



YSGOL GYMUNEDOL ABERDÂR ABERDARE COMMUNITY SCHOOL



prospectus

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Message from the Headteacher/Neges o'r Pennaeth

On behalf of the Governing Body, teachers and staff at Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdâr Community School it is our pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all. This prospectus will tell you a great deal about our school; how it is organised, what we offer and what we expect from our learners. We hope that you find the information useful and helpful. We are a caring school, which expects high standards of work, behaviour, attendance and good manners. Our main focus is to ensure that all learners achieve their full potential under the guidance and care of staff.



The atmosphere within the school is warm and friendly. We have excellent facilities and offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities, be they sporting, musical or cultural. These activities enrich a pupil's experience and contribute to the learning process. The teaching staff are experienced and well qualified and we are proud of our achievements both in and out of the classroom.

Parents and carers have a significant role to play in the success of Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdâr Community School and we encourage parents to play an active role in the learning experience of their children. This embraces support for the school rules, high expectations of work, attendance and the willingness to monitor progress and achievement.

Every pupil at the school is seen as an individual and we respect and value these characteristics in order to encourage tolerance and understanding of each other.

Simply, our aim is to provide a positive, caring and safe environment in which learners can grow and flourish during the first years of their young adult life.

I hope that your child will play a full and active role in school life and thoroughly enjoy their time at the school.

I am proud to say that our school is a genuine community school. We are located at the heart of the Aberdare community and we are proud to serve that community. We work hard to establish and sustain outstanding partnerships with our local primary schools, colleges, community groups, and of course, with the parents and carers of our learners. These partnerships help to give us the best chance to provide our learners with an outstanding education.

A prospectus though can only ever tell part of the story. Please visit our website, our Facebook page and our Twitter feed to get a real time understanding of what goes on here at the school.

Again, a very warm welcome. With your support we will achieve the very best for your child.

Mrs Carol Morgans

Headteacher

Vision and Core Values - Aims and Objectives

School Aims

- Aberdare Community School aims to be an outstanding school where young people enjoy learning, achieve highly and enter into the adult world with confidence.
- We aim to produce an environment that encourages each pupil to develop qualities of self-discipline, organisation, motivation and the enjoyment of working hard that makes them confident and competent members of society.
- We aim to develop the positive ethos and learning culture throughout the school community with a commitment to continual improvement and meeting the very highest expectations.
- We aim to encourage a strong and effective partnership with parents and the local community.
- We will continue to develop the literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, and creativity and communication skills so necessary for pupils to access the curriculum and take a full part in society as ambitious, capable learners.
- We will take every opportunity to reward pupils and enhance their self-esteem whilst supporting one another in demanding the highest academic and social standards.
- We will offer a broad and balanced curriculum which evolves to reflect the needs of pupils and the demands of modern society

Please visit our website, our Facebook page, Twitter feed and other social media platforms.

School Mission Statement

Work Hard, Dream Big, Reach for the Stars

School Objectives

To develop in each pupil:

- Self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth.
- A healthy lifestyle and physical and mental well-being.
- Care and respect for people and the environment in a context of social, moral, multi-cultural and spiritual awareness.
- The ability to work as part of a team, developing a sensitivity to other people's needs and points of view.
- A responsibility for their own learning and actions.
- An awareness of the modern world, and to ensure a sustainable environment.
- The ability and confidence to communicate effectively. This includes development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- The ability to apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- A creative and enquiring mind committed to life-long learning.



Senior Staff

Head-teacher

Senior Deputy Headteacher

Deputy Headteacher

Assistant Headteacher

Assistant Headteacher

Assistant Headteacher

Assistant Headteacher

Director of Pupil Progress

Mrs Carol Morgans

Mrs Michelle Pearce

Mr Richard Carter-Evans

Mrs Emma Harris

Mr Christopher Lovell

Mrs Karen Leyshon

Miss Tara Neale

Mr Steffan Williams

Additional Learning Needs

Our aim is to provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all pupils, whilst acknowledging that some children may require additional support.

