



# Ysgol Y Grango Academic Newsletter

**Excellence for All  
Excellence from All**

Issue 1  
December 08

## Ysgol Y Grango is recognised as the most improved high school in Wrexham in 2008 following outstanding examination success of students

The day of external examination results in August this year was a happy one for the year 11 and year 9 students who came into school to receive their results.

The overall school results have shown a dramatic increase. The percentage of students achieving the Key Stage 4 Threshold has risen from 69% to 71%. This has been largely due to the positive effects of the compulsory vocational curriculum introduced into the school in 2005. This improvement earned school the accolade from the LEA as the 'most improved' secondary school in Wrexham.

Although delighted with the results this year, we are always focusing on further improvement. This year we have extended our processes for monitoring student's work, especially coursework. This will enable us to give extra support to students who have fallen behind with deadlines.

### Partnership delivers success

At Ysgol Y Grango we believe that in order for student's to achieve their full potential they need to be supported by a strong team. The staff at the school are fully committed to developing each individual to achieve their best results even though this may mean extra classes and tutorial sessions outside the normal school day. We believe this is the basis of our support team. As parents, guardians, grandparents or friends; you can make a valuable contribution too. Studying at home should be a positive experience and you can help students to plan work and discuss ideas. These are skills which students sometimes lack and although you may not be a subject specialist, you have much to offer in terms of supporting your child through examinations



Students look happy as they open their results envelope!

In each academic newsletter we will share with you ways in which you can provide specific types of support to help you child with various aspects of school and home work

## CATS testing provides new data on children's potential performance

In September year 7 and year 9 have sat a series of tests known as Cognitive Ability Tests. The information provided by the test results can help teachers to target individual students with support. The tests fall into three main sections:

The verbal test is concerned with testing the individual's

ability to communicate. The quantitative test is designed to identify an individual's ability to work with numbers. The non-verbal tests deal with spatial awareness and visual skills.

The test is scored on a range between 20 and 150 with 100 being the average score. The test results show for some students that they may have a

score in excess of 140 in one area showing that they have exceptional ability in that area and yet have an average score in other areas. These tests provide the school with powerful information which we can use to effectively monitor and support students. Teachers will also be able to use the information to plan more effectively.

### Diary dates for students and parents

*Staff Training Day  
5th January 09*

*Year 11 reports out  
Week of 9th February 09*

*Half Term  
16th—20th February 09*

*Year 9 reports out  
Week of 23rd February 09*

*Year 9 Parents evening  
26th February 09*

*Tracking reports out for years 7, 8 and 10  
20th March 09*

*Year 11 Mock examinations start Monday 2nd March 09*

Ysgol Y Grango is committed to working with parents to ensure that students have all the support they need to make good academic progress.

If you wish to discuss your child's progress please make an appointment to speak with their Year Progress Leader.

Year 7— Mrs A Harris

Year 8&9— Mrs Corbally

Year 10&11— Mr P Phillips

*“Evidence shows that sensitive talking together helps build confidence, motivation to learn and effective language skills”*

*The Basic Skills Agency 2005*

## Helping your child to develop effective language skills

You would be surprised just how much language development happens in the home. School may well teach students the technical ability to write letters, construct essay answers etc but there is much that you can do at home too.

- It is important for adults to have informal conversations with young people to develop their confidence in spoken English.

- Get into the habit of reasoning things aloud, so that they can listen to the way that you problem solve.

- Ask questions and encourage your child to seek explanations.

This might include getting them to consider and predict any outcome in a given situation.

- Use every opportunity to encourage your child to explain and describe any experiences they may have had. This will help to develop their vocabulary too.

- Try to encourage your child to talk in different situations, adjusting the way they speak. For example, they may be encouraged to talk to other adults in a more formal way eg, speaking on the telephone to a company or business, speaking with health professionals such as doctors and dentists, your work colleagues etc

- Even telling jokes or playing word games are good ways of encouraging a variety of language styles to be used.

Young people thrive when they have a wider understanding of how to communicate both in the home and in their wider community. With practice, they also gain experience and confidence in using the spoken and written word.

You can even make your own life easier by getting them to answer the phone, take messages, etc!

## Preparing year 9 students to choose their Key Stage 4 subjects for next year.

After Christmas year 9 will commence the Subject Choice Consultation Process.

Each student has the opportunity to meet on an individual basis with Mrs Corbally, the year 9 Progress Leader. Interviews will also be arranged for students with the Careers Advisor, Mr Steve Fitton and with Mrs Girvan the Learning Coach.

During these meetings students discuss their individual Learning

Pathway. The chosen pathway will be based on their strengths and interests. When selecting courses we operate a 'shopping basket' approach where every effort is made for students to study the subjects of their choice.

Every student is encouraged to take one vocational subject. Some vocational courses are offered on the Grango site (CACHE, Sport and Leisure, Small animal Care, ICT) whilst other courses such as Hair and

Salon Services, leisure and tourism and built environment courses (plumbing, joinery etc) are offered on the Yale College site.

In addition to this, all students are expected to choose at least two GCSE or equivalent courses.

We expect all students to have made their provisional choices by February half term but firm decisions are finalized soon after Easter.



Students have an opportunity to discuss career planning with the Careers Advisor.

## New thinking skills course for year 7 students

As part of their curriculum year 7 are following a 'Learning to Learn' programme. This is part of a whole school approach to promote emotional and social skills that form the basis of effective learning and positive behaviour.

Students will complete four units during the year. 'Being Unique' is about students developing an understanding of what it means to be a good student and to develop an understand-

ing of the roles and responsibilities of those within the learning community who will support them. 'Wales and the World' encourages students to consider their sense of cultural identity. In the 'Environment' work pupils will consider their understanding of environmental issues and what it means to be eco-friendly. 'Looking Back; Looking Forward' provides opportunities for pupils to examine their own preferred

styles of learning and develop their own learning techniques. A range of guest speakers have supported the work of this course.

By developing these skills pupils are more likely to be self motivated, work co-operatively, solve problems and be effective and successful learners.

We are delighted with the progress being made by students on this exciting project.



Students in year 7 are hard at work in a school eco project