

**Islwyn High School**  
**Ysgol Uwchradd Islwyn**

**Annual Report Academic Year 2023/4**

Headteacher: Mr. Jason Hicks



**Governors' Annual Report to Parents**  
**Adroddiad Blynyddol y llywodraethwyr**

**Belong. . . Believe. . . Achieve. . .**

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## FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Dear Parent /Carer,

I am pleased to be able to commend to you the school's annual report, covering the last academic year 2023/2024. I am very proud of what the pupils and staff at the school continue to achieve. In the academic year 2023/2024 Year 10 and 11 pupils recorded the school's best set of exam-based results showing incremental improvement on previous years.

The results over the summer were made even more special knowing that the examination boards had removed any marking leniency relating to the impacts of COVID-19. Despite this, Islwyn did extremely well, and in many senses bucked some local and national trends.

When examining the summer GCSE results there have been some substantial improvements in reducing the gap for our most disadvantaged learners which shows the benefit of being a school committed to Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Young (RADY).

The Governing Body continue to focus on the oversight of key priorities contained with the School Development Plan (SDP), with its subcommittees continuing to monitor compliance with the Additional Learning Needs bill which was introduced in 2021 and remains in its infancy and the performance of the new curriculum for Wales.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the school staff and parents for their continued support, and the support I receive from fellow Governors who freely give up their time to support the school progressing.

Parents should also note that they can petition the school requesting a formal meeting to discuss this annual report and the school and the Governing Body will oblige.

Best wishes



Mr G Bryce  
Chair of Governors

The full list of Governors is as follows:

**1. (a) Chair of Governors: Mr G Bryce**

c/o Islwyn High School  
Waterloo  
Oakdale  
BLACKWOOD  
NP12 0NU  
01495 233600

**(b) Vice Chair: Mrs K Moons**  
**Reserve: Mrs L Curtis-Jones**

**2. Clerk to the Governors: R Barrett**

EAS Governor Support Services [governor.support@sewaleseas.org.uk](mailto:governor.support@sewaleseas.org.uk)  
Tredomen Gateway  
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CF82 7EH  
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**3. Members of the Governing Body:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Term of Office Ends</u>
Mr G Bryce	Local Authority	
Mrs L Curtis-Jones	Local Authority	
Mrs K Moons	Local Authority	
Cllr Mrs Patricia Cook	Local Authority	
Cllr R Saralis	Local Authority	
Jo Poole	Parent	05.05.25
Catherine Baldwin	Parent	8.12.24
Rhiannon Penny	Parent	18.12.26
Scott Reasons	Parent	26.3.28
Sarah Windsor	Parent	26.3.28
Mrs N Roberts	Community	18.09.27
Mr R Bevan	Community	06.10.28
Mrs J Crook	Community	06.10.28
Mrs J Ford	Community	06.10.28
Mrs S Hicks	Community	01.04.28
Mr J Hicks	Headteacher	N/a
Mr J Morris	Teacher Representative	03.12.27
Mrs L Godding	Teacher Representative	20.04.25
Mrs T Crooker	Staff Representative	15.11.28

The next parent and staff Governor election arrangements will be undertaken at the appropriate time in line with either resignations or end of terms of office.

## **The Work of the Governing Body**

During the last twelve months, the full Governing Body (GB) has been well attended and has met on six occasions, with a full AGM in September 2023. The GB generally alternates its meetings between Microsoft Teams and face to face meetings at the school.

The School has made good progress with regards to the School Development Plan and the continued embedding of the National Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) bill. As overseen by the GB the school's finances and outlook remains strong despite 2% cost improvement productivity requirements set by the Local Authority.

The School has also increased its Special Resource Based (SRB) numbers during this academic year and continues to work on plans for a modular build to provide an additional support area for our pupils at the front of the school.

The Sub-Committees of the Governing Body continued to meet throughout the year also and dealt with specific business, they provide assurance to the Governing Body across a range of activities. This allows the GB to concentrate on more strategic business, such as the School Development Plan (SDP). There has been very good engagement between the Headteacher, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at the school and the Governing Body. Governors have been involved in all major decisions including recruitment of school staff.

The non-statutory sub committees are set out below:

- Finance, Staffing and Premises
- Standards, Performance and Curriculum
- Inclusion, Safeguarding and Wellbeing

In addition governors support statutory panels throughout the year, these are necessary to the function of the school, these are panels such as pupil discipline, complaints, grievance, Headteacher performance setting and pay awards.

The Chair of Governors visits the school regularly and remains in close contact with the Headteacher in the form of weekly touchpoint meetings.

The Governing Body receives reports / updates from the Headteacher in every meeting. These always focus on progress against set targets and have covered such matters as:

- Progress against School Development Plan
- Plans relating to the implementation of the new curriculum for Wales
- Whole school performance and effectiveness
- Staffing levels and wellbeing
- School organisation and administration (as appropriate)
- Maintenance of buildings
- Pupil activities, extra-curricular activities
- School attendance
- Safeguarding arrangements (as appropriate)
- Examination results, school assessment procedures
- Local financial management of schools and oversight of the school budget.

The Governing Body regularly receives updates and presentations from the Pupil's Council representatives, supports their initiatives and takes onboard pupil feedback. A standing agenda item relating to staff wellbeing also features on the GB agendas.

The Governing Body has also received and considered various reports and documents from the Local Education Authority, the regional consortium (Education Achievement Service) and the Welsh Government. In addition, the Governing Body's sub committees continue to receive on a cyclical basis school policies when they are due for review and these are noted by the Governing Body.

## **Attendance**

Improving pupil attendance remains a key priority at Islwyn High, as there is a strong correlation between attendance and educational attainment. While attendance levels have been impacted by the ongoing effects of the pandemic, our school remains in a positive position compared to other schools within the Local Authority.

We continue to implement a range of strategies to promote and improve attendance, including regular communication with parents and carers, early intervention for persistent absenteeism, and targeted support for pupils who may face barriers to attending school. Our pastoral and attendance teams work closely with families to provide guidance and assistance where needed, ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to engage fully with their education.

To encourage and celebrate good attendance, we have maintained our system of rewards and recognition. Pupils who demonstrate excellent and improved attendance receive certificates, praise in assemblies, and participation in incentive-based initiatives. These measures help to reinforce the importance of regular school attendance and foster a culture where pupils are motivated to attend consistently.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to working in partnership with parents, carers, and external agencies to continue improving attendance levels. We will also monitor attendance data closely, identifying trends and implementing proactive measures to address any emerging concerns. Through a combination of encouragement, support, and intervention, we aim to ensure that all pupils benefit from regular attendance, giving them the best possible chance of success in their academic journey.