All pupils have access to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Some pupils requiring assistance with learning receive help from our specially trained staff or are supported in the classroom by learning support assistants, who may work one to one with pupils.

The school has a team of trained literacy and numeracy specialists who provide pupils with basic skills interventions. We also support pupils with English as an additional language and pupils who speak a different first language to English who are given the opportunity to take a GCSE in their home language.

The school has a number of pastoral staff trained to provide pupils with emotional support. We regularly survey our learners to assess their attitudes towards themselves and school and use this information to identify pupils who may need additional help to achieve their full potential. We use a variety of in-house wellbeing interventions,

such as the Student Assistance Programme, ELSA and Thrive. We also work closely with Eye-to-Eye counselling services, enabling pupils to access confidential professional counselling within the school environment.

Parents and carers are always kept informed and will be aware of any interventions their child may be involved in.

The school also works with the School Educational Psychology Service as well as other agencies to provide tailored support.

If your child is playing an instrument well or has achieved success in an event, we want to know this so that we can make sure they continue to get the same support and opportunities they had in their primary school.

Our school has two communication classes, which are called ASTRA and SIRIUS. These distinct groups specialise in provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Entry to the unit is via the local authority. Pupils in the unit play a full part in the life of the school and are on the school roll.



Admissions

Application forms are distributed by the local authority to all Year 6 students as part of the Admissions Policy. Students within the catchment areas will be offered a place, subject to the admission number not being exceeded. In such instances, places will be allocated in accordance with the Authority's oversubscription criteria. For further information, please contact the Local Authority.

Transition

Transition is an on-going process and our senior team work closely with our partner primary schools. Every year all pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in a programme put on by our school that focuses on one of the following: Health and Wellbeing, Sustainability and Global Citizenship or on science and technology based study.

Our Assistant Head Inclusion also visits all partner primary schools with the Progress Leader for Year 7. The visits are intended to ensure that vital information about your child is shared prior to entry.

As parents you will also have ample opportunities to visit the school and meet with the staff. Before your child even gets here we have gathered a lot of information about them and we use this to ensure that they are challenged on entry and do not repeat work unnecessarily. In June, prior to entry an induction event is

organised allowing children to meet their form tutors and gain confidence in their new school. Though most pupils transfer easily there are some who may find it more difficult.

Aberdare Community School has an excellent support system for vulnerable pupils. As well as the staff mentioned above, our year 7 assistant progress leader and the pastoral support assistant for Year 7 are all on hand to support your child.

Supporting the Able and Talented

At Aberdare Community School pupils are grouped to allow them to attain their full potential.

The school runs an enrichment programme and subject leaders work with senior staff to identify More Able and Talented Pupils (MAT).

These benefit from opportunities to enrich their learning through competitions, masterclasses or through the school providing opportunities to study GCSE subjects early.

The school also supports pupils to attend open days in university and takes part in a project aimed at getting pupils from state schools to red brick universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.

All pupils entering the school follow the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness with a view to them gaining a GCSE by the age of 14.

We are one of the few schools in Wales to offer this opportunity.



Buddies and Anti-Bullying

Respect for each other lies at the heart of everything we do.

Aberdare Community School is a Rights Respecting School and in our assemblies and in all our dealings with pupils we make it clear that we have a zero tolerance to bullying.

We also make sure that pupils are aware of the dangers of online bullying and if this occurs the school will involve the police and parents to ensure this stops.

Our form tutors and progress leaders are vigilant and we make sure that children who feel that they are being bullied know where to go to seek help.

The school will not tolerate bullying, intimidation or intolerance of any kind and pupils are aware that there are clear sanctions to deal with such behaviours.

We want our pupils to grow into caring and responsible citizens and therefore bullying will not be tolerated. As part of our statutory responsibility we have an Anti-Bullying Policy which can be found on our website.

Child Protection

The school has a safeguarding policy and is fully compliant with all the statutory and local authority guidance to ensure that our children are safe in school.

