

ISLWYN NEWS

Leading The Way

On Friday, 21st November, pupils from Islwyn High School had an exciting and important day as they hosted the Foundation for Community Engagement Youth Conference at Bryn Meadows Golf Club. The event was a big success and showed how young people can make a real difference.

Over 150 pupils and staff attended the conference, coming from different schools across Wales, including pupils aged between 3 and 18. The day was planned, organised, and led by pupils from Islwyn High School, which made it even more impressive. Many adults attended too, including guest speakers, members of local government, and people from different community agencies and services.



The main focus of the day was to make sure young people had a voice. Pupils were encouraged to share their opinions about what they think is working well in their schools and local communities, and also what they believe needs to be improved. The aim was to understand how schools and communities can better support pupils on their learning journeys.

Throughout the day, pupils took part in activities, discussions, and feedback sessions. Everyone was given a chance to speak and share their ideas, which made the conference feel welcoming and important. Many pupils said they enjoyed being listened to and felt proud that their opinions mattered.

The information collected during the conference will not be wasted. Islwyn High School pupils will use the feedback to write a detailed report that will be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government. They will also present their findings in different places, including the Local Authority Council Chambers early in the new year. This is a huge opportunity for young people to influence decisions that affect their education and future.

Teachers and staff at Islwyn High School said they were extremely proud of the pupils for their hard work, confidence, and dedication. Hosting such a large and meaningful event was not easy, but the pupils rose to the challenge and proved what they are capable of achieving.

Student Council members conducted themselves brilliantly on the day and represented Islwyn with pride and passion. Each member spoke in turn to the gathered audience, highlighting their passions and hopes for the future. From Year 11 were Head Girls Lily Clarke and Skye Grandon and Head Boy Oliver Morris. Freya Reasons and Charlie Davies represented Year 10. From Year 9 were Dylan Barnes and Macy Davies. Year 8 were represented by Lloyd Shippley and Nin Forest. Eva Morris and Yashvardhan Chauhan represented Year 7. The pupils would also like to thank Mrs Underwood for all her leadership, help and support in organising this event.

Overall, the Youth Conference was an inspiring day that showed the power of youth voice and teamwork. Everyone involved is excited to see what changes may come from the pupils' ideas and efforts. Well done to all the pupils who made the day such a success!



Young Talent Shines at Albert Hall

The South East Wales Youth Orchestra and Choir recently had the extraordinary opportunity to perform at London's iconic Royal Albert Hall, one of the United Kingdom's most prestigious concert venues. The performance formed part of the renowned Schools Prom series, organised by Music for Youth, which brings together young musicians from across the country for a celebration of talent, energy, and music.



Over 1,400 performers took to the stage for this spectacular event, with 220 representing South Wales alone. Among these, 45 hailed from Caerphilly County, including 18 students from Islwyn High School. The Islwyn High participants represented a range of year groups, showcasing the depth of musical talent across the school:

- Year 11: Dea Kemlo, Bailee Price, Evan Cheesman, Gabby Williams, Kasey Bartholomew, Ellie May Browning, George French, Lacey Leadbetter, Euan Adamson (clarinet)
- Year 10: Liberty Trinder, Seren Lovell, Nia Smith, Ella Lane
- Year 9: William Jenkins, Isabelle Stanford, Grace Cray, Elodie Williams
- Year 8: Amber Smith

For many of the students, it was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The atmosphere of

the concert was described as “phenomenal,” with high energy and professionalism evident from every performer. Students and staff alike are still buzzing from the excitement of being part of such a large-scale, prestigious event. Photos from the day capture the momentous occasion, with more footage expected once a video compilation is edited together.

Among the performers, particular recognition goes to Evan Cheesman, a Year 11 student who has already made history as the first Islwyn High pupil to attend a National Youth Music course through the NYO Inspire programme. Evan has also been invited to take part in a bespoke National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain Percussion Ensemble in Blackpool this February—an incredible achievement at such a young age.

The success of Islwyn High students doesn't stop there. Four students—Bailee Price, Evan Cheesman, Dea Kemlo, and Lacey Leadbetter—are preparing to audition for the National Youth Choir next week, with results due in December. The school community is eagerly awaiting the outcome, which could mark another significant milestone in these talented young musicians' journeys.

