

Dear Parents and Carers,

We were delighted to mark a truly historic moment for our school community with the official opening of our new school building. It was a proud and memorable occasion, attended by a number of distinguished guests including Lynne Neagle, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Rachel Gunter, Project Manager, leaders from Kier Construction, and members of our Governing Body.

In addition to the excitement of our official opening, we were also pleased to welcome a member of the ESTYN inspection team this week. She visited as part of a thematic review involving multiple schools across the region. During her time with us, she met with pupils and staff to explore key areas of school life, with a particular focus on pupil voice. We are proud to share that she was extremely impressed by the confidence, insight and enthusiasm of our learners, as well as the positive ethos evident throughout the school.

It has been a week filled with celebration, reflection and pride. Thank you to our pupils, staff, governors and families for your continued support in making our school such a vibrant and inspiring place to learn. We look forward to many more exciting milestones ahead!

Please find link to the RCT website page dedicated to the investment in Ysgol Afon Wen. [Youth centre and changing rooms add to Ysgol Afon Wen investment](#)

We look forward to seeing all of the pupils back to school after the half term break.

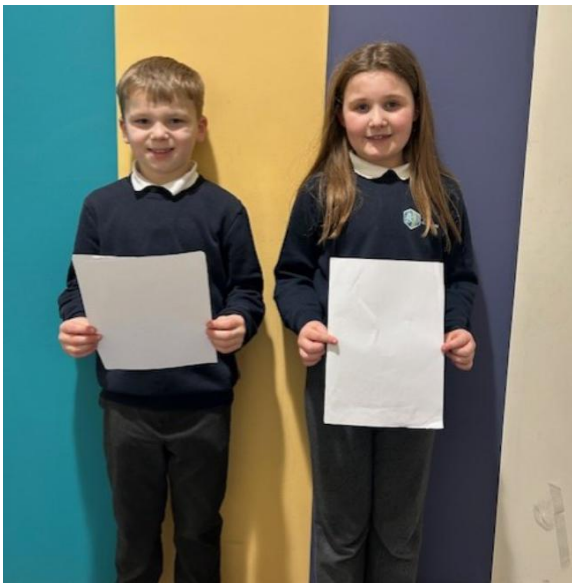
Key Dates

Date	Event
Monday 16th February 2026	Week of half term
Thursday 26th February 2026	Year 11 GCSE support evening 5-6pm
Friday 27 th February 2026	Advance Year 4 – 7 Eisteddfod
Monday 2 nd March 2026	Activate (N-Year 3) Eisteddfod
Thursday 5 th March 2026	World Book Day
Friday 6 th March 2026	Year 9 Options Evening 3.15pm -6.00pm ACE Day (Careers focus)
Monday 9 th March 2026	Year 11 Welsh Oral exam week

Celebration of Success

Congratulations to the following pupils who have been commended by their Progress leader or teachers. Well done!

Nursery	Lily James-Kuras & Sidney Allen-Jugessur	Year 4	Tommie Algar and JJ Moore	Year 9	Fin Phillips & Rose Pitcher
Reception	Dariah Manfield & Euan Simpson	Year 5	Alys Deren-Richards & Oliver Rees	Year 10	Oliver Hughes
Year 1	Ffion Jenkins & Isabela O'Sullivan	Year 6	Cody Pitman & Jack Marchant	Year 11	Tehila Goje
Year 2	Violet Williams, Harmony Fletcher-Slocombe & Evelyn Vaughan	Year 7	Sumayyah Alabi & Daisy Morgan		
Year 3	Marley Webb-Birkinshaw, Malia Rees & Kyrian Ugochukwu	Year 8	Tavis Healy, Fiona Huang and Milo Keetch		



Congratulations to Matilda and Ezra who prepared readings in English and Welsh for the opening of the school. Both pupils practiced the readings and worked really hard to show the amazing calibre of pupils we have in Ysgol Afon Wen.



Opening of the School

Pupils from Year 1 to Year 11 had a significant role in the ceremony to officially open Ysgol Afon Wen on Thursday. We were extremely pleased to welcome Lynne Neagle AS/MS to the school along with many other dignitaries and members of the Governing Body.