Our school has a senior member of staff (Assistant Headteacher) who is appropriately trained and charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating child protection matters within the school, and that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are aware of who that person is.

The Child Protection (Safeguarding) Officer is Miss Tara Neale (Assistant Headteacher) and the Deputy Child Protection Officer is Mrs Michelle Pearce (Deputy Headteacher).

They are supported by all of our Progress Leaders and pastoral staff, who are fully trained, by the local authority, to ensure that all members of our school community are safe.

Disability Access

The school acts in accordance with The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) and the Equality Act 2010, which define a disabled person as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Aberdare Community School is committed to the goal of the achieving equality of opportunity for disabled persons.

As a consequence we

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life and
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

At our school we pride ourselves on the fact that all our pupils have the opportunity to develop individually and socially.

Homework

Homework is important for all pupils in our school. It allows pupils to build on the learning that is going on every day in school and helps them to develop as individual learners. All pupils who come to Aberdare Community School are expected to complete homework and we hope that you will support us in this.

The nature of homework tasks may vary and can include written tasks, research, reading, aural and oral work.

We ensure that the nature of the homework recognises the age, ability and resources available to our students.

Every pupil is issued with a homework diary or planner. It is essential that all homework is recorded in pupils' planners and that parents and carers check these planners on a weekly basis to ensure that homework is completed on time.

Religious Education and Collective Worship

The day begins with a year group assembly or meaningful time spent in form rooms discussing the 'Thought for the Week'. All pupils are taught Religious Education and follow the syllabus as agreed by the local authority at Key Stages 3 and 4. In addition, Religious Studies is offered as an option at GCSE and at Advanced Level. The school has no affiliation with any particular religious denomination. As a school we are committed to promoting tolerance and respect for those who have differing religious beliefs.

School Security and Pupil Safety

The security and safety of our pupils is a priority. All visitors are required to enter the school via the Visitor Entrance which is located on the north side of the school building and report to the school reception. All visitors to the school must sign in at reception where they will be issued with a visitor's badge. Pupils enter the school via the Pupil Entrance which is to the south of the school building. Access gates to the staff car park and

bus bays are secured during the day and access is controlled by staff within the school. To the south of the school building the site is enclosed by perimeter fencing. The school is joined to the Sobell Leisure Centre, but access is secured with card readers, only issued to school staff. The school has extensive CCTV coverage that operates 24 hours a day.



School Meals

The school does not allow pupils in years 7-11 off site during the day and the school provides excellent food from early in the morning. Pupils can choose from a range of good quality and well-priced meals. Meals are served in the main restaurant for those in years 7-11. A staff and sixth form café is to be found on the first floor. The school is committed to providing pupils with good quality, healthy options.

School Uniform for ALL pupils

School Blazer	Black blazer with school badge, only available from school. (Compulsory all year)
Shirt	White formal shirt - short or long sleeve (NOT polo shirt)
Tie	Black and yellow – years 7,8 and 9 Black, yellow and burgundy – years 10 and 11 Burgundy, yellow and grey – sixth form (Only available from school) All pupils should wear their ties with a small knot tied at the neck.
Jumper	Black V-neck with school badge, only available in school. (Optional)
Skirt	Straight, black, knee length.
Trousers	Formal, smart black trousers. Denim, lycra, skinny type trousers or leggings are NOT acceptable
Socks	Black socks to be worn with trousers. During the summer term only, black knee length socks can be worn with skirts.
Tights	Black tights at least 40 denier to be worn with skirts. (Tights can be worn at all times during the school year)
Shoes	Plain black footwear with no logos, markings or embellishments (no boots or high heels).
Outer coat	Dark in colour, no hoodies or sweatshirts or cardigans allowed. Coats are not to be worn inside the school building.

