

Ysgol Bryn Castell



Ysgol Bryn Castell

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YSGOL BRYN CASTELL



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Welcome



Helen Ridout
Headteacher

Welcome to Ysgol Bryn Castell, and thank you for taking the time to find out more about our school and community.

Whether you are considering joining us for the first time or moving into our Newcastle provision after Year 11, choosing the right setting is an important step. We understand that every learner is unique, and finding the school where they feel safe, valued and able to thrive matters enormously. We warmly invite you to visit us, meet our staff and learners, and see our school in action. We are always pleased to welcome families for a tour, a conversation and a chance to learn more about the opportunities we offer.

Ysgol Bryn Castell is a community day special school for learners aged 7 to 19 with a range of additional learning needs, including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, autism and specific learning difficulties. As a small school, we are able to get to know our learners exceptionally well and provide the personalised support, care and encouragement they need to flourish.

For many learners, joining Ysgol Bryn Castell marks the beginning of a positive new chapter in their educational journey. We believe that every learner deserves to feel successful, understood and valued. Our aim is to help learners discover confidence in themselves, develop meaningful relationships and experience the joy of achievement. We work alongside learners to help them build resilience, independence and self-belief, equipping them with the skills they need for the future.

At the heart of our school is a strong sense of community and belonging. We are proud of the warm, supportive relationships between learners, staff and families. We encourage everyone to be kind, respectful and considerate of one another, and we place great importance on helping learners understand that they are valued members of our school community. We have high aspirations for every learner and support them to achieve their personal best, both academically and personally.

Learners joining our Newcastle provision, whether from another school or progressing from within Ysgol Bryn Castell, are supported through a carefully planned induction programme to help them settle confidently into the next stage of their education. We work closely with Learners and families to ensure that transitions are positive and successful, and we provide guidance to help learners make informed choices about the courses and pathways that best match their strengths, interests and future ambitions.

I hope that this prospectus gives you a flavour of life at Ysgol Bryn Castell and the values that underpin everything we do. If you would like any further information, have any questions or would like to arrange a visit, please do not hesitate to get in touch. My colleagues and I would be delighted to welcome you to the school and show you all that makes Ysgol Bryn Castell such a special place.

We look forward to meeting you and to working in partnership with you and your family in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Ridout'.

Helen Ridout
Headteacher

Introduction to life in the Newcastle department

The Newcastle Department offers a welcoming, supportive and aspirational Post-16 experience, designed to help young people prepare for adulthood while continuing to grow in confidence, independence and self-belief.

We recognise that every learner arrives with their own strengths, interests and ambitions. Our role is to help them identify their next steps and provide the opportunities, guidance and encouragement they need to achieve their goals.

Learners benefit from a personalised programme that combines practical experiences, life skills, employability opportunities, academic learning and community engagement. Through high-quality support and meaningful experiences, we help young people develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for life beyond school.

Most importantly, Newcastle is a community. Learners build positive relationships with staff and peers, discover new interests, celebrate their achievements and develop the independence required for adult life. Whether their next step is college, employment, training or increased independence, we work alongside each learner to help them achieve their aspirations.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, offering flexible and personalised pathways that prepare pupils successfully for future education, employment or training.