The performance at the Royal Albert Hall not only highlighted the outstanding musical talent coming from South East Wales but, for those involved, it was an unforgettable day, full of music, camaraderie, and inspiration.



Honouring Our Heroes

Pupils at Islwyn High School undertook a number of activities to remember the soldiers from the local community who gave their lives in the Great War and every war since.

Mr Fowler ran assemblies in the build up to Remembrance Sunday where pupils were given the opportunity to reflect on the armistice, remembrance services and how we can show our gratitude and respect for the fallen soldiers of the Great War and every war since.

Following this, pupils were invited to write their own message of remembrance on a poppy during their History and Humanities lessons and place their poppies on our Wall of Remembrance. This has become something of a tradition at the school over the years and pupils always mark the occasion with the respect and dignity it deserves.

Year 9 pupils were given the opportunity to research the names of the fallen from the Oakdale cenotaph as part of their WW1 topic. Pupils were tasked with researching the soldier's background as well as details of the part they played in the Great War. This task was received well by pupils and will be an integral part of the Year 9 curriculum moving forward. Pupils commented on how important this task was and showed genuine reverence within the lessons.

On Sunday November 9th, 11am, members of the Student Leadership Team and Student Council attended the Memorial Service in Oakdale. Student Council Members Freya Reasons, Grace George and Mya Newell welcomed guests at the ceremony by handing out hymn books. Oliver Morris (Head Boy) and Skye Grandon (Head Girl) read the names of the fallen

to the congregation, a poignant and heartfelt tribute to those who sacrificed their lives from our village. Both pupils did themselves and the school proud.



Lily Clarke (Head Girl) Laid a wreath of remembrance on behalf of the pupils and staff at Islwyn High School, taking part in a tradition that has held since the end of World War One.

It was a heart felt service and it was lovely to see so many pupils attending in order to support their community and give thanks.

Islwyn High School will continue to remember the soldiers who sacrificed so much for us and continue to honour them.

Thank you.



Read All About It!

Islwyn Breaks Records with Over 75 Million Words Read!

Islwyn High School is celebrating an extraordinary achievement this term, with students collectively reading a staggering 75,394,494 words through the Accelerated Reader programme: a new school record!

Even more impressively, we now have an unprecedented number of "Word Millionaires" in our school community. Leading the charge is Jessica T, who has read an incredible 2,282,048 words by passing 104 quizzes, closely followed by Blynda C with over 2 million words from 24 quizzes, and Alecia-Grace W with 1,906,829 words from 37 quizzes. Prizes are coming in for our "Word Millionaires" who were each able to choose a book they would like to read as their prize!

However, success in Accelerated Reader isn't just about reading the longest books; it's about reading consistently and finding books you love. Take Carys E, for example, who has built up an impressive 81,823 words by passing all 27 of her quizzes, showing that dedication to regular reading really pays off. Similarly, William F has accumulated over 1.4 million words through 49 quizzes, proving that reading lots of shorter books can be just as rewarding as tackling lengthy novels.

The variety of approaches to reading success is truly inspiring. Whether you prefer shorter, quick reads or immersive longer novels, every book counts towards your word total. Remember, every book you finish and every quiz you pass contributes to your personal reading journey and our collective success. Who will be our next Word Millionaire? Keep reading, Islwyn!



From Muggles To Masters!

Islwyn High School was transformed into a place of magic and mystery this week as students and staff celebrated Harry Potter Week. Organised by the English Department, the event brought excitement, creativity, and a real sense of Hogwarts into classrooms across the school.

To truly kick off the celebrations, the week started with a Harry Potter-themed assembly featuring a Sorting Hat ceremony. Mrs McGirr did a wonderful job holding the Sorting Hat ceremony and selected pupils were placed into their Hogwarts houses, which created lots of cheers and laughter from the rest of the year group.

Throughout the week, students took part in a wide range of imaginative activities. One highlight was the magical creature design challenge, where pupils were encouraged to create their own fantastical beasts. The designs were incredibly detailed and imaginative, and many looked like they belonged in the Enchanted Woods.



