

iDdysgu



# iLearn

iCommunicate iCalculate iDiscover iThink iThrive iCreate

Curriculum Pioneer School

# iExplore

Olchfa School Ysgol yr Olchfa  
2023







Dear Parents/Carers

It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword for this booklet, in which the iExplore component of the iLearn curriculum is outlined.

If, like me, you passed through school some time ago, you will be understandably intrigued and maybe even concerned about anything that falls outside your comfort zone in terms of a school curriculum. To be honest, at one point I felt the same myself.

However, we live in a very rapidly changing world and that change requires a different type of learner moving forward; a learner with a different skill-set to the one required in years gone by.

Welsh Government has recognised this in the hugely important 'Successful Futures' document and has backed this up with numerous measures to support the development of the new curriculum, outlined in 'A Curriculum for Wales – A Curriculum for Life'.

Later on in this booklet we try to answer some of the most frequently asked questions in relation to iLearn and to answer them in as honest a way as we can. Please take time to read that section of this booklet if you have any concerns about the iLearn curriculum.

However, just from me, can I assure you that iLearn does not dilute the 'content' of the curriculum. In fact, the reverse is true. It enhances and deepens the understanding of key concepts, events and ideas. As Year 9 look forward to their GCSE courses, it is even more important that the Year 9 curriculum prepares them for GCSE study in the best possible way. Specifically, subjects that are contained within the iLearn curriculum and 'badged' in a different way (such as History, for example, within 'iThink') are nevertheless still there and, we would argue, studied in a deeper and more meaningful way. Occasionally people think that we 'don't teach History anymore'. That is clearly not the case.

And so to 'iExplore'. This has proved to be a popular addition to the curriculum. Out of the 50 lesson fortnight at Olchfa, 4 lessons have been allocated to 'iExplore'. The idea behind this is that pupils who have already begun to identify (in their minds, at least) their favourite curriculum areas or interests can explore them in more depth and in engaging contexts. Two things are really important to remember here: firstly, the remainder of the curriculum (the 46 lessons) allows for all other subject areas to be studied fully and properly; secondly, that the choice of an iExplore option should, ideally, follow a pupil's preferred learning path or aspiration. For example, a pupil who could see a future in a scientific field might well choose 'Turning Points in Science', whereas a talented linguist might choose to study a second language and choose 'French'.

In conclusion, here at the school we see iExplore as an entirely positive initiative in that it allows pupils a small measure of choice at Year 9, and it also allows them to deepen their skill-set in certain chosen areas.

If you read our inspection report, you cannot fail to be struck by the accolades that the inspection team gave to our pupils, who were described as resilient, ambitious, independent and demonstrating outstanding attitudes to their learning. The inspection team also recognised the commitment and expertise of our staff in planning work that was highly challenging and interesting and supporting pupils to achieve very high standards. This is what we are trying to build on and develop; a way of teaching and learning that produces learners who have the capacity to respond to change in a rapidly changing world.



Hugh Davies  
Headteacher

*“Creative and effective approaches to the design of the curriculum are a notable strength of the school. The innovative, ambitious and carefully planned ‘iLearn’ curriculum provides key stage 3 pupils with an extensive range of stimulating and challenging learning experiences. It is effective in helping pupils to develop as reflective, confident and independent learners. The school, through its innovative ‘research team’ approach, continuously reviews and evaluates this curriculum. This ensures that the curriculum evolves successfully to match pupils’ interests, ambitions and abilities”*

**Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for  
Education and Training in Wales**  
February 2018





## To all Year 9 pupils

**Welcome to the new part of Year 9 known as iExplore.**

*In Year 9, we are giving you the opportunity to select additional topics to study. Each of your current subjects have put together a selection of interesting courses for you to choose from.*

*This means that you can specialise in something that already interests you and allows you to further develop your knowledge and skills in that area.*

*You will take one subject in the first half of the year and a second subject in the second half of the year. The subjects on offer are shown below.*



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## Choosing your options

We are asking you to select FIVE iExplore subjects that you would like to take next year. You will need to fill in your choices on a google form that has been sent to your school email account.

Please make sure that you put your choices in order, with the subject you would most like to take as your first choice. From your list, we will choose two subjects.

The deadline for submission is **Monday 27th March 2023.**

To submit your FIVE iExplore subject choices, please complete the google form that has been emailed to your school email account.