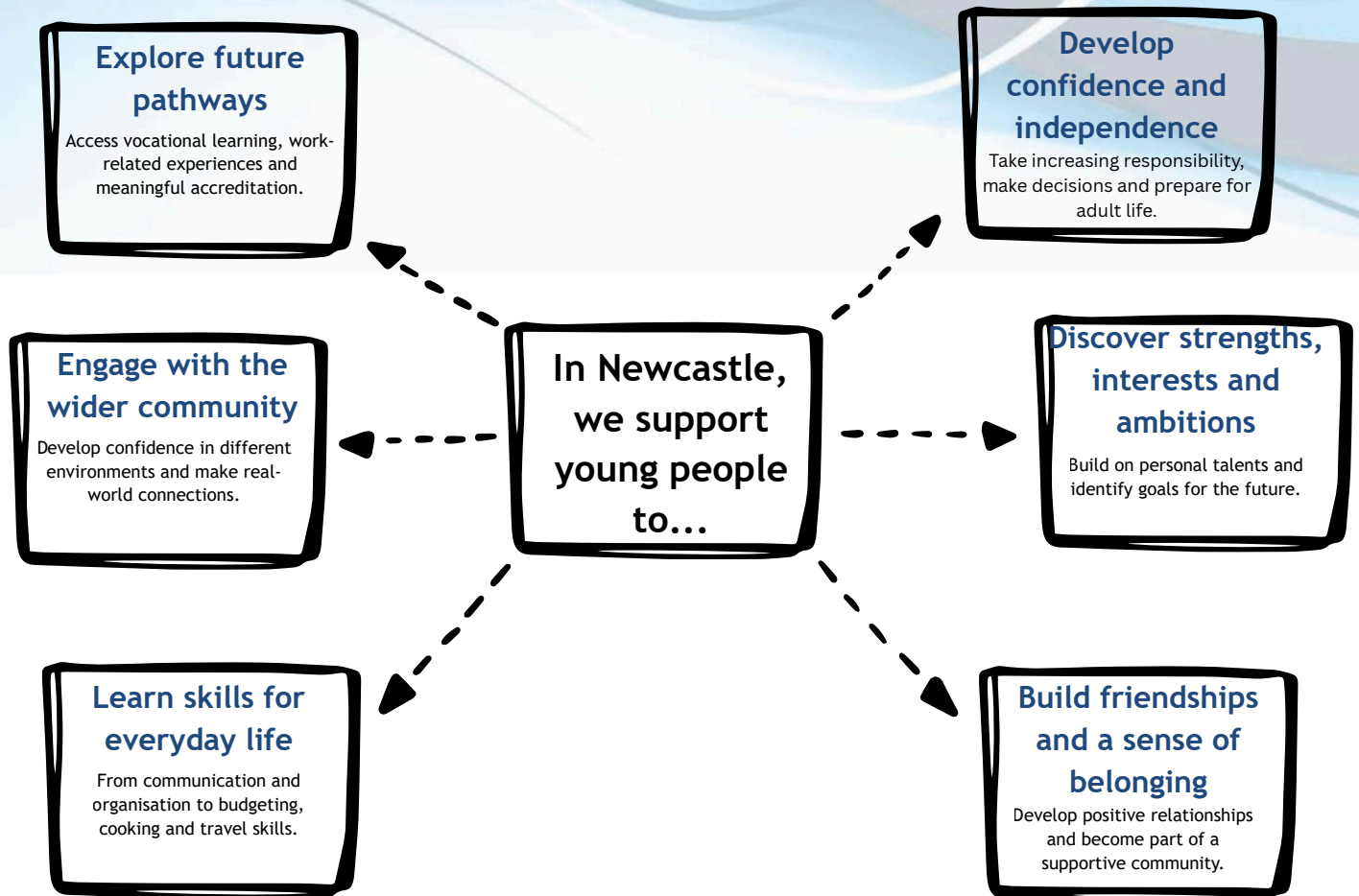
Estyn, January 2026



The Next Chapter

Building confidence, independence and pathways for the future.

Leaving Key Stage 4 is an important milestone and an exciting opportunity to begin preparing for adult life. In Newcastle, we support learners to build on their strengths, discover their interests and develop the skills, confidence and independence needed for their next steps.



Every learner's journey is unique. In Newcastle, we provide personalised support, meaningful learning experiences and opportunities that help learners prepare for adulthood, further education, training and employment.

Our learners benefit from:

- Experienced and specialist staff
- A welcoming and inclusive learning environment
- A personalised curriculum
- Strong pastoral support
- Opportunities to learn in authentic, real-life contexts
- Community and employer partnerships
- High aspirations for every learner



The school makes highly effective use of external partners to enrich learning experiences.

Estyn, January 2026

‘Together we can achieve’

Why Choose Newcastle?