English lessons were also given a magical makeover. Pupils took part in interactive sessions where they learned skills such as spell creation and creative writing, inspired by the Harry Potter films. One of the most popular moments was spellcasting practice in English lessons. Pupils had the chance to invent and perform their own spells, with some even bringing in their own wands to make it extra realistic. These lessons were not only fun but helped pupils build confidence and use their imagination in new ways.

To end the week in style, teachers joined in by dressing up as different Harry Potter characters and magical objects on Friday. This was a brilliant way to finish the celebrations and showed how the whole school community got involved.



Criw Cymraeg

Shwmae!

Criw Cymraeg continue to spread the Welsh language around Islwyn High School. This team of confident Welsh speakers has gone from strength to strength this year and are a highly visible part of our school community.

If you see pupils around the school wearing red ties, you have probably spotted members of our Criw Cymraeg. They play an important role in helping to promote the Welsh language and make speaking Welsh fun and exciting for everyone in the school.

One of the popular things Criw Cymraeg organise is the Raffl Heulog, which means the Sunshine Raffle. Towards the end of the week, Criw Cymraeg members go around the school asking members of staff if they would like to buy a raffle ticket. The raffle is a fun way to spread a bit of happiness and positivity before the weekend begins. Many staff enjoy taking part and supporting the work of Criw Cymraeg



Every week, Criw Cymraeg members also visit each form class to encourage them to display the Welsh phrase of the week. This helps pupils learn new Welsh words and use them more often. The most recent phrase was "Rydw i'n gobeithio," which means "I hope." Displaying the phrase in classrooms reminds pupils to practise Welsh every day, not just in lessons.

Criw Cymraeg also help organise the Bwth Siarad Cymraeg, which takes place every Thursday during first break in the Year 7 indoor area. Pupils are encouraged to come along and try speaking Welsh, even if they are not very confident yet. As a reward, pupils who take part receive a sweet treat, which makes learning Welsh more enjoyable.

In addition to this, Criw Cymraeg members listen out

for pupils speaking Welsh around the school. If they hear someone using good Welsh, they give them a Tocyn Iaitth, which can later be exchanged for a prize. This encourages pupils to use Welsh naturally and feel proud of their language skills.

Overall, Criw Cymraeg do an amazing job helping to keep the Welsh language alive in our school. Their activities make learning Welsh fun, friendly, and rewarding, and they inspire pupils of all ages to give it a go.

As we approach Christmas, Criw Cymraeg will be making and selling Christmas cards. These will be available to staff, pupils and parents. We will also be sending cards to local businesses to thank them for their support of HIS.

New Criw Cymraeg member, Amber Rose Card said, "I like Criw Cymraeg because it helps me improve my Welsh and I organise lots of tasks that helps improve Welsh around the school."

The new year has lots in store for us, especially as the biggest Welsh event of the year will take place in March - our school Eisteddfod. We look forward to keeping you updated with our work and would like to say a big 'Diolch yn fawr!' to everyone who continues to use their Welsh language on a daily basis.



SPORTING SUCCESS

It's been an incredible term for sports at Islwyn High, with so many of our teams showing amazing skill, determination, and teamwork!

Firstly, a huge congratulations to the Year 7 rugby boys who are still unbeaten this season! They secured another fantastic win against Lewis School, continuing their impressive run. The only tiny downside? They let Lewis score, which was the first point conceded all year—but let's be honest, it doesn't take away from their amazing performance! Try scorers this game were J. Jones (x3), Will P, and Kian J, who all played brilliantly.



In football, our girls teams have also been on fire. The Under 13s girls have now made it into the last 32 of the Welsh Schools Cup after another convincing victory, beating Ebbw Fawr 7-1.

Meanwhile, the Under 15s girls are also through to the next round of the Welsh Cup and will be taking on Monmouth at home after a stunning 9-0 win over Crickhowell. These results are a testament to all the hard work and training the girls have put in this season.



The Year 10 boys football team have also had a fantastic Welsh Cup match, beating Newport High 5-1 to progress to Round 4. It's been great to see so many of our students giving it their all on the pitch.

And it's not just team sports! A massive well done to all of our Cross Country runners who took part in the South East Wales race at Caldicot. Everyone showed fantastic effort, determination, and resilience, and we're really proud of all the pupils who represented Islwyn High.