Mrs Neagle AS/MS was greeted by pupils into the school and the ceremony opened with a speech from Tehila G from the Pupil leadership team, followed by Mrs C Crockett, Headteacher. Ezra M, Year 3 wowed our visitors by reading a poem in Welsh.



The celebration was made even more special by the incredible contribution of our pupils. To officially open the school, children and young people from Year 1 through to Year 11 joined together to perform the inspiring song *"When I Grow Up."*

Their performance beautifully reflected the ambition, talent and aspirations that define our school community. It was a powerful moment that showcased the unity of our learners across all year groups and set a joyful, forward-looking tone for the future of our school.



The Hospitality and Catering team prepared an impressive buffet for everyone to enjoy. Our guests were invited on a tour of the school which gave everyone the opportunity to see the amazing facilities in Ysgol Afon Wen, as well as to see the impressive pupils and embedded routines across the school.



World Book Day 2026

The Importance of Reading

Reading is one of the most important skills children can develop, supporting their learning across all subjects and helping them understand the world around them. Regular reading at home and in school builds vocabulary, improves concentration, and sparks imagination and creativity. It also encourages empathy, as children explore different characters, cultures, and perspectives. **World Book Day** is the perfect reminder to celebrate the joy of reading, whether it's sharing a story together at home, discovering a new favourite book, or taking part in fun reading activities at school.

We are very much looking forward to **World Book Day on Thursday 5th March**; it is always one of the highlights of the year. On the day, there will be many opportunities for pupils to celebrate their love of reading and share their favourite books with their peers.

Wear a Quote

Instead of the more traditional practice of dressing up as characters from books, we are encouraging pupils in **Activate and Advance** to "wear a quote" from their favourite book, author, or literary piece. This will encourage creativity and enable pupils to reflect thoughtfully on the books they have experienced throughout their life.

What does "Wear a Quote" mean?

Pupils can choose a quote that resonates with them from any book or author they love. They can then find a way to "wear" it. Here are some ideas:

- Write or design the quote on a piece of paper and pin it to their jumper.
- Create a homemade badge, sash, or headband displaying the quote.

Use fabric paints or pens to write a quote on a t-shirt.

We believe the "Wear a Quote" day will also reduce the need for parents to buy or create costumes in an effort to support both family wellbeing and environmental sustainability. If parents and pupils would prefer to dress up as a character from a book, they may do so. **If not wearing a quote, or dressing up, pupils must otherwise wear normal school uniform on the day.**

We want to hear about the books pupils love to read and to inspire other children to read too and so pupils are encouraged to bring in the book that the quote comes from, so they can share with the class.

World Book Day Vouchers

Activate and Advance pupils will be given a World Book Day book token.

They can choose one of the £1 books FREE with their £1 book token. Alternatively, children can swap their £1 token to get £1 off a full price book. Please note that the World Book Day book tokens cannot be used for online purchases.

You are able to use the Book Tokens at the following local retailers in Pontypridd:

Storyville Book Shop, Lidl, The Works, Sainsbury, Tesco



Attendance

Nursery	81%	Year 4	88%	Year 9	84%
Reception	88%	Year 5	89%	Year 10	79%
Year 1	87%	Year 6	88%	Year 11	81%
Year 2	89%	Year 7	91%		
Year 3	91%	Year 8	86%		

Thank you to all pupils and their families for their focus on attendance during this half term.

After the half term break, every pupil needs to keep this momentum going. Every day in school matters, and arriving on time, ready to learn, gives you the best possible start to each day.

Together, we can continue building strong routines, supporting one another, and aiming for even higher attendance.