The Newcastle Department offers a personalised and supportive Post-16 experience that helps young people prepare confidently for adulthood, further learning and future employment.

Learners benefit from:

- A welcoming and inclusive environment where every learner is known, valued and supported.
- Small class sizes and personalised learning pathways tailored to individual strengths, interests and aspirations.
- Experienced teachers and specialist support staff who understand the needs of our learners.
- Opportunities to develop independence, confidence and life skills that prepare learners for life beyond school.
- Vocational learning, enrichment activities and work-related experiences that help learners explore future pathways.
- Strong partnerships with families, employers and community organisations to enhance learning and personal development.
- Access to technology and specialist facilities that support engagement and achievement.
- A vibrant student community, including opportunities to participate in projects such as our learner-run coffee shop, Y Cwpan Bach.



Nearly all pupils make meaningful progress in independence skills over time.

Estyn, January 2026

Dress for Success

There is no formal uniform in Newcastle. Learners are encouraged to dress appropriately for their learning activities, vocational experiences and work-related opportunities. This helps prepare them for adult life, further education and future employment.

A Day in the Life of a Newcastle Student

No two days are exactly the same in Newcastle, but every day is centred around helping learners develop the skills, confidence and experiences they need for the future.

The Start of the Day

Learners begin the day by meeting with staff and peers, checking their timetable and preparing for the day ahead. This provides an opportunity to develop organisational skills, build positive relationships and set personal goals.

Learning for Life

Throughout the day, learners take part in a range of activities tailored to their individual pathways. This may include English, Mathematics, digital skills, vocational studies and preparation for adulthood activities. Learning is practical, purposeful and linked wherever possible to real-life situations.

Developing Independence

Learners are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for themselves and their learning. Opportunities are built into everyday experiences to develop communication, problem-solving, decision-making and self-management skills that will support them in adult life.

Exploring the World Beyond School

Many learners access opportunities within the local community, including work-related learning, enterprise activities, volunteering projects and visits that help them develop confidence and experience in different environments. These experiences help learners understand the opportunities available to them beyond school.

Building Friendships and Belonging

Newcastle is a friendly and supportive environment where learners have opportunities to socialise, work collaboratively and develop meaningful friendships. We believe that a strong sense of belonging is an important part of personal growth and wellbeing.

Planning for the Future

As learners progress through Newcastle, they receive support to explore their interests, identify future aspirations and prepare for their next destination. Whether moving into further education, training, employment or greater independence, students are encouraged to think positively about their future and the contribution they can make to their communities.

Celebrating Success

Every achievement matters. We take pride in recognising and celebrating progress, whether that is gaining a qualification, completing work experience, developing a new skill or overcoming a personal challenge. Our aim is for every young person to leave Newcastle feeling proud of what they have achieved and confident about what comes next.

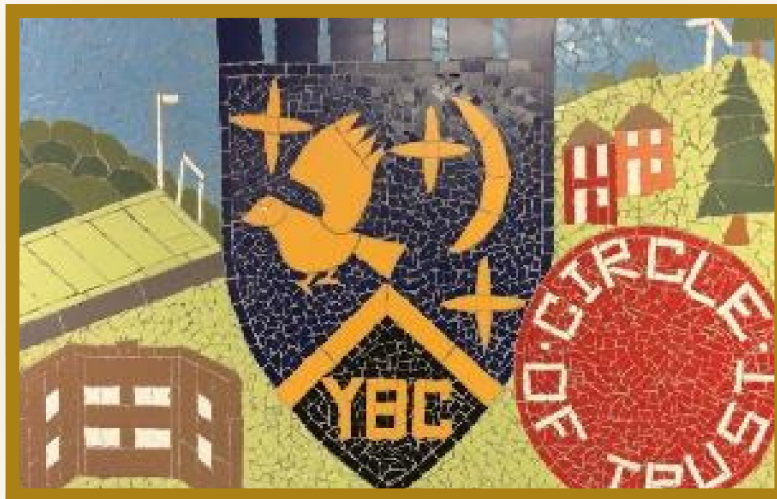
Supporting Every Learner

When learners join the Newcastle Department, we take time to get to know them as individuals. Initial assessments help us identify each learner's strengths, interests and areas for development, ensuring that they are placed within the most appropriate learning groups and receive the support they need to succeed.

