Ysgol Y Gwendraeth

Ysgol y Gwendraeth is a relatively small, mixed 11 - 18 community school beautifully set in lovely countryside within the Gwendraeth Valley in Drefach. It takes its name from the river and valley from which it draws its pupils. It serves a largely rural catchment area centred around 17 feeder village primary schools in and around the Gwendraeth Valley. There are 570 pupils in the school at present with 53 pupils in the Sixth Form and 38 teaching staff. The valley is on the Western most edge of the old 19th Century coal valleys and has a proud industrial and agricultural past. The coal mines are all closed now but the growing Business Park centred around Cross Hands is constantly attracting new employers into the area. The small villages in the valley still retain their own individual identity and share a common ethos encouraged by agencies such as Menter Cwm Gwendraeth which seek to ensure that the traditional Welsh language and culture are maintained.

The school is naturally bilingual in character and has a high percentage of Welsh speakers amongst staff and pupils. All the feeder primary schools are designated 'Category A' schools according to the county policy, that is, they teach subjects primarily through the medium of Welsh. Gwendraeth is a designated English medium school but the Welsh language is regarded as extremely important and parents may opt to have their children taught History, Geography and Religious Education in the medium of Welsh should they so wish. Wales and the the Welsh language permeates the curriculum offered within the school and has a considerable social, moral and cultural influence in all subject areas through the "Cwricwlwm Cymreig" and also through the extra-curricular activities offered by the school e.g. the orchestra, Urdd movement and Eisteddfodau. There is a "Canolfan Iaith" within the school where primary school pupils who have moved to the area may get extra Welsh lessons.

Gwendraeth was built in the 1920's and had a long and proud tradition as a grammar school until it became a comprehensive school after reorganisation in 1983. Rugby was a very strong point in the school's development at this time and Gwendraeth was immortalised within the rugby world as the Welsh 'fly-half factory' where famous Welsh international rugby players such as Carwyn James, Barry John, Gareth Davies and Jonathan Davies were educated.

The old, grey, stone main building houses the main subject areas and school hall while a 'new' wing built in the 60's contains the library and a suite of Science laboratories. There is a new Sixth Form ICT and Careers Suite in the main school. The Dining Hall and Music area are based in Cwmmawr House while Garreglwyd houses the new unit for secondary age autistic pupils. In 1983 Gwendraeth became a comprehensive school and additions were built to complement the old grammar school campus. 'Neuadd Carwyn', a very well equipped Sports Hall, was built at this time and caters for indoor netball, football, cricket and badminton. The Sports Hall also has a physical fitness room and two squash courts with auditorium. These excellent facilities are supplemented by those in the old gym. Gwendraeth is privileged in being surrounded by beautiful playing fields, which look glorious in summer but lose something of their attraction when it rains! A new Technology Block was also built in 1983 and this contains a suite of Craft, Design and Technology, Art, Home Economics and Textiles rooms. One of these Technology rooms was fitted with new Computer Aided Design and Manufacture computers in 2002. A new Humanities and Information Technology Block completed the 80's phase of building. The Information and Communication Technology department moved into new accommodation in the middle of the school next to the library in 2002. Three ICT rooms have now been fitted with new computers while many departments have benefited from new computer technology such as whiteboards.

A notable feature of the school is "Canolfan Garrero". This is a Modern Foreign Language resource in the form of a mock European town or village with a café, bank, hotel lobby, tourist office, cinema, market stalls and boutique. It is designed to stimulate and motivate pupils engaged in role play situations in French. This centre was opened in June 1997 and won the Mary Glasgow Language Trust

Award for the most innovative language learning project in Britain in 1997 and a Welsh Secondary Schools Association Award (WSSA) in 1998. It is a language facility that is unique to Wales and has featured prominently in national and local media and won the school much acclaim. The school received the European Award for Languages in 1999 from CILT in London and was presented with the Central Bureau's International Award in September 2000-2003 for work with schools abroad. Further WSSA awards were won by the school in 1998, 1999, 2001 and 2002. The school was also accredited for its literacy work by the Basic Skills Agency in 2002 and has achieved the bronze and silver 'Eco Schools' award.

The school places great importance on the social, personal and academic development of each individual child. We value our partnership with parents as well as our links with the local community and communities abroad. The intention to develop further as a community school in practice as well as in theory is central to the school's aims, policies, activities and relationships. This is illustrated by the fact that the school obtained the prestigious "Schools Community Award" from the Duke of Gloucester or its work with the community in 2002. The general aim of the school is encapsulated by our 'mission statement' which follows:

"Our vision is to open doors to the future by providing a happy, caring community where all have equal worth and are inspired to achieve the best for themselves and others".