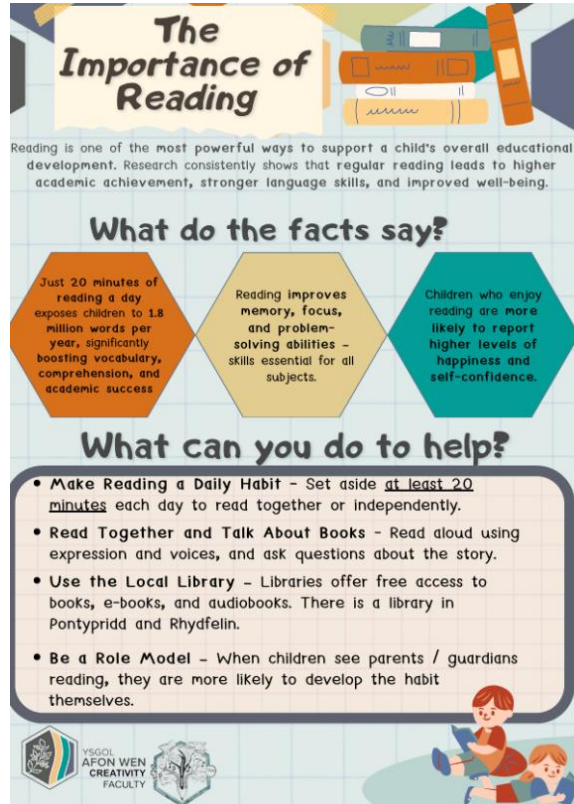
Parental Reading Survey

At Ysgol Afon Wen, fostering a love of reading is one of our most important whole-school priorities. Reading is the foundation of learning across every subject, and strong reading skills open doors—helping children grow in confidence, deepen their understanding of the world, and discover the joy that books can bring. As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening reading within our school community, we are working closely with the **Central South Consortium** to better understand how we can support families at home. We know that parents and carers play a crucial role in children's reading development, especially during the Key Stage 2–3 years (Years 4–8), when pupils begin forming their own reading habits, preferences, and levels of independence. The time you spend encouraging, listening to, or sharing books with your child has a powerful impact. Your insight is essential in helping us tailor our approach so that every child can thrive as a confident, enthusiastic reader.

To help us achieve this, we kindly ask all **Advance parents and carers (Years 4–8)** to complete our Reading Questionnaire. Your feedback will guide us in understanding what works well for families, what challenges you may face, and what support you would find most helpful. We want to ensure that the provision we offer—both in school and at home—truly meets your needs. Please use the below QR code or link to access the questionnaire.

[Ysgol Afon Wen Parental Reading Survey](#)

The questionnaire takes only a few minutes to complete, but the information you share will play a meaningful role in shaping our next steps as a school. Together, we can make a lasting difference to every child's reading journey. Thank you for your ongoing support, commitment, and partnership.



The Importance of Reading

Reading is one of the most powerful ways to support a child's overall educational development. Research consistently shows that regular reading leads to higher academic achievement, stronger language skills, and improved well-being.

What do the facts say?

- Just 20 minutes of reading a day exposes children to 1.8 million words per year, significantly boosting vocabulary, comprehension, and academic success.
- Reading improves memory, focus, and problem-solving abilities – skills essential for all subjects.
- Children who enjoy reading are more likely to report higher levels of happiness and self-confidence.

What can you do to help?

- Make Reading a Daily Habit** – Set aside at least 20 minutes each day to read together or independently.
- Read Together and Talk About Books** – Read aloud using expression and voices, and ask questions about the story.
- Use the Local Library** – Libraries offer free access to books, e-books, and audiobooks. There is a library in Pontypridd and Rhydfelin.
- Be a Role Model** – When children see parents / guardians reading, they are more likely to develop the habit themselves.

YSGOL AFON WEN CREATIVITY FACULTY



Coffee Mornings

A Wonderful Week of Coffee Mornings in Our New Community Hub

This week, Ysgol Afon Wen was delighted to welcome families into our brand-new community hub for a series of successful coffee mornings. Held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the events brought together parents, carers, pupils, school governors and members of the Senior Leadership Team in a warm, relaxed environment designed to strengthen our home-school partnerships.

Each morning focused on different year groups—Year 7–9 on Tuesday, Year 4–6 on Wednesday, and our youngest families from Reception to Year 3 on Thursday. Over coffee and biscuits, families had the opportunity to talk openly with school leaders about matters relating to Ysgol Afon Wen, share ideas, and celebrate the inclusive and supportive community spirit that defines our school.