Alongside specialist teaching staff, learners can access additional support from our Basic Skills Officer, who works with them individually and in small groups to help develop confidence and skills in literacy and numeracy.

Supporting wellbeing is a key part of life in Newcastle. A school counsellor is available throughout the week, and learners can also seek support from any member of our pastoral, teaching or support staff whenever they need advice, guidance or someone to talk to.

We work closely with a range of specialist professionals to help learners prepare for their futures. Careers Advisers visit regularly to support learners with planning their next steps, while Youth Engagement Workers and other specialist staff provide additional guidance and opportunities tailored to individual aspirations and needs.



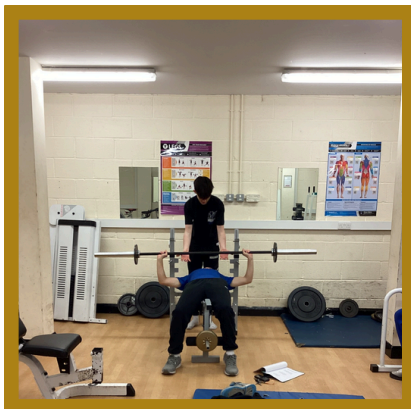
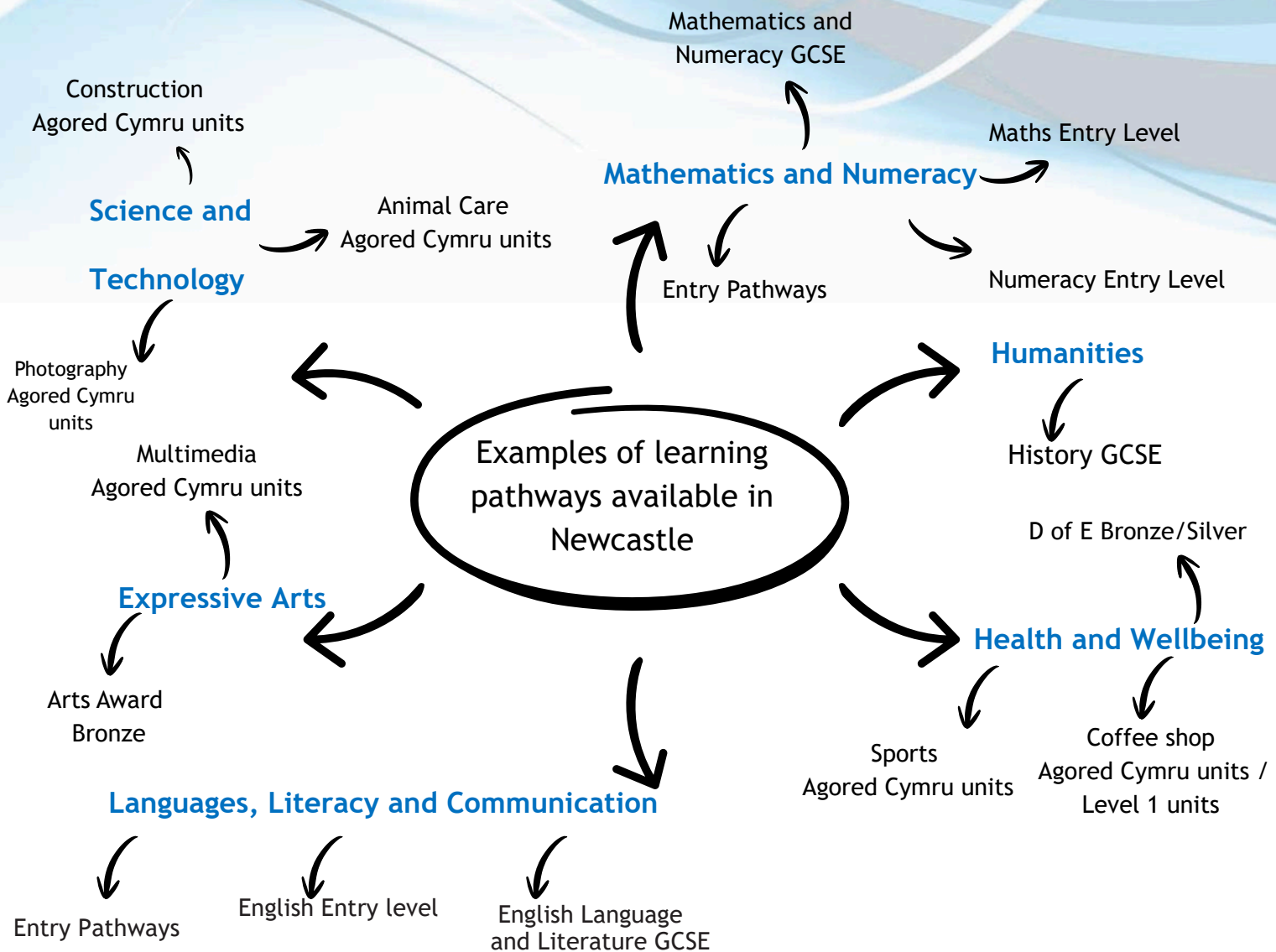
Learner voice is highly valued within Ysgol Bryn Castell. Newcastle learners have opportunities to contribute to school life through the School Parliament, helping to shape decisions about the learning environment, school facilities and wider opportunities available to learners.