The school completed a very positive and successful Estyn inspection in September 2003.

The formal curriculum is centred on a 50 x 1-hour cycle of lessons every fortnight. The main subjects taught are English, Cymraeg, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Technology, Religious Education, Personal and Social Education, Music, Art and Physical Education to pupils in Years 7 - 9. In Year 10 pupils may choose 3 subject options to accompany the core curriculum subjects and these may be studied at GCSE or COEA level. A full range of "A" and "AS" level subjects and some GNVQ courses are offered in the Sixth Form where there are also opportunities for students to take additional responsibilities as prefects and 'mentors' of younger children. The school has received the Gold Award for Careers Education and Guidance from the West Wales TEC in recognition of the quality of its careers education and guidance programme. The range of extra-curricular activities which pupils are encouraged to follow are wide and varied but sport, music, information technology and Urdd activities are particularly strong.

Parents are asked to enter into a partnership with the school to ensure that children wear the correct uniform, attend regularly and punctually, behave themselves and work hard to fulfil their potential. We want pupils to succeed and to achieve their "personal best". The school operates a merit system to reward effort and pupils can work towards achieving bronze, silver and gold awards. Basic literacy and homework are regarded as important and parents are asked to check and sign their child's Home School Book regularly and to note any comments made by staff. Form Tutors and Heads of Year underpin the pastoral system. The Head of Year 7 works closely with feeder primary schools to ensure the smooth transition of pupils to Gwendraeth. Form Tutors deliver a pastoral programme to pupils during the registration periods. Links with parents and pastoral advice to pupils are regarded as extremely important in maintaining pupil progress and parents are encouraged to contact the school if there appears to be a problem. Teachers and parents work together to achieve the same objectives - that is to ensure that pupils do well and are happy in school.

Ysgol Y Gwendraeth is a small and happy school and community. The good relationships which exist between staff and pupils and the collegiate atmosphere noticeable within the staffroom are features which are often commented upon by visitors. The general atmosphere is a relaxed and happy one. These are features of the school which we value and wish to maintain.

March 2004

Ysgol Y Gwendraeth

Ysgol cymharol fechan yw Ysgol Y Gwendraeth, ysgol gyfun gymysg 11 - 18 oed wedi ei lleoli yn Nrefach, yn ardal hardd Cwm Gwendraeth. Cymer yr ysgol ei henw oddi wrth yr afon a'r dyffryn sy'n dalgylch i'r disgyblion. Mae yna 570 o ddisgyblion yn yr ysgol gyda 53 o ddisgyblion yn y chweched dosbarth ynghŷd â 38 o staff. Mae'n gwasanaethu talgylch wledig ar y cyfan, gyda 17 ysgol gynradd yn ei bwydo. Saif y cwm ar ochr orllewinol yr hen ddyffrynnoedd glo'r 19 ganrif, ac felly mae'n ymfalchïo yn ei orffennol diwydiannol ac amaethyddol er bod y Parc Busnes, Cross Hands yn cynyddu a denu cyflogwyr newydd i'r ardal. Caewyd y gweithfeydd glo i gyd, ond mae gan bob pentref bychan yn y cwm ei hunaniaeth ei hun, ond eto, yn rhannu'r ethos sy'n gyffredin iddynt, ac yn cael eu hybu gan asiantaethau fel Menter Cwm Gwendraeth sy'n ceisio sicrhau bod yr iaith Gymraeg a'i thraddodiadau Cymreig yn parhau.

Ysgol naturiol ddwyieithog yw hi, ac mae ganddi ganran uchel o siaradawyr Cymraeg ymhlith y staff a'r disgyblion. Categori A yw pob ysgol gynradd sy'n ei bwydo, yn ôl polisi'r sir, hynny yw, maen nhw'n dysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn bennaf. Ysgol cyfrwng Saesneg benodedig yw'r Gwendraeth, ond ystyrir yr iaith Gymraeg yn hanfodol bwysig, a gall rhieni ddewis i'w plant gael eu haddysgu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg yn Hanes, Daearyddiaeth ac Addysg Grefyddol, os dymunant. Mae'r iaith Gymraeg a Chymru yn naturiol yn treiddio drwy'r cwricwlwm a gynigir gan yr ysgol, ac mae ganddynt ddylanwad cymdeithasol, moesol a diwylliannol drwy'r Cwricwlwm Cymreig ymhob pwnc. Hefyd drwy'r gweithgareddau allgyrsiol a gynigir gan yr ysgol, e.e. y Gerddorfa, yr Urdd ac Eisteddfodau. Mae yna "Ganolfan Iaith" o fewn yr ysgol lle mae disgyblion yr ysgolion cynradd a symudodd i'r ardal yn gallu cael gwersi Cymraeg ychwanegol.