We were also fortunate to be joined by several of our valued community partners. Representatives from Careers Wales, Resilient Families, and RCT Adult Education and Skills Services were on hand throughout the week to offer guidance, support and signposting to services that benefit both our learners and their families.

Importantly, the feedback gathered during the sessions is already helping shape future community support. In response to parental requests, we are now planning upcoming sessions on:

- Defibrillator training
- ALN (Additional Learning Needs) support
- Financial skills and budgeting



These events will continue to build on our commitment to being a community-focused school—one where conversation, collaboration and care come together to support children and families in every way possible.

A heartfelt thank you to all families who attended, and to all of our community partners for their continued involvement. We look forward to hosting many more events in our community hub as we strengthen the connections that make Ysgol Afon Wen such a special place.

As discussed during these events, our next coffee morning will focus on supporting parents of children in Nursery to Year 6 with Additional Learning Needs. The ALN coffee morning will take place on Thursday 26th February 2026 from 9-10am in the Community Hub.



Activate Phase (Nursery to Year 3)

Eisteddfod

The Eisteddfod for Nursery to Year 3 will take place on Monday 2nd March 2025 (as Year 1 are on a trip on Friday 27th February). Pupils are welcome to wear their traditional Welsh Costumes, Welsh colours or outfits.

World Book Day

We are very much looking forward to World Book Day on Thursday 5th March; pupils can wear an outfit from a book or can wear a quote. Please see information on previous page.

Year 1 Trip

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are looking to book a trip to Cardiff Castle for our Y1 learners, as part of our 'Land of the Dragon' topic.

Details and Dates are as follows:

Friday 27th February

Time: Arrive at school as normal at 8.50am start of day. We will be leaving the site at 9.30am and arriving back at approximately 2.30pm.

Travel: We will be using a coach company to travel to and from Cardiff Castle.

Cost: £6.00

Other information: Students **must** wear school uniform for the trip, as well as coat and appropriate footwear.

If you wish for your child to attend, please pay via 'RCT Pay It' by **Friday 20th February**, and sign and return the letter to school as soon as possible.





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Newsletter 13.02.26

Article 7: I have a right to a name and to belong to a country

Activate Phase (Nursery to Year 3)

Valentines Day

A huge thank you to Trish for a wonderful Valentine's assembly.



Advance Phase (Year 4 to Year 8)

Llangrannog 2026

Pupils on the Year 6 trip to Llangrannog threw themselves into every moment, from racing into the facilities to tackling new challenges with wide-eyed excitement. The mix of adventure, fresh sea air, and time spent with friends gave the whole experience a warm, buzzing energy. By the end of the trip, they were tired in the best possible way, full of stories, proud of what they'd tried, and already talking about when they could go back.





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Llangrannog 2026



Achieve Phase (Year 9 to Year 11)

Year 9 Options

Following an introduction to new subjects this week in assemblies, this is the process for the Year 9 GCSE options after half term. It was extremely encouraging to speak to pupils during the Progress evening held this week to hear that they had already started to narrow down their choices.

Week Commencing 23rd February 2026

Pupils will be given a “free choice” option form (shared on Google Classroom and the My Child at School App) where they will select the three subjects that they feel they would like to study at KS4 at this point. This will be the starting point of the creation of the option columns.

Week Commencing 2nd March 2026

Thursday 5th March – Year 9 Options Evening 3.15pm – 6.00pm

Progress Evening on site for non-core subjects. This will also provide an opportunity for you to discuss potential GCSE option choices for your child with their teacher. Details to be sent out via Google Classroom and the My Child at School App.

The Year 9 prospectus will be made available via Google Classroom and the My Child at School App as well as on the school website. Please sit down with your child to ensure that they have read through the information explaining the options available. It is important that pupils understand what the subjects are about and are aware of what is on offer. Many of these courses are completely different from KS3. In order to support this research, the teaching staff have compiled a short video on each subject for you to watch.

Friday 6th March - Second open option choice.