Learners are encouraged to participate fully in the wider life of the school, including sports teams, fitness activities and enrichment opportunities. We also welcome ideas from our students and work hard to create experiences, visits and activities that reflect their interests and ambitions.

One of the highlights of Newcastle is Y Cwpan Bach, our learner-run coffee shop. This provides valuable opportunities for learners to develop communication, customer service, teamwork and employability skills while playing an active role within the school community.

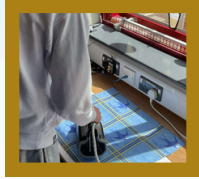
Personalised Learning Pathways

Every learner's journey through Newcastle is unique. Programmes of study are carefully tailored to meet individual needs, interests and future aspirations. Learners may work towards a range of qualifications, accreditation and vocational experiences designed to support successful progression into adult life.



Supporting Independence

Every learner's journey is different. Through a combination of life skills, community experiences, work-related learning and personalised support, Newcastle helps young people build the confidence and independence needed to take their next steps.



Nearly all pupils have purposeful opportunities to apply and develop their skills in authentic, real-life contexts

Estyn, January 2026



Choosing Your Pathway

Every learner's journey in Newcastle is unique. We work closely with learners, families and professionals to develop personalised programmes of study that reflect individual strengths, interests and future aspirations.

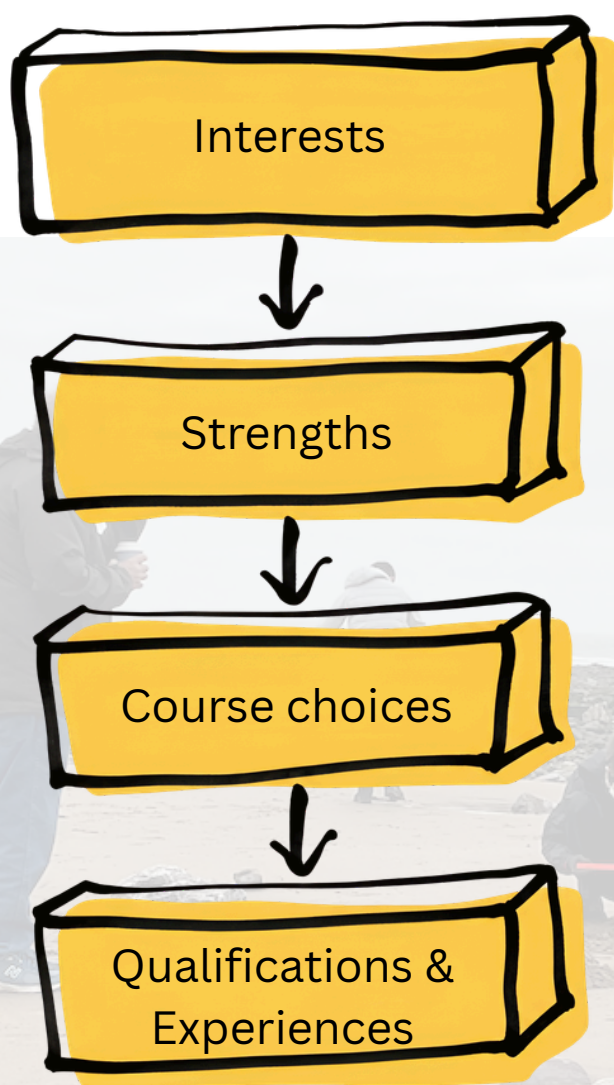
Learning pathways may include a combination of academic qualifications, vocational courses, life skills and preparation for adulthood opportunities.