The school's attendance figures are set out in the table below:

			<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>	<b>Authorised Absence</b>
<b>2023-24</b>	<b>Autumn Term</b>	<b>89.07%</b>	<b>2.94%</b>	<b>7.99%</b>
	<b>Spring Term</b>	<b>88.82%</b>	<b>2.92%</b>	<b>8.26%</b>
	<b>Summer Term</b>	<b>81.36%</b>	<b>3.15%</b>	<b>15.39%</b>
	<b>Full Year Attendance</b>	<b>89.2%</b>		

## **Number on Roll/Staffing**

At the time of the school census data being collected in January 2024 there were 1055 pupils on roll with 54.1 full-time equivalent members of the teaching staff. In addition, the associate staff consisted of 41 members of staff across the premises, technical support, learning support, administrative, pastoral support teams. Of these staffing numbers, 6 full-time equivalent teachers and 19 Teaching Assistants work within the complex needs' base (SSRB).

## **The School Staff**

During the last academic year, the school saw a number of changes to its staffing.

### **New Staff:**

Miss D Bray - Numeracy Intervention Officer  
Mrs E Fortagh - SSRB Teacher  
Miss E Dwyer - SSRB Teaching Assistant  
Mrs E Davies - SSRB Teaching Assistant  
Ms H Radford - Assistant Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator  
Dr S Southwood-Samuel - Science Teacher  
Mr D Gillies - Assistant Headteacher

### **Staff who left:**

Miss C Calvani - Spanish Teacher  
Mrs E Clark - Geography Teacher  
Mrs J Watts - Head of SSRB  
Mrs A Thomas - Spanish Teacher Maternity Cover  
Mr R Jackaman - Technology Teacher

## **Curriculum**

Islwyn High School is an English medium school. The Curriculum offered at the school is summarised below. The broad, balanced educational opportunities provided are in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Welsh is taught as a second language to every pupil until they leave.

### **The New Curriculum for Wales**

Whilst our key stage four (GCSE) curriculum offer is by subjects, our curriculum for learners in Year 7 and Year 8 (and Year 9 from September 2024) is now taught through six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE):

Expressive Arts - Art, Drama & Music

Health and Well-being - PE, PSE, RSE, Food tech

Humanities - Geography, History & Religion, Values & Ethics(RVE)

Languages, Literacy and Communication - English, Welsh, Spanish

Mathematics and Numeracy - Mathematics

Science and Technology - Science, Technology & Digital Communication (IT)

Each AoLE has between three and six 'what matters' statements which provide guidance on the content we need to address. At Islwyn High School our curriculum offers wide ranging experiences in each area which focus on learning through exploration, refining skills and understanding, considering local, national and current perspectives in preparation for next steps and lifelong learning.

For example in humanities the pupils will study and immerse themselves in the Newport Rising chartist movement. This has a strong link to the local community and neighbouring schools.

The most important factor regarding assessment is that learners understand what they may need to do in order to improve their work. We call this 'assessment for learning' and it is seen in learners' work.

Within each AoLE 'what matter statements', there are five 'progression steps' that learners can achieve by the end of the key stage. Staff will record the progress a learner is making in each what matters statement in relation to their target along with their attitude to learning which is reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Governors. This information was shared with parents through interim and full reports throughout the year.

In setting targets for our learners we use prior data from cluster schools, Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) and National Test results in literacy and numeracy to set AoLE targets for learners in Year 7 to 9. The learner will then have a clear flight path to success which is bespoke to them.

Pupils are being assessed via a holistic approach. Using observation, discussion about their learning, summative and formative assessments, diagnostic tools and personalised assessments. Progression steps are used to inform pupils and parents of progress, with each progression step broken up into developing, embedding and securing.

Islwyn high staff (along with cluster primary AOLE leads) have worked collaboratively together to enhance the transition and continuity of the new curriculum. The meetings have been viewed positively this year and will continue to run as the new curriculum is a process which is ever changing.

Our new curriculum statement can be found here [New curriculum statement](#).

Our two-year GCSE program provides breadth and depth across at least 10 chosen subjects enabling our ambitious curriculum experience to continue. All GCSE Students study English Language and English Literature (Year 10 English literature, Year 11 English language), Maths & Numeracy, Double Award or Single Award Science (some study Biology, Chemistry & Physics). Welsh, Equality & Diversity, PE, Skills and PSE. Students are required to follow up to three additional courses leading to GCSE or other Level 2 qualifications. Students are also provided with a wide and ambitious range of further options. These lead to high levels of achievement and open up extensive options post-16, including access to Level 3 courses and progression into a range of career options. Some students choose, or are guided to take, additional lessons to support their English and Maths and Science. Students are taught in sets according to ability in core subjects at GCSE and in mixed ability groups for option subjects and compulsory PE.

Carefully planned opportunities support students to make informed decisions about their futures, be those studying AS/A levels or vocational qualifications at College, or through employment. There is a focus on independence and agency throughout the pastoral team.

In setting targets for our learners in year 10 and 11, FFT20 is used alongside prior attainment and teacher judgement, to give an accurate and challenging target to work toward achieving. FFT20



data is provided by Fischer Family Trust and is an estimate of the results you might expect in a top 20% ranked school based on the cohort's prior attainment at KS1.

## **RADY**

Raising the Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) is a priority for Islwyn High School. The RADY project is a long-term *hearts and minds* approach, aimed at providing equitability in all aspects of the education journey in Islwyn. As a school we have adopted the RADY principles in the way we work. We have ensured a golden thread throughout the school development plan that prioritises and focuses on ensuring everything is done to close the gap as early as possible. This means disadvantaged youngsters are set the same expectations as their non-disadvantaged peers. The RADY approach is making sure that those learners who need it most get the extra help they need to achieve their full potential.

A particular investment has been made to ensure all teaching staff, with form groups, have 1 extra period for RADY. This is specifically used to mentor RADY pupils in their form class to ensure support and guidance is given throughout the pupils' time at Islwyn High school.

## **Years 7, 8 & 9**

All pupils study the following subjects:

English, Mathematics, Science, Spanish (*with the exception of two groups in Years 7 and 8*), Welsh, Humanities, Physical Education, Technology (including Construction, Digital Competence, Food, Textiles and Technology/Product Design), Music, Art, Performing Arts and Personal and Social Education (PSE). Humanities lessons become separate Geography, History and RE lessons in Year 9 (with Geography and History studied by 6 of the 8 teaching groups).