Pupils will be given a second “free choice” option form (shared on Google Classroom and the My Child at School App) where they will select the three subjects that they feel they would like to study at KS4 at this point. This will inform the creation of the option columns. Option columns will then be published to pupils.

Week Commencing 9th March 2026 - FINAL OPTION CHOICE

Option blocks will be made available from which your child will select their options from the columns of subjects available. A letter detailing the option blocks available will be sent to you. The options form will be available online via the Year 9 Google Classroom and the My Child at School App.



Achieve Phase (Year 9 to Year 11)

Year 10 Updates

LiFE - Updates

Pupils have recently begun their **WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate** Community Challenge which is worth 25% of their overall qualification. As part of this challenge, pupils will complete a range of individual and group tasks, including planning and delivering lessons to teach younger pupils about an important social issue. This work supports the development of key skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership. The final pupil deadline for this assessment is **Monday 23 March**.

History and Geography students will be starting their NEA (non-examined assessment) over the next few weeks. Excellent engagement and attendance is essential to maximising success.

GCSE PE students are well underway with their NEA and are making excellent progress each week. Each practical session is completed with a high level of independence, and their written evaluations are equally impressive. If they maintain this strong work ethic, there is no doubt they will continue to achieve great success!

Travel and Tourism students are in the final stages of preparing for their first assignment and are working with focus and maturity. They are making effective use of their research and inference skills to develop well-informed and thoughtful work. If they maintain this positive approach, they are well placed to achieve strong outcomes in their first assignment and beyond.

Success is not
about luck; it's
about
persistence,
determination,
and hard work

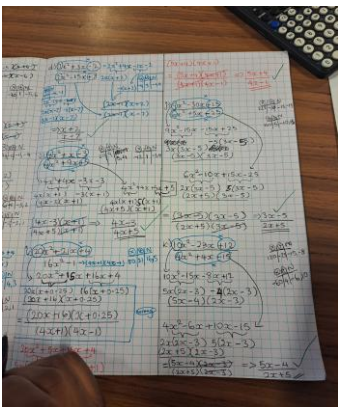


Innovation - Maths pupil shout outs!

Omotayo has recently completed some fantastic work simplifying algebraic fractions. She always annotates her work and shows full workings in a clear and methodical way. An exemplary page of work!

Oliver O'C and Mckenzie M have shown excellent commitment in lesson and by attending afterschool revision on a Tuesday.

Muhammed and Ieuan are displaying fantastic attitude to learning by participating in class discussions and sharing their solutions with the class.

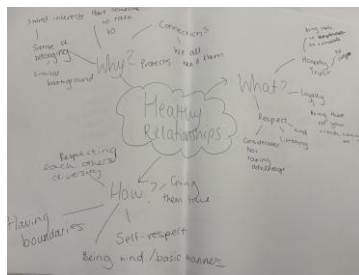
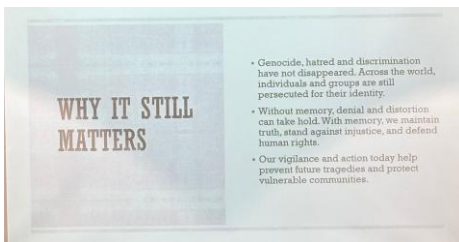


Achieve Phase (Year 9 to Year 11)

Year 10 Updates

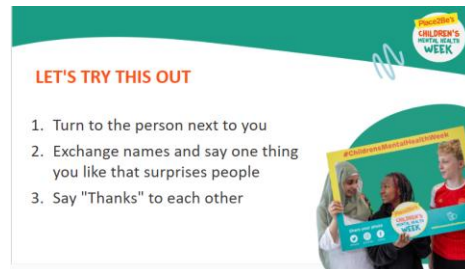
Creativity

Hospitality students have started experimenting with new dishes in preparation for next year's practical exam!.



Assemblies

Miss Boyce is incredibly proud of the year group's respectful and attentive manner during assemblies. Over the last few weeks, they have been active participants in assemblies on a range of topics including Holocaust Memorial Day, healthy relationships, and mental health and belonging.



Success Evening

Last week, we welcomed many of our families to the Year 10 Success Evening, where information was provided on upcoming external exams, revision methods, and support available to pupils.