Boys PE Kit	Girls PE Kit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black and gold PE top with school badge • Black training top with school badge • Black PE shorts with school badge • Black PE socks with school badge (The above sport kit is only available from the school.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training shoes • Towel and black swim shorts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black and gold PE top with school badge • Black hooded top with school badge • Black PE skort with school badge • Black leggings with school badge • Black PE socks with school badge (The above sport kit is only available from the school.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training shoes • Towel and black one piece swimsuit

Other Items:

- Pupils are allowed one pair of plain studs worn in the lobe of the ear. No other piercings are permitted. This includes facial piercings.
- Pupils are not permitted to wear stretchers or 'javelin' style earrings.
- Due to health and safety reasons pupils are not allowed to wear bracelets, necklaces or rings of any description (except for religious reasons)
- Pupils are allowed to wear a wristwatch. No watches are allowed to be worn in examinations.
- Pupils are only allowed to wear minimal makeup to school.
- Pupils are not allowed to wear nail varnish or false nails to school. Pupils are not allowed outlandish hairstyles or hair coloured in an unnatural colour. No visible tattoos.

The School Day

8.42am First Bell and movement time for pupils

8.45am Registration/Assembly (as relevant)

9.00am Movement time for pupils

9.02am Lesson 1- 60 minutes

10.02am Movement time for pupils

10.04am Lesson 2 – 60 minutes

11.04am Break (15 minutes)

11.19am Movement time for pupils

11.21pm Lesson 3 – 60 minutes

12.21pm Movement time for pupils

12.23pm Lesson 4 – 60 minutes

13.23pm Lunchtime (35 minutes)

13.58pm Movement time for pupils

14.00pm Lesson 5 – 60 minutes

15.00pm End of the school day

Assessment, Reporting and Recording

We believe in working with parents and carers to support your child's learning throughout their time at Aberdare Community School. Regular and rigorous assessments ensure that we track progress, celebrating successes and identifying where additional support may be required every term.

All pupils are given aspirational target grades, based upon their previous achievements and their potential. Our teachers identify core tasks for each year group, which are used to assess progress. Detailed feedback is given for these assessed pieces of work, so that learners are aware of what they did well and of what they need to do to improve. Our learners are encouraged to reflect on the feedback they have been given to ensure that they understand fully how to improve their performance.

At the start of Year 7 all pupils complete Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs). They are designed to assess a pupil's ability in three different areas: verbal (thinking with words); quantitative (thinking with numbers); and non-verbal (thinking with shapes and space). We also test pupils' literacy and numeracy skills on entry, so that we can provide a tailored support package if pupils need extra help

in these vital skills. The results of these assessments, combined with your child's performance data from primary school, enable us to ensure that pupils are placed in the most appropriate teaching groups. We regularly review our grouping arrangements to ensure that pupils are placed in the right class for them.

Parents and carers are invited to one Parents' Evening per year. Parents and carers receive one annual full report, and two interim reports, outlining your child's progress across all subject areas. Our Progress Leaders and Leaders of Learning are of course available to meet with parents at any point during the year to discuss any concerns around achievement or a pupil's attitude towards learning.

Pupils' achievements are celebrated at our annual Prize Evenings and through the school's rewards system. We are committed to recognising all kinds of achievements, including academic, sporting and cultural successes.

Careers Advice & Guidance

Aberdare Community School is a Gatsby School. All pupils from years 7 - 13 at Aberdare Community School take part in a structured programme of Careers Education and Work-Related learning. This is intended to prepare them, as they progress through the school, for the World of Work. It also provides them with the ability to make increasingly important decisions that will influence their further education and careers options. Much of this is delivered in our focus

days or in specialised events that take place throughout the school years. Pupils also benefit from one-to-one interviews and mock interviews as well as listening to outside speakers. The school delivers a number of courses that prepare pupils for the world of work and many pupils visit open days in universities and colleges of higher education. We also collaborate where possible with industry and business and are part of Careers Wales Business Class.

Medical Provision

Many teaching and non-teaching staff are first aid trained. We will contact you, as parent/carer, if we feel your child is not well enough to remain in school or requires medical attention beyond basic first aid. Your child's attendance is very important to us and so we do ask for parents to be sensible when deciding on whether a child is too unwell to be in school. Please contact the school as early as possible if your child is too unwell for school so that attendance records can be accurately maintained.