If you have any difficulty accessing or filling out the google form, please email Mr Thomas, your Learning Leader.





# iCalculate

## Playing with Programming!

Could you be the next Bill Gates or Steve Jobs? Do you enjoy logic puzzles? Are you a whizz at mathematics? Do you sometimes think 'I could write a programme to do that?' Then this is the course for you!

You will undertake a range of programming projects, which will see you using programming languages such as Visual Basic, Python, Java and Web Programming. You will enhance your computer science skills by focussing on logic and problem solving. You may even have the opportunity to look at robotics and programming for different devices.

## The Wizardry of Web Design

Are you a good designer? Do you think you have the skills needed in the world of technology? Do you look at websites and mobile apps and then think 'I can design better'? Do you want to enhance your IT and design skills to create your own website or mobile application using industry software? If so, this is the course for you.

You will develop your design, usability and UX (User Experience) skills by developing your own website using industry software such as Dreamweaver, Photoshop and developing your skills in HTML and CSS. You will also have the chance to look at animation, video and music manipulation and may even have the opportunity to look at mobile app design.

## The Marvel of Mathematics

Do you love solving puzzles, spotting patterns and finding new ways of looking at things? Have you got the courage to experiment, ask questions and be creative to solve problems? Are you ready to enjoy the beauty in Mathematics? Then this is the course for you!

The aim of this course is to develop your thinking and reasoning skills and encourage you to think creatively through mathematical games, exciting challenges and investigations. There might even be the chance to prepare and enter competitions!

# iCommunicate

## Film and Media in the modern world

This exciting and interactive course will help you to develop an understanding of the important role that the media plays in the modern world. We will explore the way newspapers represent contemporary events and issues as well as learn how to read and analyse film sequences from contemporary British and American films. Furthermore, you will learn the skills required to complete your own media production, gain an insight into the wider issues in mainstream cinema and learn how to write engrossing film scripts of your own. Here is a list of the topics covered:

- Contemporary television and film
- Objectivity and bias in newspapers
- The music industry in the modern world
- Representations of stars
- Contemporary video games and the issues they raise
- How to analyse film sequences
- Short films and independent cinema

## Creative Writing

What makes a reader pick up a book or short story and read it from start to finish? Creativity. Horror, adventure, sci-fi, romance and mystery all need this creative writing to keep a reader engaged and so writers need to present their ideas in an imaginative and unique way.

Focusing on how a writer develops plot through different writing techniques, you will learn how to develop your own events through suspense, conflict and conversation. You will also learn how to use descriptive techniques to set your scene effectively and clearly, as well as exploring and developing your characters to tell your story through different genres.

- Engage with different genres of text and discover how they differ in terms of engaging an audience
- Explore different writing styles and characterisation
- Discover how to set a scene effectively and use symbolism to enhance meaning
- Have the opportunity to enter a writing competition and be published with [www.youngwriters.co.uk](http://www.youngwriters.co.uk)



## French for Fun!

Forget le homework and les textbooks. Come and find out all about what makes France our tastiest, chic-est and most cultured European neighbour!

It's not all cheese and verbs. Come and explore modern France: the film, the food and - ofcourse - the fashion; find out why French football and rugby teams are never far from the finals and why after a history soaked in the blood of revolution, France is an equal, vibrant and multicultural society.

We have activities and trips planned, and our aim is to give you a taste of the real France. Grab your virtual passport and come along to iExplore French

## Hispanic fantastic!

Fancy trying your hand at Portuguese? Falamos do Bruno-no no-no?

On this course you will have the opportunity to learn the wonderful language that is Portuguese whilst exploring the diverse cultures across the Hispanic world through the vibrant genres of cinema, music, art, food, geography and history. What will you do?

- Practical Portuguese language activities and games.
- The chance to be a food critic and learn recipes for some tasty Spanish tapas or the famous Portuguese 'Pastéis de nata'!
- From beaches to jungles and mountains to deserts - explore the jaw-dropping geography and iconic landscape, ancient civilisations and unique wildlife that can be found.
- If history is what interests you - then delve into the past to see how it has impacted the present.
- Artists, grab your paintbrushes and scalpels and discover inspiring artwork by Picasso, Goya, Dalí and many more!
- Film, should we talk about Bruno? What can film teach us about the language, society and culture of the Hispanic world?