Personal Wellbeing (Pw) lessons, initially introduced into Years 7 and 8 in 2022-3, have been extended into Year 9 - the school is responding purposefully to the Wellbeing requirements of the New Curriculum.

To ensure the support of all pupils within their formative years at Islwyn High School, two distinct classes (based on ALN provision) are now established within the timetable model for Years 7, 8 and 9. This allows greater focus and time upon key Literacy skills alongside additional nurture support - enhanced hours are set aside for English lessons and lower pupil numbers are maintained in these classes. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is also delivered within the timetable to two Year 9 classes, featuring units including: voluntary work, skills, physical activity and [taking part in an] expedition.

## **Years 10 & 11**

All pupils study English, Mathematics, Science, Welsh, Skills Challenge, Religious Education (Equality & Diversity) and Games.

In addition, three other subjects are chosen - one from each of three options blocks (the example below outlines course options as made available to Year 9 pupils during the summer term of 2024):

1. Business Studies, Construction, Hospitality and Catering, History, Media Studies, Performing Arts and Separate Science: Triple Award
2. Business Studies, Geography, Health and Social Care and Childcare, Music, PE (Boys/Girls)

### 3. Art, Construction, Computer Science, History, Product Design, Sociology, Vocational ICT

The options process conducted in the Spring term of Year 9 is thorough and data-informed. An initial free survey is conducted across the year group to gauge pupils' interest in a range of qualifications; assembly and classroom talks accompany this and a detailed booklet is published detailing the potential subjects and qualifications for study. Middle leaders also produce website-accessible videos detailing specifics of course content and assessment models. Careers Wales representatives are also available during Year 9 Parents' Evenings to offer advice and guidance.

Results from the free survey help to inform curriculum discussions, the formation of potential option blocks and the consideration of subject combinations and qualifications. Careful analysis of these results produces an option block offer that best caters for the cohort of the day, ensuring a breadth of choice both in terms of subject and assessment type. In the Spring of 2024, for example, the school introduced Business Studies and Media Studies as new and returning subjects respectively. These proved popular choices with considerable uptake in each. Performing Arts was continued (following its launch in 2023), providing an opportunity for those pupils who express interest in studying aspects of Drama and/or Dance.

#### **Use of the Welsh language: Communication**

Islwyn High School is an English medium school. However, we are committed to the vision outlined by the Welsh Government in 'Our National Mission' regarding the development of: 'a transformational approach to the learning, teaching and assessment of the Welsh language with the aim of ensuring all learners will be able to use the Welsh language when they leave school'.

Achieving the *Siarter Iaith Bronze Award* (EAS) was the target put into place in readiness for the school year with milestones to assess progress in-built across the school development plan and Welsh department improvement plan. A new 'Welsh Language Policy' was also produced alongside *Siarter Iaith* success criteria as established in partnership with the EAS Welsh Language Advisor.

A Key Stage 3-driven *Criw Cymraeg* was launched as a key part of the strategy to promote, advance and reward the use of Welsh language, both in lessons and across the school. Participating pupils are now identified by their red ties and meet regularly with the department to review the success of *Criw Cymraeg* Welsh language strategies and to plan further opportunities for involvement.

Key events and actions have taken place this academic year, including: the school's annual Eisteddfod, featuring our Link Governor on the adjudication panel; Careers Wales [employer-led] assemblies to Key Stage 4 on the importance of Welsh language in the workplace; successful participation in the National Urdd Eisteddfod – the first time the school has competed; training of staff via PLA (professional learning led by the Welsh department); alterations to signage and Welsh imagery across the school (including a Welsh flag on entry); regular 'language-environment walks' undertaken by *Criw Cymraeg* to enhance displayed Welsh vocabulary and phraseology where appropriate; plus, the running of KS3 and KS4 Welsh clubs.

In addition, classrooms across the school's AoLEs are equipped with Welsh language placemats to aid the use of incidental Welsh in lessons; administrative staff have been coached by GCSE Welsh language students in the use of spoken Welsh; specific *Tocyn Iaith* days are promoted at various points of the year with leading speakers rewarded; bilingual greetings have been recorded by senior students on the school's answer machine system; and, a Welsh 'Phrase of the Week' is promoted through form times and in-corridor screens.

The focus on Welsh has also become a focus of lesson trails across the school, the 'Teacher' acronym now including 'C' for Curriculum Cymraeg. 90% of lessons were deemed to feature 'competent' or 'instructional' levels of informal Welsh/Curriculum Cymraeg in May/June 2024. Once a fortnight, a Welsh language teacher works with our cluster of primary schools to advance language skills as part of school transition.

Pleasingly, the *Siarter Iaith Bronze Award* was achieved in the summer term of 2024 and we look forward to targeting *Silver* in 2024-5.

In terms of curriculum coverage, pupils are taught Welsh as part of their fortnightly school timetable:

Welsh in Years 7, 8 & 9 – 3 hours per fortnight

Welsh in Years 10 and 11 – up to 4 hours per fortnight

### **Additional Learning Needs**

The School's policy for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is designed to provide access and inclusion for all ALN pupils to the full curriculum. The school's policy for the identification, assessment and provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs is consistent with the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice for Wales that was issued by Welsh Assembly Government.

The school's Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo), and all staff within the ALN department, work closely with all members of staff, pupils and parents/ carers to ensure that Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are developed and implemented to meet the needs of those pupils that require them. The ALN team liaises with all staff to ensure that the progress of pupils is regularly monitored and assessed and to ensure that each pupil reaches their potential. The new system ensures that planning will be flexible and responsive, professionals will be skilled and confident in identifying needs of learners and strategies of support will be bespoke to ensure that learners overcome barriers to learning and are at the centre of everything we do.

The introduction of the ALN reform has developed a graduated approach to supporting the needs of learners. Welsh Government has identified a specific timeline with the view that this will be completed in 2024 - 2025 to ensure a full coverage of all year groups and complete movement to the new guidance. Documentation has been reviewed and the roll over process has begun to ensure that the statutory deadline of July 2024 will be met for these learners. Provision for learners who require support, follows the graduated approach of Universal Provision, Targeted Provision and Specialised Provision according to the level of need for the learner. All parents and carers have been notified if their child fulfils the criteria for the new code, Person Centred Planning Meetings held, and relevant documentation established and shared.