Information Technology

ICT is delivered to all pupils at Key Stage 3. In addition, pupils have opportunities to learn about computer programming through a series of additional calendared days within the school year. We place a huge emphasis on all our pupils becoming digitally competent and pupils have opportunities to use IT in all their subjects. This makes the use of technology realistic and allows pupils to see how IT is used in the 21st Century.

The school is fully wireless and as well as having two Apple suites and five computer suites, along with bookable laptops and iPads for use by students within subject areas.

Sixth form students have access to a study area and computer suite situated around Café Llyfrau, which is open every morning. Sixth form students are also able to remain after school to make use of the facilities and have their own printer access.

Learning Resource Centre

The school is a 21st Century learning establishment with access to iPads and laptops.

The school library provides opportunities for pupils to access books for pleasure as well as research for information.



The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Extended Learning and Out of Hours Activities

All pupils in years 9 and above are offered the chance to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. We already have a high number of participants in the Bronze and Gold Awards. There is a rich provision of opportunities both sporting and non-sporting outside school hours with pupils being offered the chance to take part

in engineering schemes, Rotary competitions, trips to art galleries, musical and theatrical events. We also host a large number of after school events for pupils organised via the Youth Participation Service. Trips and excursions will operate in conjunction with school policy on this.

Pastoral Organisation and Wellbeing

Pupils are placed into mixed-ability form groups at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils usually remain in these form groups, where possible with the same form tutor, until the end of Year 11. Your child's form tutor will play an important role as he or she progresses through the school. The form tutor is often the first person a pupil might turn to if they need help or guidance. Our form tutors regularly monitor pupil progress, attendance and behaviour and intervene when a pupil needs additional support.

Each year group has a dedicated Progress Leader who is responsible for the pastoral care and wellbeing of pupils in their year group. As

with our form groups, your child's Progress Leader will remain the same throughout their time at the school. Our Progress Leaders are ably supported by Assistant Progress Leaders and pastoral support assistants, who are nonteaching staff who are often your first point of call should you wish to discuss any concerns you may have.

Aberdare Community School is committed to ensuring that all pupils are supported fully throughout their time at the school. In addition to the pastoral team, a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team is attached to each year group.



Attendance

Regular attendance to school is extremely important and all pupils should aim for 100% attendance over the course of the year.

Research shows that students who have a high level of attendance achieve more. All absences need to be authorised. If a pupil has more than 10 unauthorised absences then the Local Authority may issue a fine. If a pupil is absent and no explanation has been given, the school will contact parents. Medical appointments should be arranged for after school where possible.

We have a number of strategies in place to support pupils' attendance including our learning house facility that we use if a child has an injury/illness that would prevent them being able

to move around the building safely.

Within school pupils are marked into each lesson electronically and in this way we assure ourselves to the best of our ability that pupils are present in all lessons.

We also have a range of rewards in school to encourage good attendance. The school is supported by the Educational Welfare Officer who also supports us in ensuring that pupils attend regularly and who works closely with parents and carers.

Pupils whose attendance falls below Welsh Government guidelines or who are constantly late may face penalty notices and fines.

The Learning House

This is an area within the school which is managed by the pastoral support assistants.

Pupils who are having difficulties in school or need a different approach to learning might spend some of their day in this environment.

However, it is there to support learning and not replace it.

Pupils who have this support will still be expected

to make progress and go to time-tabled lessons for most of their school week.

Parents and carers of pupils who have this support or indeed any other form of support will be notified.

Where a pupil is not engaging within this environment then the provision will be withdrawn and the resources re-directed.

Y Senedd Aberdâr

Do you want to have your voice heard?

Then join Y Senedd Aberdâr! We have a range of sub committees that focus on key areas affecting your life at Aberdare Community School, including LGBTQ+ / Mental Health and Wellbeing/ UNCRC/ Anti-Bullying and Eco Schools. If you want to join this fantastic organisation, you can sign up with your form tutor. You can also put yourself forward for Form Captain or Deputy Form Captain in your first week at Aberdare Community School. We look forward to seeing you and remember: your school, your voice!