The Year 11 football team have worked incredibly hard this season. They have experienced mixed fortunes recently, securing an impressive 2-0 victory over Plasmawr before suffering a narrow 4-3 defeat against Bro Morgannwg. Despite the close loss, the squad put in a brilliant performance and remain positive, turning their full attention to the Caerphilly Cup, where they hope to finish their school football journey on a high.



It's such an exciting time for sports at our school, with so many teams and individuals achieving amazing results. Well done to everyone involved—you're all making Islwyn High proud!

Pumpkin Patch Supporting Our Futures

Earlier this term, some of our humanities classrooms looked more like a pumpkin patch than a school classroom as Mr Morris and Miss Mutlow helped their classes carve pumpkins to learn about the history of Halloween.

As part of the spooky season, pupils got the chance to take part in a fun and creative activity while learning where Halloween really comes from. The lesson focused on the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter. People believed that during this time, spirits could cross into the human world, which is why carving faces became important. Pupils also learned about the origins of spooky traditions like 'Trick or Treating' and dressing up.

The activity was a great way to help students remember the history, and as with many humanities lessons, it's easier to understand the past when pupils can actually do something connected to it.

The pumpkin carving activity helped show how traditions change over time. Moving from the traditional turnips that were carved in Britain and Ireland, before pumpkins became popular in the USA later on.

The students loved the lesson, even if it got a bit messy. The pumpkin carving lesson certainly brought the history of Halloween to life.

Earlier this term, Year 11 pupils visited Coleg Gwent's Crosskeys Campus to take part in a taster day aimed at helping them explore their options after GCSEs. The visit gave pupils an exciting opportunity to experience college life first-hand and learn more about the wide range of courses available. Pupils were given an overview of what it is like to study at Coleg Gwent, the support systems available, and the many pathways students can choose depending on their interests and future career goals.

Students choosing vocational pathways spent the morning fully involved in one subject, giving them an in-depth look at the course and how it would be taught. Meanwhile, A Level pupils took part in several different sessions, allowing them to experience a variety of subjects and compare different options.

The subjects available included both familiar and brand-new choices. Many pupils enjoyed trying subjects such as Psychology, Criminology, Law, Graphic Design, and Photography. Vocational courses included Engineering, Film and Media Studies, Childcare, Travel and Tourism, and Performing Arts, offering pupils a clear insight into practical learning in a college environment.

Feedback from Year 11 pupils was extremely positive, with many agreeing that the taster day was both helpful and informative. The experience supported pupils who were unsure about their next steps and helped them feel more confident about making decisions for the future. Several pupils commented that the visit gave them a realistic understanding of college life and the expectations of different courses.



Xmas At The Movies

The Drama Club and choir are busy preparing for an amazing Christmas concert on 10th December, and it's sure to be a show you won't want to miss! The concert is made up of a fantastic mix of songs and scenes from some of your favourite Christmas movies, including *The Grinch*, *Love Actually*, *Home Alone*, and *The Polar Express*.

Everyone in the Drama Club and choir has been working so hard to make this concert possible. Many of us have given up our lunch breaks to rehearse, learn lines, practise songs, and make sure every scene is perfect. It hasn't always been easy, but it's been so much fun seeing everything come together.

Our teachers have been incredible too. Mrs Day, Mrs Llewellyn, and Miss Muttlow have put in an amazing amount of effort, supporting us through every rehearsal, helping us with choreography, set design, and making sure everything is ready for the big night. We owe them a massive thank you for making this possible.

The excitement for the concert has already been huge—all the tickets sold out almost instantly, showing just how popular this event has become. Everyone in the Drama Club and choir is thrilled to perform for our friends, families, and teachers, and we can't wait to share all our hard work with the audience.

What makes this concert even more special is how everyone has pulled together as a team. From the actors and singers to the students helping with props, lighting, and sound, it really feels like we're all part of one big Christmas family. It's been amazing to see everyone support each other, encourage one another, and laugh together—even when we make mistakes!

It's going to be a magical evening full of laughter, music, and Christmas spirit, and we're all counting down the days until we get to take to the stage. Don't miss it—it's going to be a Christmas concert to remember!



GUESS WHO?