We provide specialist teaching for identified pupils in small teaching groups as necessary, as well as supporting others with Learning Support Assistants in mainstream classes. We actively look to support learners by removing barriers to learning by ensuring that personalised provision is tailored through a universal provision in classes by the class teacher using One Page Profiles to ensure that needs are shared, and guidance on how best to support teaching and learning included. In this way, pupils with particular learning difficulties receive the support they require but also experience the social and educational integration with their friends which is essential as a preparation for post school life. (A full copy of the ALN policy is available from the school). The CYNEFIN has become the centralised area for ALN which contains our HWB (Home of Wellbeing)

Provision and a number of intervention areas. There was a large investment in this area to develop bespoke suites for interventions and a sensory room that has been invaluable for supporting regulation of learners.

All school admissions are managed by the Local Authority through their centralised system. The school does not have control over the enrollment process; placements are determined by parental choice and the allocation decisions made by the Local Authority Admissions Team, subject to availability.

The Governing Body is mindful of the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act in drawing up the School Improvement Plan and the day to day operation of the site. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are able to participate in the school curriculum and (where they desire) in activities such as after school clubs, leisure/ sporting events and educational visits. All aspects of accessibility, including access to written information are included in the planning process. The Local Authority has in place an Accessibility Strategy and in line with this strategy has had an audit of the school site undertaken, as part of an Authority wide brief, to identify any potential barriers and, where possible and needed, improve access to school.

### **Secondary Special Resource Base**

The school also has a Secondary Special Resource Base (SSRB), which provides specialist teaching for pupils from around the county, with complex learning needs. This facility continues to provide a fantastic learning environment for young people and is also delivering the new curriculum as part of their everyday teaching. The Resource Base has had an extra class since September 2023 and now has places for 63 pupils.

We continue to collaborate with Caerphilly Adventure Group (CAG), Disability Wales, Disability Sports Caerphilly, and various external providers to offer learners a diverse range of activities. These experiences help develop confidence, resilience, and support both their physical and mental well-being.

We held a successful Christmas Fayre attended by families, pupils and staff. Our Christmas Concert was also very successful and well attended.

Class Dojo has been embedded for keeping in touch with families and regular photographs, videos and updates are sent home, showing class activities. We continue to develop a presence on Twitter, which has been favourable with our parents. These are both used to share important information and update our families.

We are committed to developing the ASDAN Life Skills Accreditation, enabling pupils to work towards achieving Bronze, Silver, or Gold awards before leaving school. This program equips learners with essential life and employability skills, fostering independence and confidence. By engaging in practical, real-world learning experiences, pupils develop key competencies that support their transition into adulthood. We hope to ensure that students have the opportunity to continue their ASDAN journey in post-16 education, further enhancing their skills and future prospects.



## Learning and Teaching

The school continues to strive to ensure that Learning and Teaching provides all of our pupils with the tools they need to be successful and progress on to the next stage of their educational journeys. Amongst its priorities, the school:

- Continues to improve the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Continues to focus on the consistency of feedback to support pupil progression and deepen thinking.
- Continues to improve standards of literacy, numeracy and pupil independence.

## Refined Priorities 2023-24

Our refined priorities for this year continue to be based upon our core **TEACHER** pedagogical principles and on our established **PUPILS!** acronym that sits at the heart of our pupil centred approach to learning:

 <b>IHS LEARNING AND TEACHING</b> Prioritising Pupil Progress 	
<b>P</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b> - pupils use their learning to make progress that is inline with or above modelled expectations - across lessons and over time.
<b>U</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING</b> - pupils demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated understanding of fundamental concepts across AOLEs and can apply this to improve their work.
<b>P</b>	<b>POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS</b> - pupils readily engage in their learning, sustaining concentration and avoiding distractions. They persevere when faced with difficulties and demonstrate respect for the contributions of others.
<b>I</b>	<b>INDEPENDENCE</b> - pupils take responsibility for their own learning, confidently applying what they have learnt independently or in collaboration with other pupils - with sustained effort in a variety of contexts.
<b>L</b>	<b>LEARNING</b> - pupils can articulate clearly what they are learning and why this is important. They have a secure understanding of success criteria and use these to improve their work and identify next steps.
<b>S</b>	<b>SKILLS</b> - pupils can make links across the curriculum, transferring existing knowledge and skills into new contexts, with increasing confidence.
<b>!</b>	Focus for the term

Following the outcomes of robust self evaluation processes and the review of our improvement priorities, the following areas have been identified as key foci for our professional learning sessions this year:

- Marking raises expectations
- Literacy, Numeracy, Digital Competence Framework and Cwricwlwm Cymraeg are planned for appropriately across the curriculum
- Distributed questioning - questioning is used effectively to engage and challenge all groups of pupils

<b>TEACHER</b>
Time is taken to explain learning objectives
Engagement and Challenge
Assessment for Learning
Circulate to Support Learning
Hands not up - Effective Questioning
Evidence of Skills
Respond to Negative/Positive Behaviours

The professional learning sessions outlined below have formed the foundation for the continued improvement of these areas and are used, along with our robust self evaluation systems and processes, to closely monitor the quality of Learning and Teaching across the school.

## **Professional Learning 2023-24**

Our continued commitment to ensuring Learning and Teaching at Islwyn High School is underpinned by effective Professional Learning is central to the progress of our pupils.

Our dedicated professional learning periods, that are included within all teachers' timetables, continue to be a key feature of our practice. The focus of the sessions is based on outcomes from our self evaluation processes which include: lesson observation cycles, learning walks, book looks and thematic reviews which allow us to identify strengths and areas for further development. During the dedicated professional learning sessions, strategies and focus areas are discussed, evaluated and theorised in a discussion context (known as Professional Learning A) and are underpinned by teacher trails (Professional Learning B) which aim to develop an increasingly open-door culture of sharing good practice across the curriculum. The sequential shift between research-based learning and practical 'trailing' of activities is one we will continue to operate so that we can continue to enhance elements of whole school, AoLE and individual teacher practice.

The dedicated professional learning sessions are complemented by a range of sharing 'best practice' forums which include the distribution of Learning and Teaching newsletters, the sharing of 'golden nuggets' amongst staff, dedicated INSET time and directed meeting time.

Our first two terms of Professional Learning sessions for 24/25 have allowed us to collaboratively work towards refining and further developing our understanding of our pupil centred approach to raise standards and improve outcomes for ALL groups of pupils.