Sport

Sport plays a vital part in our school and the leader of learning for this subject is in charge of Health and Wellbeing as Director of Sport and Health and Wellbeing.

The school organises a number of events throughout the year to support the improvement of health and fitness for all learners. We employ a rugby coach who works with talented boys and girls to develop their skills. We also work regularly with professional sportsmen and women, as we invite them into school to share their inspirational stories with our learners. In recent years, we have been proud to welcome international footballers, rugby players and elite athletes to help raise aspiration and support our pupils with advice on nutrition, training and fitness.

The school runs an innovative sports academy for sixth form students. Students who are accepted on to this technical programme complete a BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Sport, which is the equivalent of two A Levels. This academic qualification is supplemented by sport-specific training provided by our dedicated rugby coach. We are a Flagship school for University of South Wales, which provides us with unlimited access to their facilities and sports laboratories. We visit the university on a regular basis with GCSE students in years 9, 10 and 11 as well as Btec Level 3 students in the sixth form. There are similar opportunities in other sporting disciplines, such as hockey, netball,

swimming or even golf. The school has state of the art facilities for sport as we share the facilities of the local leisure centre; additionally we have our own multi-use games area as well as access to the new athletics stadium, 3G pitches and cricket facilities. The sports centre houses wide screens, which are used alongside iPads and tablets to enhance sports lessons and further develop pupil skills in a variety of sports including tennis, badminton, gymnastics, netball, basketball, volleyball, rounders, cricket and hockey. All pupils have regular PE lessons on their timetable and we expect pupils to wear our sports' uniform.

Our sporting teams are incredibly successful in all years but even more so at senior level where we are the current Welsh Schools Rugby Champions and the RCT Schools Football Champions.

The department also runs educational sports tours including Spain and America, with skiing mixed in as well.



Performance, Music and Dance

At Aberdare Community School, we offer a wide range of exciting opportunities in Drama, Dance and Music to maximise and support pupils' potential and talents. Pupils are able to work creatively in our purpose built Music studios including a Recording studio and Mac Suite. Our performers can truly achieve their potential in our sprung floored Dance Studio and even learn to operate lighting and sound equipment in our specialist Drama Studio.

Performance beyond the timetable includes many amazing extra-curricular opportunities throughout the year including Orchestra, Jazz Band, Junior and Senior Choir as well Dance and Drama Clubs. Pupils may learn to play an instrument, individually working weekly with a peripatetic teacher. Our talented pupils also have the chance to make unforgettable memories by taking part in the annual school production, performed in the professional venue of The Coliseum, Aberdare.

Passionate about performance? We offer pupils theatre trips including visits to The Wales Millennium Centre and New Theatre in Cardiff, as well as working with professional performers and theatre companies in our own outstanding facilities.



Equality

At Aberdare Community School we want all our pupils to achieve to the best of their individual ability.

Our philosophy is that everybody is given the opportunity to succeed by following a curriculum suited to their unique individual needs.

It may mean that some will have a slightly different curriculum to others but it is child led and centred.

We believe that the school has a part to play in breaking down stereotypes related to such matters as sex, race, religion and disability.

Such matters are dealt with through the formal curriculum in lessons such as our Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, PHSE days and Religious Education, but more importantly in the way in which personal relationships are managed on a day-to-day basis.

The school is a Restorative Approaches and a Rights Respecting organisation.

We will not tolerate any form of intolerance and we make every attempt to ensure pupils respect one another.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

We believe that the purpose of Relationships and Sex Education should be to provide knowledge about loving relationships, the nature of sexuality and the processes of human reproduction. This should enable pupils to learn to view their relationships in a healthy and responsible manner. Every effort is made to ensure that the message is tailored to the age and understanding of the child and that sound moral values are a part of it. All such sessions are delivered by appropriate adults such as school nurses or the school police liaison officer. We work closely with

outside agencies to deliver elements of this programme feeling that their expertise and background allows them to present this in an effective and engaging manner. Relationships and Sex Education is linked with areas of the National Curriculum. Where this occurs pupils will learn about this in Science at both Key Stage 3 and later. Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their children from learning except for those aspects covered in our statutory courses.