Adeiladwyd y Gwendraeth yn y 1920^{au} ac mae ganddi draddodiad hir a balch fel ysgol ramadeg tan iddi ddod yn ysgol gyfun ar ôl aildrefnu yn 1983. Roedd rygbi yn rhan gref o ddatblygiad yr ysgol yn ystod y cyfnod hwn ac anfarwolwyd y Gwendraeth yn y byd rygbi fel "ffatri maswyr Cymru" o'r lle yr addysgwyd yr enwogion rhyngwladol Carwyn James, Barry John, Gareth Davies a Jonathan Davies.

Yn yr hen brif adeilad y lleolir ystafelloedd y prif bynciau a neuadd yr ysgol, tra bod rhan 'newydd' y 60^{au} yn cynnwys cyfres o labordai Gwyddoniaeth, a'r llyfrgell. Mae ystafell gyrfaoedd a chyflesterau Technoleg Gwybodaeth ym mhrif adeilad yr ysgol. Yn Nhŷ Cwmmawr mae'r Ffreutur a'r ystafelloedd Cerdd. Yn ogystal mae yna Uned Awtistig newydd wedi'i leoli yng Ngharreglwyd ar gyfer disgyblion awtistig o oed ysgol uwchradd. Yn 1983, daeth y Gwendraeth yn ysgol gyfun a chodwyd nifer o adeiladau ar y campws i gyd-fynd â'r hen. Neuadd Chwaraeon yw 'Neuadd Carwyn' gyda'r cyfleusterau diweddaraf yn cynnwys pêl rwyd, pêl droed, criced dan do a badminton. Hefyd mae yma ystafell cadw'n heini a dau gwrt sboncen gyda lle gwylio. Mae'r hen gampfa ar gael hefyd. Breintiwyd y Gwendraeth gan feysydd chwarae da o'i chwmpas sy'n edrych yn ddeniadol yn yr haf er yn colli ychydig o'u hapêl yn y glaw! Codwyd Bloc Technoleg yn 1983 sy'n cynnwys unedau Crefft, Dylunio a Thechnoleg, Arlunio, Economeg y Cartref a Thecstiliau. Codwyd hefyd bloc Dyniaethau a Thechnoleg Gwybodaeth newydd. Darparwyd un o'r ystafelloedd Technoleg yma efo cyfrifiadur i Gynorthwyo Cynllunio a Chyfrifiadur Cynhyrchu yn 2002. Symudwyd yr adran Dechnoleg Gwybodaeth i ganol yr ysgol ger y Llyfrgell yn 2002. Bellach mae tair ystafell Technoleg Gwybodaeth wedi derbyn cyfrifiaduron newydd, tra fod sawl adran arall wedi elwa ar ôl derbyn offer technolegol newydd megis byrddau gwyn.

Nodwedd arall nodedig yn yr ysgol yw "Canolfan Garrero", sef adnoddau Ieithoedd Modern Tramor mewn ffurf ffug bentref neu dref Ewropeaidd gyda chaffi, banc, derbynfa gwesty, rheolaeth drwydded, sinema, stondin marchnad, boutique a bistro. Mae'r rhain wedi eu cynllunio i symbylu a hybu'r disgyblion mewn sefyllfaoedd chwarae-rôl yn Ffrangeg neu Almaeneg. Agorwyd y ganolfan ym Mehefin 1997 ac enillodd Gwobr Ymddiriedolaeth Iaith Mary Glasgow am y prosiect dysgu iaith mwyaf dyfeisgar ym Mhrydain yn 1997. Mae'n adnodd iaith unigryw yng Nghymru a chafodd gryn

sylw yn y wasg genedlaethol a lleol gan ddod â chlod i'r ysgol. Yn ogystal, derbyniodd yr ysgol wobr Ewropeaidd am ieithoedd ym 1999 oddi wrth CILT yn Llundain ac ym mis Medi 2000 derbyniodd yr ysgol wobr rhyngwladol oddi wrth y Swyddfa Ganolog am ei gwaith gyda ysgolion dramor. Enillodd yr ysgol wobrau WSSA (Cymdeithas Ysgolion Uwchradd Cymru) yn 1998, 1999, 2001 a 2002. Yn ogystal cafodd yr ysgol ganmoliaeth oddi wrth yr Asiantaeth Sgiliau Sylfaenol yn 2002, ac fe enillod Clwb Eco'r Ysgol wobrau arian ac efydd.