## **ICT Developments**

The school continues to fulfil the vision for a 1:1 device scheme. All students are provided with a Lenovo Chromebook when they join the school to support their learning and progress.

We have continued to utilise EDETech funding to further develop the learning environment by purchasing eighteen Samsung WA86D Touch screens that have been installed in classrooms. The screens are of a very high standard and offer many benefits to both teaching and learning. The screens are also able to connect to any other device on the network, which supports interactive and collaborative work through the students' Chromebooks. Witnessing the positive impact the screens had on the learning environment, we made the decision to purchase a further six screens, using funds outside of the EDETech funding.

The school is currently working with the LEA on imminent network changes, which will remove physical servers from school sites and push schools to a cloud based network using Welsh Government's Platform HWB. These changes are being tested with other schools in the authority but with the plan to start a roll out within six months.

We have now worked with Xerox for three years and are happy with the quality and service provided, but the contract ends in a couple of months and the school will decide what options to do, especially with imminent network changes as mentioned above.

The school continues to work with the LEA on maintenance and further development of the school network to support the use of mobile devices.

The School IT Support Team consisting of the school Network Manager and ICT Technician provide daily onsite support for the monitoring and maintenance of the school IT systems and student devices.

### **Admissions/Transition**

Caerphilly County Borough Council is the admissions authority for the school. The school's admission arrangements are therefore operated in line with the Authority's policy on school admissions, full details of which can be accessed via the Caerphilly CBC website.

At Islwyn High, one of our key priorities is ensuring a smooth and supportive transition from primary to secondary school. We work closely with our cluster family of primary schools to provide continuity and reassurance for both pupils and parents throughout this important phase.

Our transition team actively engaged with all our cluster primary schools, visiting each one to establish strong relationships and address any concerns Year 6 pupils may have had about starting secondary school. In addition, Mrs. Price visited every feeder primary school throughout the year, delivering Welsh lessons fortnightly, helping to foster language skills and familiarity with secondary teaching staff.

During the summer term, we were delighted to welcome the parents of Year 6 pupils to a special evening event, which included a school tour. The event was well attended, and feedback from parents was overwhelmingly positive. We also hosted a dedicated transition day where Year 6 pupils met their new form teachers, engaged in team-building activities through our WRAP initiatives, and participated in engaging Science experiments and Technology lessons. The day proved highly successful, leaving many Year 6 pupils excited about joining Islwyn High in September.

Miss Poole, our Year 7 Progress Leader, visited each primary school to introduce herself to the pupils and distribute transition packs, which included an introductory letter, a one-page profile, and data collection forms. She thoroughly enjoyed meeting the pupils and sharing useful information about their next steps. Our Family Liaison Officer, Miss Sam Edwards, also made visits to each primary school, using a 'worry monster' activity to help pupils express and discuss their concerns about the transition process.

Additionally, in July, a group of More Able and Talented (MAT) pupils from each primary school collaborated with our Year 7 MAT pupils on a special project titled 'Wild Wales,' led by Mrs. Morgan. The project was well received, and Mrs. Morgan was extremely proud of the final outcomes. For pupils requiring additional support, we organised enhanced transition visits, providing opportunities for them to meet key staff and build confidence before starting in September.

A further highlight was when all our feeder primary schools attended the matinee performance of *Annie* at the Memo Arts Centre in Newbridge. This event showcased the opportunities available at Islwyn High, inspiring our future pupils with the breadth of extracurricular activities on offer.

To strengthen early relationships, our transition team also joined a residential trip with six of our cluster primary schools during the final week of the summer term. Pupils spent the weekend at Manor Adventure Park in Brecon, taking part in team-building activities within their registration groups. This experience provided an excellent opportunity for pupils to form friendships and connect with staff ahead of their official start in September.

Recognising the financial challenges many families face, we opened the school in August to allow Year 6 parents to access our Uniform Swap Shop. This initiative encouraged the reuse and recycling of school uniforms, supporting families while promoting sustainability.

We continued to provide support through our dedicated transition email address, offering parents a direct line of communication during the summer term. As a result of these efforts, all pupils started the new academic year in September with enthusiasm, quickly settling into their new environment and school community.

We are incredibly proud of our transition programme and will continue working to enhance this experience for future cohorts.

### **Year 11 Leavers Destinations**

Pupil's known activity on the 31<sup>st</sup> October after they left year 11:

	Year 11						Total	
	Female		Male		Total			
		%		%		%		%
Continuing in full-time education - School	2	1.87%	2	1.90%	4	1.89%	4	1.89%
Continuing in full-time education - College	98	91.59%	93	88.57%	191	90.09%	191	90.09%
Continuing in Part time Education	0	0.00%	1	0.95%	1	0.47%	1	0.47%
Entering employment outside WBTP	0	0.00%	1	0.95%	1	0.47%	1	0.47%
Entering WBTP (employed status)	1	0.93%	1	0.95%	2	0.94%	2	0.94%
Entering WBTP - (without employed status)	5	4.67%	3	2.86%	8	3.77%	8	3.77%
Able to Enter Emp, Ed or WBTP (Unemployed)	0	0.00%	1	0.95%	1	0.47%	1	0.47%
Unable OR NOT READY to enter Emp, Ed or WBTP (e.g. due to illness, custodial sentence)	1	0.93%	2	1.90%	3	1.42%	3	1.42%
Known to have left the area	0	0.00%	1	0.95%	1	0.47%	1	0.47%
<b>Total number of 2024 statutory school leavers</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Key: WBTP – Work Based Training for Young People, Emp – Employment, Ed - Education

### **The School Buildings**

The Business Manager is responsible for the management of the school site and does so with the support of two full time Caretakers. This team ensure reactive maintenance issues are addressed swiftly and that a proactive programme of painting and decorating continues during school closure periods.

The school uses the facilities support through Caerphilly County Borough Council for emergency reactive issues and buys in to an annual service level agreement with Property Services at Caerphilly County Borough Council for all statutory maintenance. Statutory maintenance is monitored through the RAMIS system.

A CCBC Health and Safety Officer supports the school on a monthly basis providing advice and guidance .



During the 2023/24 year an additional classroom space was created in the SSRB to support the growing demand for specialist provision across Caerphilly CBC, and 'Cynefin' was created on the third floor to provide specialist ALN and nurture provision within the mainstream.

Overall, the school spent £85,809 in terms of pre-emptive and responsive maintenance.