Use of the Welsh Language

We are proud of our language and heritage and the commitment to the language is to be seen in many areas of the school not just in lessons.

We celebrate our nationhood in many ways including holding an annual Eisteddfod and the Welsh department organises a number of trips to Llangrannog and places of cultural interest in Wales.

Within the school you will hear Welsh spoken informally by a number of our staff and around the school there are bilingual signs.

Welsh is the first language heard when you ring us up and it is also evident on materials printed in the school.

Many of our staff speak Welsh and Welsh may be heard in assemblies where there is a bilingual focus. In addition all subjects contain a focus on Curriculum Cymreig within their schemes of work.



How to make a complaint

The school is committed to dealing effectively with complaints. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we will put right any mistakes that we have made and we will apologise.

Our definition of a complaint is “an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to the school or a member of its staff that requires a response from the school.”

We will consider your complaints in an open and fair way and will make every effort to protect confidential information. Complaints made anonymously will be recorded but investigation will be at the discretion of the school, depending on the nature of the complaint.

We believe that all complainants have a right to be heard, understood and respected and we expect the complainant to be polite and courteous. We will not tolerate aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour.

In the first instance, a concern should be raised with a teacher or a member of the office staff, normally within 10 school days of the incident. Most complaints are resolved in this way.

If you feel that your initial concern has not been dealt with effectively, you should put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher. If your complaint is about the Headteacher, your complaint should be addressed to the Chair of School Governors.

It is rare for a complaint to progress any further than this, but if you feel that your complaint has not been dealt with fairly, you should write to the Chair of School Governors at the school.

A full copy of the document: Complaint Procedures at Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdar Community School is available upon request.



Discipline and Behaviour

In Aberdare Community School we place great importance on the way we behave and act as members of our community.

The School Council, governors, parents/carers and teachers have all contributed to developing a clear code of conduct and behaviour policy.

Our Code of Conduct is clearly evident in our planners and in all classrooms and focuses on respect for others and the environment, an attitude that leads to success and good attendance.

Rewards and Sanctions

Pupils can be rewarded by:

- Verbal praise and encouragement.
- Positive written comments in exercise book and/or Planner.
- Letter or phone call home.
- Referral to Leader of Learning / Progress Leader for verbal praise.
- Mention in Newsletter.
- Every week form tutors analyse the behaviour of the pupils in their form class. Any pupil who has maintained a “clean slate”, which means they have not received any poor behaviour points, will receive an automatic 10 achievement points. This system means that our learners are rewarded for consistently following the school rules. At the end of each term, pupils who achieve a significant number of achievement points will be rewarded.
- Pupils can also earn individual achievement points for good behaviour, effort and good work during lessons. These are awarded by pupils receiving blue cards which are then logged on our behaviour management system. Again these achievement points are added up and pupils rewarded at the end of term.
- Being pupil of the month. In each of the year groups there will be a pupil of the month, nominated by the progress leader. The progress leader will base their decision on the pupil's attendance, behaviour and academic progress.
- Being learner of the month. In each subject there will be learner of the month for each year group, nominated by each department. The department will base their decision on the pupil's performance, effort and progress.

KS3

All pupils between the ages of 11 and 13 (Years 7 to 8) follow a broad range of subjects determined by the requirements of the National Curriculum. There will be a number of extra-curricular opportunities for your child. We offer the chance to learn a range of musical instruments including guitar and drums and we also seek to encourage those with a good voice to develop it by employing a voice coach.

These opportunities are free to all pupils. There are regular sporting fixtures and the school offers a huge range of sporting opportunities outside of the normal rugby, hockey, football, netball, basketball, and cricket.