The resources from this evening can be found at:

<https://www.ysgolafonwen.co.uk/page/?title=Year+10+GCSE+Success+Evening&pid=134>





Achieve Phase (Year 9 to Year 11)

Year 11 GCSE examinations

Year 11 is where all the small choices you've made start to add up, and the effort you put in now can genuinely change the direction of your future. Hard work isn't about being perfect every day; it's about attending school everyday for the next 10 weeks, staying focused, and pushing yourself a little further than you did yesterday. Revision can feel overwhelming, but every page you read, every question you practise, and every mistake you learn from strengthens your confidence. Think of this year as your chance to prove to yourself what you're capable of. Stay disciplined, stay curious, and trust that your consistency will pay off. You're building something bigger than grades. You're building resilience, ambition, and a future you can be proud of.

GCSE Examinations

10 teaching weeks left
250 lessons left

before the first examination on
Thursday 7 May 2026

[summer-2026-wales-and-eduqas-gcse-october-2025.pdf](#)

Year 11 GCSE Support Evening

On **Thursday 26th February** there will be a GCSE support session for Year 11 pupils and parents in the theatre from 5-6pm.

The session will provide families with information on what pupils are studying in each of their courses to support revision, the course requirements, examination dates and information as well as information on how to revise and succeed at GCSE. Pupils are encouraged to attend with family members.





Context

Most young people do not vape, smoke or use drugs; however, some young people in our area and community have become very unwell after vaping. This is because they did not know the vape actually contained a more harmful synthetic drug.

What are synthetic drugs?

Synthetic drugs are man-made drugs, made using chemicals - such as a synthetic cannabinoid. Synthetic cannabinoids are defined as class B drugs under the misuse of drugs act. It is not real cannabis, but it tries to mimic the desired effect of cannabis. These drugs are much stronger than cannabis and produces more frequent side effects.

Why are these risky?

- It can make people feel very anxious or worsen mental health
- It can cause side effects that may need urgent hospital treatment
- These can be added to ordinary vapes

Vaping Products

Some vaping products say they have cannabis or THC in them - These are illegal drugs called Class B drugs.

Because they are illegal;

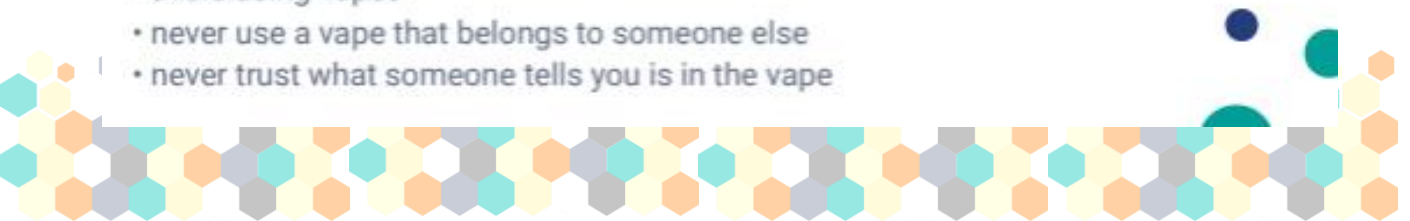
- No one checks what's inside them
- They can be very strong and very dangerous
- They might even contain very harmful substances

These products can be bought online, through encrypted message apps like Telegram or Snapchat or in the local community.

Some vapes are tampered with and have synthetic drugs added via small holes, so you will never know it is inside the vape.

The best way to avoid any risk of harm is to;

- avoid using vapes
- never use a vape that belongs to someone else
- never trust what someone tells you is in the vape





Talking to a young person about Vapes and the Potential Risks



Synthetic drug strength can vary a lot, which makes it easy to take too much by accident.

People might not know what drug they've taken. If you think someone has taken too much of a synthetic drug, call an ambulance immediately.