### **Health and Safety**

The school continues to be supported by a Service Level Agreement with CCBC Building Consultancy on matters relating to statutory maintenance, all of which are documented and monitored through the RAMIS system. Ramis is a database that records and tracks all Health and Safety matters.

The school's CCTV system is remotely monitored out of hours by the CCBC CCTV Monitoring Centre at Tiryberth, with the Fire and Intruder systems remotely monitored via a private alarm monitoring centre.

The LEA continues to provide the support of a Health & Safety Officer via the school's Health & Safety Service Level Agreement. The Health and Safety officer visits the school fortnightly providing advice and support such as carrying out inspections and providing support relating to items such as staff training, risk assessments and policies.

The school's Health and Safety Governor visits the school throughout the year and provides feedback to the Governing Body.

### **Healthy eating and drinking:**

As part of our commitment to promoting healthy eating and drinking habits, the school actively encourages students to make informed dietary choices. We have a Healthy Schools Action Plan, which outlines key initiatives to support student well-being, including the ban on energy drinks within the school. This policy aims to reduce the negative impact of high-caffeine and high-sugar beverages on students' concentration, behaviour, and overall health. In addition, we provide ongoing education through PSHE lessons, assemblies, and targeted interventions to raise awareness of balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. Our PE wellbeing lessons further reinforce this by educating students on the importance of diet and its impact on the body, including energy levels, physical performance, and long-term health. Our catering provision aligns with national healthy eating standards, ensuring that school meals offer nutritious, balanced options. By embedding these practices into our school culture, we are fostering a healthier environment that supports both the physical and mental well-being of our students.

### **Toilet Facilities**

There are plenty of very well-maintained toilets available on all floors. These main sets of toilets are complemented by a number of accessible toilets across the whole building for anyone requiring them. The school fully complies with the Equality Act 2010. All school toilets are cleaned daily as part of the school contract with Caerphilly County Borough Council Building Cleaning Department, with a daytime cleaner also on duty daily to clean pupil toilets during breaktimes.

### **School Development Planning**

Following the creation of the school's three-year strategic plans, all areas of the school have reviewed progress on meeting the targets that were set. The priorities which include raising levels

of attendance, achieving the best GCSE results year on year and raising the attainment of disadvantaged young people (RADY) are in line with Local Authority and Welsh Government areas of focus and are reviewed regularly by the EAS School Improvement Partner (SIP). Departments have gone through the process of creating new annual action plans in line with the aims identified in the three-year strategic plan and their work is now even now more closely linked to whole school priorities.

A key element to the effective delivery of the plan is funding and the school remains committed to providing a high level of resourcing in order for aims and objectives to be successfully met and the Curriculum For Wales to be delivered appropriately.

The school has a robust self evaluation cycle that allows us to assess our current practices, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for development in alignment with the school's improvement priorities. Our thematic approach provides us with a broad evaluation perspective and allows us to strategically plan for improvements that will have the greatest impact on pupil outcomes.

### **Community - Wider Life of the School**

At Islwyn High School, the governors are extremely proud that the school plays a full and active role within the communities in which it serves. During the 2023/4 year the school entered into a Community Use Agreement with the Local Authority meaning the 4G and sports hall facility out of school use is now managed via Caerphilly Sport and Leisure by Newbridge Leisure Centre. The expertise available through this agreement provides the opportunity to further maximise community use of the school, therefore supporting sports provision across the local authority. The agreement also secures the opportunity for other community groups (such as the Rotary club) to use the school premises during evenings and weekends.

The Friends of Islwyn High School are now well established and have a programme of community activities in place including quiz nights, car boot sales and shopping trips. The Friends also actively support parents evenings, school concerts, wellbeing activities to raise funds and to provide the school with a greater outreach into the local community. The team welcomes any applications from parents who would like to play an active role in this fantastic community group. Interest can be expressed by emailing: [pta@islwynhigh.org](mailto:pta@islwynhigh.org)

### **School Prospectus**

The school prospectus is reviewed annually to include any changes required by Welsh Government or other related bodies. Parents/carers of pupils joining the school for the first time receive a copy of the prospectus, and the prospectus is also available on the school website. Parents/carers will be informed if any changes are made to the prospectus.

### **GCSE Outcomes 2023-24**

Our commitment to ensuring all pupils felt settled and well-prepared for their exams was at the heart of our approach this year. Through high-quality teaching, additional revision sessions, and targeted support after school and during holidays, we provided every opportunity for success. We placed a particular focus on supporting our most disadvantaged learners, ensuring they had the resources and guidance needed to reach their full potential. As a result, the school achieved its best overall results to date. Notably, 25.26% of pupils attained at least five A\*-A grades, meaning that

over a quarter of our cohort left with these top grades—an outstanding achievement that reflects the dedication of both our staff and students.

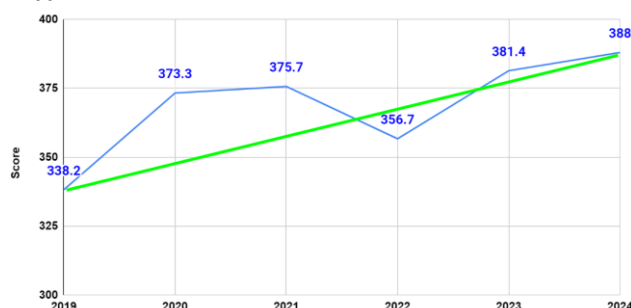
	Actual 2023	Actual 2024	Wales Average 2024
<b>CPS: Capped 9 Points Score</b>	381.55	388.06	351
<b>FSM</b>	310.65	348.26	296.7
<b>LITERACY</b>	40.91	41.61	38.5
<b>Cohort</b>	181	190	
<b>Gender Difference</b>	-7.54 (M: 36.78; F: 44.32)	-4.84 (M: 39.14; F: 43.98)	
<b>FSM</b>	31.5 (non: 42.93)	34.26 (non: 43.04)	
<b>NUMERACY</b>	39.13	38.28	35.9
<b>Cohort</b>	181	190	
<b>Gender Difference</b>	-3.98 (M: 36.95; F: 40.93)	-1.06 (M: 37.74; F: 38.8)	
<b>FSM</b>	29.38 (non: 41.22)	32.19 (non: 39.47)	
<b>SCIENCE</b>	40.04	40.88	36.0
<b>Cohort</b>	181	190	
<b>Gender Difference</b>	-5.25 (M: 37.17 ; F:42.42)	-2.57 (M: 39.57 ; F:42.14)	
<b>FSM</b>	29.31 (non: 42.35)	33.55 (non: 41.79)	
<b>5A*-A</b>	20.99%	25.26%	