We make use of the swimming pool and we have good links with other sporting organisations including our local golf clubs.

The school also offers a number of out-of-hours classes including Astronomy, Photography, including for older children the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

In year 7, pupils are grouped into two bands Omega and Gamma and within these pupils are streamed to aid their learning. The school holds an open evening for prospective parents of pupils in year 5 and 6 early in the autumn term.



KS4

The school operates a three year KS4 curriculum and during year 8 pupils will be able make choices about which subjects they would like to study in KS4. Subjects that are suited to their likely career interests as well as their ability.

At this point children are able to make decisions about their learning pathways and we want this to be a real discussion between parents/carers, the child and the school.

An options evening is held in the spring term and parents are also able to read through an options booklet that outlines the subjects available and how they are examined.

We encourage parents to come to the school to learn more about the subjects that are on offer. Considerable help and guidance is given to our pupils when they are making these choices and each child has an individual interview with a careers' advisor as well as one of the senior leadership team.

Every effort is made to ensure that pupils get their subject choices but clearly when choices are involved this may not always be possible.

During year 10 pupils have the chance to go out on work experience and all pupils in years 9-13 will study for the Welsh Baccalaureate. This is an excellent qualification allowing pupils to further develop a range of skills that employers wish pupils to have.

Welcome to our Sixth Form

Pupils who wish to study in our sixth form traditionally need to gain at least five good GCSEs including English Language and Mathematics. However, for certain subjects including the separate sciences, we insist that pupils have at least a B grade to start the relevant Advanced Level course.

Sixth formers have a separate internet coffee shop shared with the staff which is open throughout the day. The sixth form courses are run in partnership with our other partner secondary schools in the Cynon Valley and pupils are able to choose courses in these schools should they wish. However, as a school we offer a wide range of sixth form courses that cover sciences, humanities, languages, sport, music and drama.

Sixth formers also have access to designated IT facilities and their own printer for school use only. The school recording studio, Apple Mac suites and other state of the art facilities mean that many of our children opt to undertake subjects in their home school.

Please note that admission to the sixth form is via the headteacher and the senior team. Our provision is non statutory. Therefore, we reserve the right to deny access to our sixth form if there have been attendance or attitudinal issues during key stage 4, for, if we feel that we cannot provide a full timetable appropriate to a child's needs. Interest in our sixth form from outside our catchment is increasing due to the quality of the provision.

Sixth form courses and option choices are wide and varied and for up to date information we advise you to come to our open evening held whilst children are in year 11, or to look at our website. We do provide English Language and Mathematics resit classes for those who narrowly miss a C grade but the time allocation for these is much less than that offered in year 11. It is also important to note that many university places are offered now to students who have at least a B grade in English and Mathematics.

Sixth Form Sporting Activities

As a school we run our own Sports Academy Programme, specialising primarily in rugby and football development.

Talented boys and girls in these sports can apply to join the academy. Pupils study conventional Level 3 courses in Sport alongside the Welsh Baccalaureate and undertake a technical programme in their chosen sport intended to support their development as elite athletes.

In addition, we have now extended this provision to pupils who may wish to study traditional Advanced levels but who are talented in a sport such as golf, swimming, weightlifting or cycling. Pupils study their chosen subjects and as a school, the Director of Sport will oversee the organisation of a bespoke technical programme.

Student Guidance

Pupils are allocated to form groups and are expected to be in school for registration at the start of the day and to attend all their lessons on time.

Lateness will not be tolerated and will be subject to appropriate sanctions. The form tutor works in the same way as those lower down the school and aims to get to know your child academically and socially. Tutors and subject teachers monitor attendance and progress.

Pupils who fail to make sufficient progress will be expected to attend a meeting with the school and parents/carers will be asked to attend. Pupils who then fail to meet targets for improvement may be asked to leave school.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr C. Lovell, Assistant Headteacher, for further information or for a tour of the school if you are thinking of your child transferring to us post-16.

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For more information about our school please get in contact:
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