When choosing courses, learners are encouraged to think about:

- Their interests and strengths
- Future education and employment goals
- Skills they would like to develop
- Qualifications that support their aspirations
- Opportunities to gain practical experience
- Developing confidence and independence

The curriculum prepares pupils effectively for their next steps, and as a result nearly all leavers progress to positive destinations such as further education, employment or training.

Estyn, January 2026



Learning pathways are personalised and developed in partnership with each student, taking account of their interests, strengths and future aspirations.

Our Students, Their Stories

Pupil A

Joined: Year 10 (2020)

Journey:

- Joined Ysgol Bryn Castell following a supported transition
- Received personalised support to access learning and navigate the school site
- Progressed from Coity Department to Newcastle
- Completed Duke of Edinburgh's Award, demonstrating determination and resilience
- Undertook weekly work experience in a local café
- Achieved a range of GCSE qualifications, including GCSE Mathematics
- Successfully prepared for progression to further education within just one year in Newcastle

Destination: 🎓 Successfully progressed to college after one year in Newcastle

Student Reflection:

When I went to YBC and Post 16 I felt very happy. The things I liked were; they understood me, there were quiet places to go if I needed to they helped me get a Maths GCSE, they helped me get a Duke of Edinburgh award. I could move about in the lesson if I needed to and I learnt lots of different topics.

Pupil B

Joined: Newcastle Department (2018) from a local secondary school

Journey:

- Joined Ysgol Bryn Castell to access a personalised Post-16 pathway
- Achieved qualifications in Mathematics, Art and Enterprise
- Developed a range of independence skills, including cooking, budgeting and money management
- Participated in travel training and work-related learning experiences
- Received support to access the Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) pathway, leading to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Built the confidence and skills needed to prepare for greater independence

Destination: 🏠 Successfully transitioned into supported housing following their time at Ysgol Bryn Castell

Pupil C

Joined: Newcastle Department (2018) from a local secondary school

Journey:

- Joined Ysgol Bryn Castell to continue their education within a supportive Post-16 environment
- Successfully completed the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Developed independence through travel training and accessing the local community
- Built budgeting and money management skills through practical, real-life experiences
- Participated in health and wellbeing activities, including walks and outdoor challenges
- Demonstrated resilience and determination during a particularly challenging period following the sudden loss of a parent whilst in Year 12

Destination: 🛒 Successfully progressed into part-time employment with Tesco

Pupil D

Joined: Newcastle Department (2024) from a local secondary school

Journey:

- Joined Ysgol Bryn Castell to access a personalised Post-16 pathway
- Rebuilt confidence and self-esteem through participation in the school football team
- Developed skills and confidence to progress to playing for a local football club
- Accessed targeted literacy and numeracy interventions to strengthen core skills
- Received ELKLAN support to further develop communication skills
- Developed valuable life skills and independence through the Newcastle curriculum

Destination: ⚽ Successfully progressed to a Level 1 College course whilst continuing to play for a local football team

‘Together we can achieve’

What Parents and Carers say

From understanding, meeting individuals needs, communicating home and promoting passions all I have to say are positive things about YBC and Post 16.