Mae'r ysgol yn gosod pwysigrwydd mawr ar ddatblygiad Cymdeithasol, personol ac academaidd pob plentyn yn unigol ac yn gwerthfawrogi ei phartneriaeth gyda rhieni yn ogystal â chysylltiadau gyda'r gymuned leol. Tanlinellwyd hyn gan y ffaith fod yr ysgol wedi derbyn "Gwobr Gymuned Ysgol" gan Ddug Caerloyw am ei gwaith gyda'r gymuned yn 2002. Gwelir hyn yn amcan cyffredinol yr ysgol a nodir yn y gosodiad canlynol:

"Ein gweledigaeth yw agor drysau i'r dyfodol drwy ddarparu cymuned hapus, ystyriol, lle mae pob un o werth cyfartal ac fe'u hybir i ymgyrraedd at y gorau iddynt hwy ac i eraill."

Cafwyd arolwg Estyn llwyddiannus iawn ym Medi 2003.

Seilir y cwricwlwm ffurfiol o gwmpas cylch pythefnos o wersi 50 x 1 awr. Y prif bynciau a ddysgir yw Saesneg, Cymraeg, Mathemateg, Gwyddoniaeth, Hanes, Daearyddiaeth, Technoleg, Addysg Grefyddol, Addysg Bersonol a Chymdeithasol, Cerdd, Celf ac Addysg Gorfforol i ddisgyblion 11 - 14 oed. Ym Mlwyddyn 10 gall y disgyblion ddewis o 3 adran pynciau i gyd-fynd â'r pynciau craidd, a gallant astudio'r rhain hyd lefel TGAU neu TCA. Gall y disgyblion hefyd ddewis astudio ar gyfer Diploma mewn Addysg Galwedigethol. Cynigir ystod lawn o bynciau lefel A a rhai cyrsiau GNVQ yn y Chweched Dosbarth ac mae cyfle ychwanegol i fyfyrwyr ymgymryd â dyletswyddau megis swyddogion neu 'gynghorwyr' i'r plant ieuengaf. Derbyniodd yr ysgol wobr Aur wrth TEC Gorllewin Cymru fel cydnabyddiaeth am ansawdd ei chyngor a'i harweiniad gyrfaol. Ceir ystod eang ac amrywiol o weithgareddau allgyrsiol i'r disgyblion eu dilyn, ac mae chwaraeon, cerdd, technoleg gwybodaeth a'r Urdd yn weithgareddau cryf.

Gofynnir i'r rhieni i ddod mewn partneriaeth â'r ysgol er mwyn sicrhau bod y plant yn gwisgo'n gywir, yn mynychu'r ysgol yn brydlon a chyson, yn ymddwyn yn dda ac yn gweithio'n galed i lwyddo'n academaidd. Rydym yn awyddus i'r disgyblion lwyddo a chyrraedd eu potensial. Mae'r ysgol yn defnyddio system teilyngdod i wobrwyo gwaith da a gall disgyblion weithio tuag at wobrau pres, arian neu aur. Ystyrir gwaith cartref a llythrennedd craidd yn bwysig dros ben a gofynnir i'r rhieni daro golwg ar Lyfr Ysgol-Cartref yn gyson a'i arwyddo i sicrhau bod Gwaith Cartref yn cael eu wneud yn gyson. Yn hanfodol i'r drefn fugeiliol mae'r Tiwtoriaid Dosbarth a Phenaethiaid yr Ysgol sy'n aros gyda'r grwp os yw'n bosibl yn ystod eu cyfnod yn yr ysgol. Yr unig eithriad yw Pennaeth Blwyddyn 7 sy'n aros yno am mai hwnnw sy'n cysylltu'n gyson â'r ysgolion cynradd wrth drosglwyddo. Mae tiwtoriaid dosbarth yn darparu rhaglen fugeiliol i ddisgyblion yn ystod cofrestru. Ystyrir cyswllt gyda rhieni a chyngor bugeiliol i'r disgyblion yn rhan bwysig o gynnydd y disgybl ac ymddygiad da, a chymhellir rhieni a disgyblion i gysylltu â'r ysgol os oes problem. Mae rhieni ac athrawon yn cydweithio i ymgyrraedd at yr un nôd hynny yw, i sicrhau bod y disgyblion yn gwneud yn dda a'u bod yn hapus yn yr ysgol.

Ysgol a Chymuned fechan a hapus yw'r Gwendraeth. Mae'r berthynas dda sy'n bodoli rhwng y staff a'r disgyblion a'r awyrgylch golegaidd yn ystafell y staff yn nodweddion y sylwir arnynt gan ymwelwyr. Mae'r awyrgylch yn un hapus a diddig. Wrth gwrs, mae yma broblemau ac anawsterau fel ag y sydd ymhob ysgol a sefydliad, ond y nodweddion uchod yw'r rhai i'w gwerthfawrogi a'u meithrin.

Mawrth 2004