Who is this person from history? If you know, head to Mr Morris' classroom (304) because the first person to name this person correctly will win a prize. A clue: Bah! Humbug!



Tinsel, Treats and Teamwork

On Friday 12th December, Islwyn High School is excited to host its much-anticipated annual Christmas Fayre. The event is being organised by the Skills Challenge Certificate Department, with Year 10 pupils playing a leading role in planning and running the fayre.

Over the past term, Year 10 pupils have been working extremely hard developing creative and festive Christmas products. As part of their course, they have designed, planned, and produced items that will be sold on the day. This has allowed pupils to use their creativity while also gaining valuable business and enterprise skills.

Visitors to the fayre can look forward to a wide range of stalls offering items such as home-made cookies, Christmas cards, decorations, and small stocking fillers. With so much choice available, there will be something for everyone. Pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 will have the opportunity to visit the fayre during the school day and purchase gifts for friends and family, making it a perfect chance to get into the Christmas spirit early.

This project has helped Year 10 pupils learn important life skills. They have completed a Skills Audit to understand their strengths and areas for development, learned about the 5 Ps

of marketing, and discovered why customer research is important. Pupils also created questionnaires to gather feedback and help them design products that customers would want to buy.

The Christmas Fayre is not only a fun event but also an excellent example of learning being put into practice. The Skills Challenge Certificate Department is proud of the effort and commitment shown by the pupils, and the fayre promises to be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

We look forward to welcoming pupils to the Christmas Fayre and celebrating the festive season together.



Peer Mediators Are Re-Branding

The school's Peer Mediation team has recently been given a fresh new identity—it is now officially called "Criw Caredig," which means Kind Crew. This new name reflects the team's focus on kindness, support, and looking out for one another, while also celebrating the Welsh language.

With the start of the new term, Year 7 students have been welcomed into the team, bringing fresh faces to our wellbeing support programme. The Criw Caredig are now preparing to launch a series of initiatives aimed at helping students feel supported, safe, and listened to throughout the school day.

Alongside the new name and members, there's also a new way to recognise who is part of the team. Students on duty can easily be spotted by their golden tie, making it simple to find a peer mediator when you need guidance or someone to talk to.

The introduction of Criw Caredig marks an exciting step forward for wellbeing support at our school. Not only does it give students a chance to help each other resolve conflicts and solve problems, but it also encourages a culture of kindness, understanding, and peer leadership. By wearing their golden ties or purple badges, these students are visible reminders that support is always nearby, and that no one has to face challenges alone.

The Big School Quiz

Quiz rules: Answer all of the questions below without using the Internet. You can ask your teachers, friends or family or read books . Good luck!

1. Which ancient Roman festival is often connected to early Christmas celebrations?
2. On what date is Christmas celebrated?
3. Which English monarch banned Christmas celebrations in the 1600s?
4. St. Nicholas is best known as the real-life inspiration for which Christmas character?
5. In which country did the tradition of decorating Christmas trees begin?
6. What 19th-century novella by Charles Dickens helped revive Christmas celebrations in England?
7. Which country is traditionally credited with starting the custom of decorating Christmas trees?
8. In the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," what gift is given on the seventh day?
9. What modern Christmas tradition began in 1931 with a Coca-Cola advertising campaign?
10. In It's a Wonderful Life, what happens



TRY THIS AT HOME

This recipe is really easy and makes around 20 delicious Snowman cookies. Why not try our recipe at home?

Ingredients

Cookies

- 125g (½ cup) butter, softened
- 100g (½ cup) sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 225g (1¾ cups) plain flour
- ½ tsp baking powder



Simple Icing (optional)

- 200g (1½ cups) icing (powdered) sugar
- 2–3 tbsp water or milk
- Marshmallow

Instructions

1. Preheat & Prepare

Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) / 350°F

Line baking trays with parchment paper

2. Make the Dough

Beat butter and sugar together until creamy

Mix in egg and vanilla

Stir in flour and baking powder until a soft dough forms

3. Shape Cookies

Roll dough into small balls or roll flat and cut with cookie cutters

Place on trays, leaving space between cookies

4. Bake

Bake for 10–12 minutes, until edges are lightly golden

Leave on tray 5 minutes, then cool completely on a rack

Add a marshmallow on top and decorate as a snowman.