Symptoms:

- Loss of consciousness / collapse
- Breathing difficulties/ Severe chest pains
- Seizures
- High temperature or Shivering
- Vomiting
- Twitching or jerking movements
- Fully dilated pupils

Top Tips for Speaking to Young People about Drugs

- Be as factual as possible - this makes the message more credible and makes sense to the young person.
- Let the young person know you want them to be safe, and you care.
- Remember - Most young people do not vape, smoke or take drugs.

Remember

- It is illegal to buy vapes if you are under 18
- It is illegal to sell vapes to children under 18
- Vapes are not permitted in school
- Synthetic drugs are an illegal class B drug
- Providing or sharing vapes or drugs with others could cause serious medical emergencies or have fatal consequences
- Dealing or supplying drugs to others is illegal - you will be dealt with by the Police and permanently excluded from school

Further information and support

Please reach out to someone if you need support

Barod - 0300 333 0000 / barod.cymru

Youth Justice Service - 01443827300 / yotinfo@rctcbc.gov.uk

Eye to Eye Counselling - 01443 202940 / info@eyetoeye.wales

Dan - dan247.org.uk

Mind - mind.org.uk

NHS - 111.wales.NHS.uk

YoungMinds - www.youngminds.org.uk





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Community Events

ARC Entertainers
proudly present

the genie-us family pantomime...



Aladdin

Thursday 19th - Saturday 21st February
2026

Thursday & Friday 7pm, Saturday 12noon & 4pm
(relaxed performance)

Crown Hill community centre

Tickets: £10 adult / £8 concession / £35 group of 4 / £7 relaxed performance
To book, email arcofentertainers@gmail.com or text 07967453246

Poster Artwork by Alex Jackson Creative

HAWTHORN & LOWER RHYDYFELIN KIDS' CLUB PRESENTS



FRIDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 2026
6PM - 8PM

GAMES NIGHT

HAWTHORN COMMUNITY CENTRE

A safe space to hang out, play old favourites and find new ones. Suitable for anyone of any age who likes to sit and play board games!

TUCK SHOP AVAILABLE!

FOR MORE INFO SEARCH 'HAWTHORN AND LOWER RHYDYFELIN KIDS CLUB' ON FACEBOOK

All children must be accompanied by an adult



Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries
present


Stories & Crafts

Thursday 19th February
Rhydyfelin Library
11am-12 noon



Suitable for age 5+.

Children under 8 years must be accompanied by a parent/carer.






Community Events

HAWTHORN LEISURE CENTRE 50TH CELEBRATION EVENT SCHEDULE - THROUGHOUT FEBRUARY



EVERY MONDAY	EVERY TUESDAY	EVERY WEDNESDAY	EVERY THURSDAY	EVERY FRIDAY	EVERY SATURDAY	EVERY SUNDAY
09:30 - 11:30 Free Table Tennis Ages 16+	12:30 - 13:15 Free Chair Aerobics Ages 16+	16:15 - 17:00 Free Clubbercise Ages 14+	18:00 - 19:00 Free Zumba Ages 16+	16:00 - 18:00 Free Pickleball All Ages	10:00 - 10:45 Family Fun Session All Ages	09:00 - 10:00 Free Bootcamp Circuits Ages 14+
	17:00 - 18:00 Free Body Power Ages 14+			UNDER 8'S TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT		

HALF TERM ACTIVITIES 16TH - 20TH FEB - ALL FREE

MONDAY 16 TH FEBRUARY	TUESDAY 17 TH FEBRUARY	THURSDAY 19 TH FEBRUARY	FRIDAY 20 TH FEBRUARY
12:15 - 13:00 Table Tennis & Pickleball All Ages	12:15 - 13:00 Table Tennis All Ages	12:15 - 13:00 Table Tennis All Ages	12:15 - 13:00 Table Tennis All Ages
14:05 - 14:50 Free Running Taster Ages 8+	13:00 - 13:45 Mixed Sports All Ages	12:15 - 13:00 Mixed Sports All Ages	12:15 - 13:00 Football Skills All Ages
15:00 - 15:45 Free Running Taster Ages 8+	13:15 - 14:00 Basketball All Ages	13:15 - 14:00 Basketball All Ages	13:00 - 13:45 Tae Kwon Do Taster Ages 8+