Key: CPS – Capped Points Score, FSM – Free School Meals, M – Male, F - Female

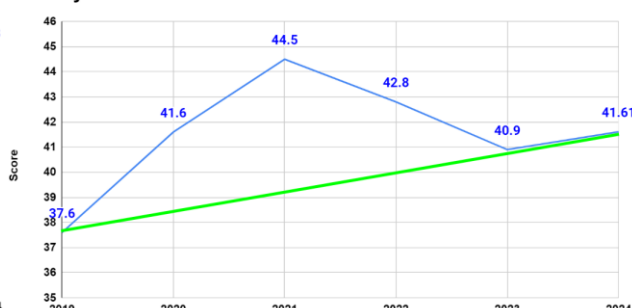
## GCSE Outcomes 2024: Key Performance Indicators in relation to previous years' outcomes

### Interim Performance Measures

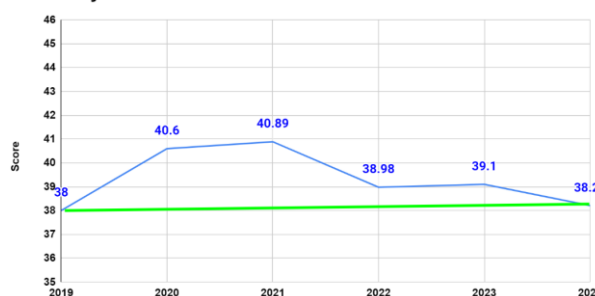
Capped 9



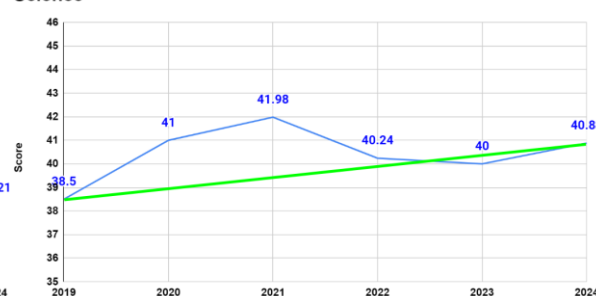
Literacy



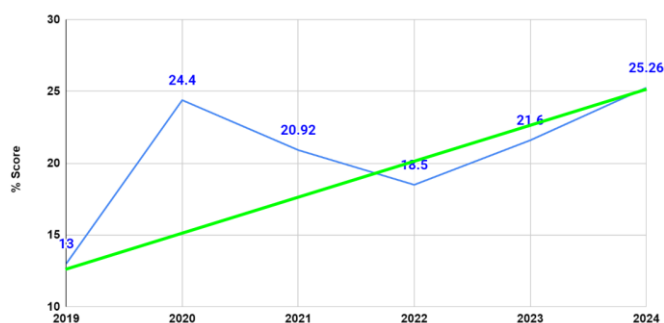
Numeracy



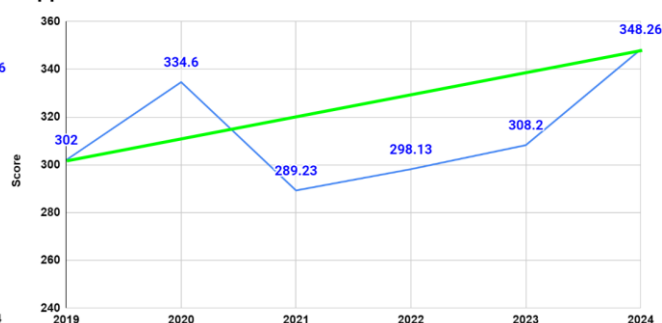
Science



5A\*-A



Capped 9 eFSM



Key – Green Line – Trend from 2019 to 2024

Blue Line – Actual year to year performance 2019 to 2024

### 2023-24 School Targets:

This year's whole-school targets (against five Key Performance Indicators) have been produced following consultation with Core [subject] Middle Leaders. In meetings with Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Department across all subject areas have also agreed upon a number of targets to support the school's Capped 9 (and eFSM Capped 9) aims.

Subject	Average Points Score
Capped 9	380 (330 eFSM)
Literacy Measure	41.0 (32 eFSM)
Numeracy Measure	40.5 (31.5 eFSM)
Science Measure	40.0 (31 eFSM)
Skills Measure	40

Key – eFSM – Eligible for Free School Meals

## **Sport and Dance**

The 2024 exam series was another positive one for the PE department, reflecting our consistent success at the GCSE level. 74% of pupils of year 11 pupils (58 in the cohort) achieved a grade C or above, with 34% attaining either an A or A\*. In total 63.8% of pupils either met, or exceeded their target grade. The uptake of GCSE in year 10 has also been extremely positive with 80 pupils selecting the subject at GCSE level.

Beyond academic achievements, 16 Year 10 pupils completed Sports Caerphilly's sports leadership training and have actively supported the PE department and local primary schools. Their contributions included assisting with sports camps during school holidays.

In the Autumn of 2023, we provided Year 10 and 11 pupils with the opportunity to complete the WRU Level 1 Referee Course. Several of these students, including year 11 pupils Thomas Murphy and Daniel Roberts, volunteered to officiate Year 7 school rugby matches.

Building on this success, 20 Year 10 and 11 pupils were also trained as FAW football referees, once again stepping forward to officiate Year 7 and 8 boys' and girls' football matches, with Harry Livesey-Hambridge among those leading the initiative.

**Rugby** - once again had strong representation in the Islwyn Schools U15 Player Pathway, with Ellis Stonelake, Jayden Stebbings, Evan Maher, and Joseph Bonnici selected.

In the U16 Development Programme, the school was well represented by Harrison Miles, Ollie Hiscott, Daniel Roberts, Thomas Murphy, Evan Davies, Jake Sheppard, and Charlie Gregory.

Several pupils also progressed to the Dragons U16s squad for the 2023/24 season, including Dan Roberts, Tom Murphy, Jake Sheppard, Evan Davies, Charlie Gregory, and Ollie Hiscott.

Additionally, Niamh Corchran-Lockley represented Islwyn High School in the Dragons Women U18 squad.

All year groups participated in the Caerphilly Cup competitions, as well as the Urdd Rugby National 7s tournament, demonstrating the school's commitment to competitive rugby.

A particular highlight of the year was the Year 11 squad's triumph as the 2024 Caerphilly Plate winners.