The department was excellent at helping us plan for the future, working at my child's pace and linking us with careers advice and opportunities that felt right for them.

I am so grateful for the support my child received in preparing for college and adult life. Without the Newcastle Department, I genuinely don't know where they would have gone after Year 11.

Ysgol Bryn Castell and the Newcastle Department turned school into a positive experience for my child. Staff quickly adapted support to meet their needs, recognised and nurtured their strengths, and helped them achieve a Maths GCSE that we never thought would be possible.

The work of the school is underpinned by strong, trusting relationships founded on compassion, acceptance and respect.

Estyn, January 2026

'Together we can achieve'

Joining Newcastle

Applying to Newcastle

Moving into the Newcastle Department is an important step in a young person's educational journey. We work closely with families, schools and professional partners to ensure that each learner is supported throughout the application and transition process.

The Application Process

During your young person's Person-Centred Planning (PCP) review meeting, Newcastle will be discussed as a potential next step in their education. This provides an opportunity for learners and families to consider whether Newcastle is the right pathway for their future aspirations.

Applications for specialist placements are considered through the Local Authority's placement process. A reviewed Individual Development Plan (IDP) is submitted as part of the application, and placement discussions involve a range of professionals, including Educational Psychologists, Careers Wales and senior leaders from Ysgol Bryn Castell.

Following this process, a placement panel will meet, usually during the Spring Term, to consider applications and confirm placements.

Offer of a Place

Learners may receive:

- ✓ An unconditional offer of a place
- ✓ A conditional offer of a place, where agreed targets and support arrangements are identified to help prepare the learner for a successful transition into Post-16 education.

Getting Ready for Newcastle

We understand that transitions can be both exciting and challenging. For this reason, transition arrangements are tailored to individual needs and may include:

- Visits to the Newcastle Department
- Meeting staff and current learners
- Accessing the common room and social spaces
- Joining Coffee Shop activities and other enrichment opportunities
- Spending time with familiar members of staff
- Gradually becoming familiar with routines and expectations

As the Summer Term progresses, learners are provided with increasing opportunities to spend time within the department, helping them build confidence and feel ready for September.



Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Source: [Education Maintenance Allowance, funding for Further Education | Student Finance Wales](#)

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is an income-assessed weekly allowance of £40 a week, to help students aged 16 to 18 with the costs of further education. Payments are made every two weeks, directly to the student's bank account, if they meet the school or college's attendance, performance and behaviour requirements.

If anyone in your household receives EMA, these payments will not affect any benefits being paid to you or the student.

Eligibility

Before making your application, there are some things you should check to make sure you'll be able to get EMA:

Age

You must be between 16 and 18 years old.

Nationality and residency

You can apply if all of the following apply:

- you're a UK national, Irish Citizen or have settled status
- you'll be living in Wales on the first day of the first academic year of your course
- you've been living in the UK and Islands for 3 years before starting your course

If these do not apply to you, you may still be eligible to apply for EMA if you're living in Wales - check your [Nationality and Residency guide](#) for more information

Course

- You must be studying at a school or college involved in the EMA scheme.
- Your course should be an academic or vocational course, up to and including Level 3. Examples of such courses are: GCSEs, BTEC, Basic skills courses, Independent Living Skills courses

You will not be eligible for EMA if you're receiving an allowance or similar, or being paid for a publicly funded work-based learning programme (such as an apprenticeship) in the UK.

Household income

Your household income must be below a certain level for you to get EMA. There are two different levels depending on your family circumstances:

- Household income must be £24,570 or less if you're the only young person in the household.
- Household income must be £27,273 or less if there is more than one young person in the household (this includes you).

Our [FE calculator](#) can help you work out whether you might be able to get EMA based on your household income.

More detailed information about household income, including what to do if you're a care leaver, can be found in the [household income section](#).



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