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Ysgol Gyfun
PORTHCAWL
Comprehensive School

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Headteacher/Pennaeth: M. J. Stephens NPQH, P Dip Ed, BA (Hons)

Deputy Headteacher/Dirprwy Bennaeth: D.W.A Beard BA (Hons)

Deputy Headteacher/Dirprwy Bennaeth: C-A. Painter BA (Hons)

9th January 2026

Dear Parents / Carers,

Happy New Year - I hope that you enjoyed the festive break with family and friends. It was lovely to see so many families at our Annual Carol Service in December – thank you for joining us! Our retiring collection raised approximately £560 for Blood Cancer UK and Bridgend Carers – another thank you!

This week, as I have walked our school site, I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting lessons - well done to all pupils and of course our dedicated staff. For our Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 pupils it is a particularly important term as they prepare for their final GCSE and A Level written examinations taking place during the Summer Term.

Year 10 Non-Examined Assessment (NEA)

For pupils in Year 10, they will begin to complete more **Non-Examined Assessment (NEA)** work as part of their GCSE qualifications. In Wales, pupils in Year 10 are the first cohort to begin several newly designed GCSEs as part of the Welsh Government 'Wave 1' of curriculum reform. Many of these new GCSEs have a different structure when compared to the previous qualifications and as a general note, many courses have more and/or different Non-Examined Assessment (NEA). E.g. assessment completed under controlled conditions at school. NEAs have existed in GCSE qualifications for many years, however, as we work through our assessment plan it is clear that Year 10 pupils (in general) have more NEAs to complete. With the above in mind, attendance is vitally important as we begin and complete NEAs. Attendance is important for all year groups, however for pupils in Key Stage 4 low attendance will impact NEA completion and subsequently the overall grade pupils can achieve.

Year 11 Options Fortnight

As I write, important decisions are being considered about future pathways. The **Year 11 Options Fortnight** will start next week and on Wednesday 14th January from 5:00pm-7:00pm, I look forward to welcoming pupils and parents/carers to our Sixth Form Open Evening. Once again, we anticipate a large intake of pupils joining Year 12 and I hope you find the evening informative. The event will begin in the Sixth Form Hall at 5:00pm. There will be a welcome address from myself, and Mr Beard, Deputy Headteacher, will lead the evening. There will be an opportunity to speak with different subject leaders about the A Level courses offered in the Sixth Form, the A Level options process and the next steps required for returning to the Sixth Form at Porthcawl Comprehensive School. Over recent years our Sixth Form intake has grown, with numbers on roll consistently between 250-270 pupils. We are very proud of all that we do and achieve, and I look forward to seeing you there!

Year 9 Options Fortnight

The **Year 9 Options Fortnight** starts on Monday 26th January (more information will follow) and we are holding our Year 9 Progress Evening on Wednesday 4th February.

If you have any questions about the Sixth Form or Year 9 Options Process please contact Mr Beard, Deputy Headteacher via info@porthcawlschool.co.uk

Whole School Attendance

Overall, attendance at Porthcawl Comprehensive School is comparatively good when compared to similar schools and has increased year-on-year up to 2026. However, it is still below our expectations. In Autumn 2025, we experienced high levels of seasonal absence due to cold and flu viruses, and this impacted overall attendance; we are now below where we were this time last year. The high levels of pupil absence experienced in Autumn 2025 could not be avoided and I am pleased that pupil and staff health levels have improved.

Improving attendance is an on-going priority for the school. The link between attendance and attainment is clear. If pupils are in school, they will usually do well academically, so we encourage all parents/carers to ensure that their child's attendance is as good as possible. We encourage all pupils to attend school on time, every day, and aim for 100% attendance. As mentioned above, I fully understand that children become unwell (my own children experienced extended illness and absence during the autumn) and that there can be exceptional circumstances for absences. However, I politely ask that you think carefully before keeping your child off school due to the impact attendance can have on attainment levels.

Porthcawl Comprehensive School is committed to ensuring that every child reaches their full potential and therefore requires your support in making sure your child's attendance is the highest it could be – thank you.

School Site / Premises Work

As you will be aware, from last summer and throughout the autumn term, significant works were completed on our Sports Hall. This includes the installation of new external and internal cladding, new heating, new lighting and the solar cells. Unfortunately, additional structural works were identified towards the end of this refurbishment and as a result the completion date for this work has been put back until the middle of January. I was hopeful that this facility would return to school and community use at the start of January however this has been delayed slightly.

School Closure (09.01.26) – Weather

I apologise for the disruption today's school closure may have caused you and I thank you for your on-going support. All decisions to close the school are not taken lightly, particularly those that I make in advance. The school site opens at 6am every day and my decision was made following a thorough risk assessment of the weather, safe travel routes, potential staffing levels, security, supervision, pupil-teacher ratios, first aid, safeguarding and how many lessons could run effectively. When I make this decision, my primary consideration is always focussed on ensuring the health safety and welfare of the whole organisation. Due to the uncertainty of Storm Goretti, I actioned an early closure notice in the best interests of everyone at the school.

Year 11 GCSE Results – Success!

I shall end with celebration! On Thursday, Year 11 pupils received their GCSE mathematics results and/or their GCSE numeracy results from their November 2025 examination series, and I am delighted to announce that they have performed incredibly well! Once again, our results indicate a strong performance. As pupils have a high number of GCSE qualifications to complete, we operate a carefully staggered and planned exam entry pattern to GCSEs which supports learning & teaching and pupil workload.

In November 2025, approximately 100 pupils completed their GCSE mathematics examination and approximately 90 pupils completed their GCSE numeracy examination, with pupils entered for numeracy having already completed mathematics in the summer of Year 10. This means that almost all of Year 11 have completed and received the result of at least one 'mathematics' GCSE.

In GCSE mathematics a high percentage of the year group secured an A*-C grade and many grades were awarded at A*-B. Considering the previously secured GCSE mathematics results the overall level 1 and level 2 pass rate is strong; so many pupils have achieved very well securing a range of grades – well done! In our mathematics entry (almost all pupils) over 35% of all grades have been awarded at A*-A and nearly 80% of all grades have been awarded at A*-C. I am very proud of all our pupils!

In our GCSE numeracy entry, a high percentage of the year group secured an A*-C grade and over 50% of grades were awarded at A*/A. Well done to Year 11 and of course, our Mathematics Faculty – thank you! I would like to personally congratulate all pupils on their achievements, and I look forward to hearing about your future ‘maths’ success. Pupils in this year group have already secured a banking and finance qualification and a large number will now move onto other mathematics and numeracy related qualifications.

All results achieved provide an excellent foundation for the summer 2026 examinations and replicate the success we celebrated in GCSE English Literature, GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Science last summer.

Another successful start to the term! I thank you for your continued support.

Have a lovely weekend.

Cofion cynnes / Kind regards,

M. Stephens

Headteacher/Pennaeth

Important Dates – Spring Term 2026

- 8th January - GCSE Mathematics results (November Entry) issued
- 12th January - Year 11 Options Fortnight Starts
- 14th January - Sixth Form Options & Open Evening (for students and parents/carers)
- 26^h January - Year 9 Options Fortnight Starts
- 4th February - Year 9 Progress Evening
- 25th February - Year 12 Progress Evening
- 11th March - Year 10 Progress Evening
- 18th March - Awards Evening
- 23rd March - INSET Day (4)