**Basketball** - representation at the Urdd 3v3 basketball tournament 2023 - with two U15 teams entered, with one team of year 10 pupils reaching the semi finals.

**Football** - we continued our strong presence in football competitions, with all boys' year groups and both the U13 and U15 girls' teams competing in the Welsh and Caerphilly Cup tournaments.

Notable achievements in 2023/24:

Year 8 – Caerphilly Schools' winners 2024

U13 Girls – Caerphilly Cup winners 2024

U15 Girls – Caerphilly Cup winners 2024

U14 Boys – South Wales Schools' 8-a-side Plate winners 2023

The school also had excellent representation in Caerphilly and District Schools' football for both boys and girls.

**Representative Honours:** Aimee Cake & Nyree Lowther – Selected for Welsh Schools U14s  
Jayden Bowden, Shae Grimstead & Morgan Harrison – Represented Caerphilly and District Schools U15s (2023/24).

Additionally, the Year 8 boys, U13 girls, and U15 girls' teams all progressed from the regional rounds to the National rounds of the Welsh Schools' Cup during the 2023/24 season.

**Netball** Georgia Gambold selected for South East Wales U16 Netball team 2023/24. Grace Hawker, Imogen Simpkins (2023/24) selected for U16 Islwyn district netball squad 2023/24.

**Cross country** In 2024, Year 7 pupils Grace Andrews, Macy Davies and Sonny Dunn, along with Year 8' Poppy Howells, were selected to represent South East Wales in the Welsh Schools Cross Country Championships held in Brecon. This is a significant achievement, showcasing their dedication and talent in athletics.

**Cricket** - U13 boys Caerphilly school champions

**Dance** -. Lowri Brass (year 8) Ballet Cymru Associate.

- Welsh National Schools Street Dance - Champions 2023.

#### **Individual honours**

**Yr 8** Ellie Lord - Wales U13 Cricket

**Yr 9** Joshua Johnson - East Wales Rugby League U14

**Yr 10** Keon Hawker-Price (year 10) - Wales Basketball U'15's

Jayden Stebbings - East Wales Rugby League U16

Ioan Mills - Welsh 200m Backstroke Champion

Grace Hawker - Welsh Athletics - Discus

Freya Walker, National Dance Champion 2024

**Yr 11** Jake Sheppard - Wales Rugby League U16 2023/2024

Dylan John - Wales Schools FA U16

Megan Titchener - Wales Swimming

Lexi Walton - Welsh Boxing Champion 2024

#### **Athletics - District Champions 2024**

##### **Juniors (Yr 8+9)**

Charlie Davies - 200m

Rhys Birt - 800m

Lowri Brass - 300m

Mia Newell - 100m

Ella Lane - Shot Put

Millie Hiscott - Discus

Poppy Howells - 800m  
Freya Pryce - High Jump  
Eva-Mae Morris-Evans - 300m  
Oliver Morris - 300m  
Ethan Green - 800m

### **Middle (Yr 10+11)**

Grace Hawker - Shot + Discus  
Sky Francis - 300m  
Tyler Symons - long jump  
Philo Hurley - 3000m

Grace Hawker South East Wales (SEW) County Champion in both the Discus with a new Championship Record and Shot Put.

Josh Livesey-Hambridge SEW Javelin Champion

The Athletics track was once again a fantastic venue for our Inter House 'Sports Day' with many pupils enjoying participating and competing in various athletics events throughout the day - well supported by school staff members outside of the PE department.

The continued development of the PE / Wellbeing curriculum for targeted school priorities in 24/25 based around the topics of Food and Fitness, Emotional well-being and Substance misuse. As well as the department introducing key skills in first aid to year 7, 8 and 9 groups in the summer of 2025.

## ISLWYN HIGH SCHOOL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

### Introduction

The Headteacher is accountable for the school budget which is overseen by the School's Business Manager and the Finance, Premises and Staffing Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee receive a budget update at each meeting and have also developed a financial risk framework and list of financial planning assumptions. The school's financial position remains positive and within acceptable tolerances. The Business manager regularly meets with the Local Authorities Finance Business Partner to review funding. The school was not in receipt of any gifts in the 2023/24 financial year neither were there any payments made to members of the Governing Body for travel or subsistence.

### ACTUAL EXPENDITURE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2024

EXPENDITURE:	£	£
Teacher Salaries	4,700,782	
Non-Teaching Salaries	1,033,883	
Other payroll costs	3,339	
<b>TOTAL SALARY COSTS</b>		5,738,004
Premises Costs	694,470	
Transport Costs	37,947	
Supplies	527,213	
Service Level Agreements	149,603	
<b>TOTAL NON-SALARY COSTS</b>		1,409,233
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		7,147,239
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		632,457
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>		6,514,782
<b>2022/23 IN YEAR SURPLUS BROUGHT FORWARD</b>		730,445
<b>FORMULA FUNDING</b>		6,639,553
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>		7,369,998
<b>SURPLUS CARRIED FORWARD TO 2024/25</b>		855,216

*\*This carry forward includes funding that was allocated to the development of the new pupil support centre and Multi Use Games Area on site in partnership with CCBC.*



## **TERM DATES 2024/25**

### **Autumn Term 2024**

- Term starts Monday 2 September 2024
- Half term starts Monday 28 October 2024
- Half term ends Friday 1 November 2024
- Term ends Friday 20 December 2024

### **Spring Term 2025**

- Term starts Monday 6 January 2025
- Half term starts Monday 24 February 2025
- Half term ends Friday 28 February 2025
- Term ends Friday 11 April 2025

### **Summer Term 2025**

- Term starts Monday 28 April 2025
- Half term starts Monday 26 May 2025
- Half term ends Friday 30 May 2025
- Term ends Monday 21 July 2025

### **INSET DAYS 2024-25**

2nd September  
6th December  
20th December  
24th March  
18th July  
21st July

<b>The School Day 2023-24</b>	
8.30am – 8:55am	Registration
8.55am – 9.55am	Lesson 1
9.55am – 10.55am	Lesson 2
10.55m – 11.15am	Break
11.15am – 12.15pm	Lesson 3
12.15pm – 1:15pm	Lesson 4
1.15pm - 1.50pm	Lunch
1.50pm - 2.50pm	Lesson 5



## Islwyn High School

Waterloo

Oakdale

BLACKWOOD

NP12 0NU

**[www.islwynhigh.org](http://www.islwynhigh.org)**

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