and Emily Rogers 7ST.

Other entries were highly commended and prizes were kindly supplied by Neath Port Talbot Youth Service.

Presentation Evenings

Cwmtawe was proud again this year to present awards for academic triumphs to pupils from across the school in recognition of their hard work over the last academic year.

The Whole School Presentation Evening was held on 23rd October and staff, parents, and pupils enjoyed pupil presentations, speeches from our current and outgoing Head Boy and Head Girl and a musical item from our 'Battle of the Bands' winners, Apathy.

Every department in the school awarded one lucky pupil with an 'Achievement' prize and another with a 'Progress' award and some pupils also received plaques and cash prizes.

The GCSE Presentation Evening was held on 12th November and was our best attended event ever, with more pupils given awards for eight or more GCSEs than ever before.

It was a pleasure to see our '2014 leavers' returning and we wish them well in their future studies and careers.



Skill Days bridge the gap with Primary Schools

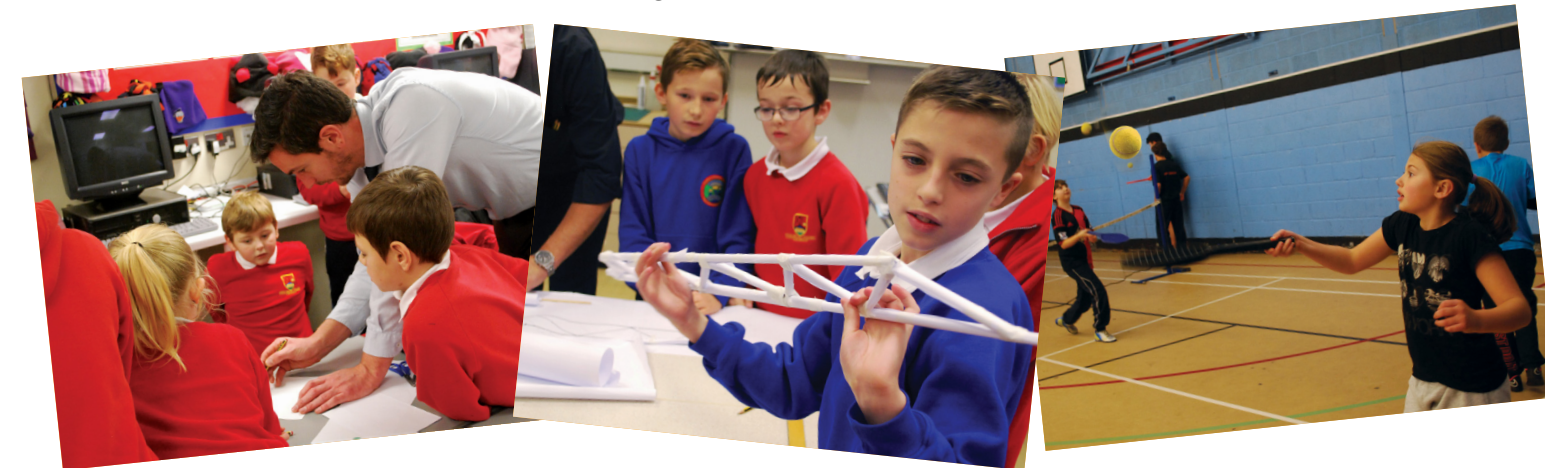
Cwmtawe continued its primary schools transition programme with two more action-packed days; Sports Skills Day and Technology Skills Day.

Sports Skills Day consisted of an exciting menu of games and activities including rounders, athletics and gymnastics, courtesy of the PE Department. It was a welcome taster of PE and Games lessons at Cwmtawe.

On Technology Skills Day, pupils spent the day learning about the model design and construction work involved in building bridges. Divided into mixed teams, pupils designed and constructed their own bridges out of paper. The finished products were pitted against each other to find out which was the best design.

Cwmtawe holds several skills days for Year 6 pupils throughout the academic year as part of its primary schools transitional programme. These days give pupils a chance to experience the varied curriculum at the school including ICT, music, sports and technology, leading to an induction day in the Summer. The events also serve to build relationships and team-building skills between pupils of different schools before they join as next year's Year 7.

The skills days are incredibly successful at easing pupils into life at Cwmtawe and are some of the most eagerly anticipated events in our school calendar.



Primary School Scientists



Twenty-two Year 4 and 5 pupils from our feeder primary schools took part in a technology project, making LED Christmas cards.

The activity taught them a wide range of skills across both science and design technology.



German Christmas Markets



Year 10 pupils spent the last week visiting the Christmas markets of Bonn and Cologne. They enjoyed a festive advent trip on the river Rhine, savouring a three course meal. Pupils also tested their ice-skating skills in the open air at Bonn and visited the Winter Wonderland at one of Europe's largest theme parks in Phantasialand.

Making a clean sweep at Badminton Tournament

On 12th November, Neath Port Talbot held their 5x60 competition at Hengwrt Leisure Centre in Briton Ferry.

Four schools entered the competition, they were: Cwmtawe, Cymer, St Joseph's and Cwrt Sart.

It was a clean sweep for Cwmtawe, winning all four competitions whilst Cymer came in as runners-up in all divisions. The boys' Year 9 & 10 competition saw a really close result with Cymer, St Joseph's and Cwrt Sart all achieving joint runner-up position.

The winners will now go through to the regional final in Llanelli Leisure Centre on the 5th February 2015.



Girls football teams kick off impressive series of victories

Congratulations to both the Under 13 and Under 15 girls football teams who have won all three of their Welsh Cup football matches.

The under 13 girls are playing some impressive football and have made a promising start to the season. Meanwhile, the under 15s squad displayed some excellent footballing skills, beating Dyffryn 3-1 on penalties, following a 5-5 draw down at Tata Steel. Leah Griffiths (goalkeeper) was awarded player of the match.

Both teams will now progress to the regional stages of the Welsh Cup competition.



FIXED PENALTIES

Neath Port Talbot local authority have recently introduced penalty notices as one of the measures to ensure regular attendance. Fines of up to £120 may be issued to parents of any pupil whose attendance is causing concern. They can also be issued for 'term time' holidays. Further details will follow, by letter, in the new year.



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