## HunanIAITH

*You + Language = Identity.*

There is so much more to Welsh than learning a language. Why not embrace all that our Welsh culture has to offer? The course will allow you to develop your knowledge and understanding of how the Welsh language has endured, and is still with us today. Consider the future of the language and the goals of the Welsh Government, as expressed in the national anthem 'O Bydded i'r Heniaith Barhau'.

You will have the opportunity to embrace the captivating culture and experience far more than the language itself with opportunities for educational visits and speakers visiting the school to get first hand information from a variety of sources. There is more to Welsh than what we learn in the classroom!

The target set by the Government is to reach 1 million speakers by 2050.  
**Will you join to become 1 in a million?**

# iCreate

## Art and Design

Did you know that creating and appreciating Art has a 'feel good' power on the brain? Are you aware that Art improves your thinking skills? Did you know that the arts are the fastest growing part of the economy in Britain?

Are you aware of how the visual arts impact our daily lives?

This course will teach you how to see things differently and to create interesting viewpoints from visual stimuli. You will be trained how to record details through a range of methods including printing, clay and textiles and digital media to name just a few. Through a range of practical masterclasses and exploration of artists work, your creative making skills will be challenged. The course will open your eyes to the vast career and further education opportunities available in the visual arts.

You will have the chance to explore:

- 2D processes such as digital media (graphics), photography, printing, painting, collage, paper cutting, textiles
- 3D processes such as clay, wire and card, product design and constructed textiles (fashion design and costume)

## Drama

Did you know that studying Drama improves your self-esteem and confidence? Did you know it also develops your ability to solve problems and expands your imagination?

This course will focus on practical experimentation that is collaborative and creative. It will enable you to develop your communication skills and your capacity to work independently. Your teacher will train you, through a series of workshops, to devise a meaningful, stylised performance. Following a series of rehearsals, your devised piece will be performed in front of an invited audience.

You will learn:

- to develop strong performance skills
- to develop characterisation
- how staging affects a performance
- how different styles of drama affect a performance



## Music

Did you know that studying music helps to improve your memory? Did you know that it also helps to build imagination and thinking skills? Do you want to learn how to play new pieces of music and try new instruments, Yes? Then read on:

The course will involve performing, having the opportunity to use a range of different instruments and playing in a range of different styles.

You will have a chance to:

- perform a variety of pieces of music in different styles
- Work individually and as a member of an ensemble (Group/band)
- practically experiment with key aspects of music (including harmony and chords)  
You will learn team skills and problem solving skills through making arrangements of songs together and develop confidence in performing skills.

## Musical Theatre

Hamilton, Dear Evan Hansen, In the Heights, Beetlejuice, A little shop of horrors, West Side Story, Les Miserables, The Lion King, Into the Woods, Wicked, The Addams family and many more! If you have heard of one or more of these musicals then this course is for you!

This course will involve performing scenes and songs from a variety of different musicals. You will have the chance to explore:

- Acting
- Singing
- Movement

You will learn how to act through song, how to work as an ensemble and how to stage musical theatre scenes leading to live performances on stage.



## Digital Music Technology

Digital music technology encompasses digital instruments, computers, electronic effects units, software, or digital audio equipment by a performer, composer, sound engineer, DJ, or record producer to produce, perform or record music. The term refers to electronic devices, instruments, and software used in performance, playback, recording, composition, mixing, analysis, and editing of music.

On this course you will have the chance to explore:

- How to use a range of Music technology software
- Create your own music for playback
- Use iMac computers to create and edit music
- Use iPads to create and edit music
- Create MP3 recordings with a mix of audio and digital sounds

Lessons will take place in the new school Apple Mac Suite in South Block.

## Fashion and Textiles

Did you know that studying textiles not only gives you a life skill that can lead to exciting career opportunities, but it also can be a hobby that improves wellbeing and mental health?

Are you aware of how fashion and textiles can impact on our daily lives? Imagine a world without textiles. What would we wear? Where would we sleep? Textile materials make a difference to the lives of others whether it be through medical textiles, such as knitted replacement heart valves, or through fashion that helps people express their individuality.

This course will give you an introduction to the Art Textiles GCSE. You will learn how to use sources of inspiration in order to create a visual diary. You will be shown how to draw from observation and translate ideas into creative and unique textiles pieces. Drawing skills are not essential but an ability to think creatively will help. You will be shown the work of other textile artists and encouraged and supported to find your own style.

You will have the chance to explore:

- Decorative techniques such as hand and machine embroidery, embellishment, printing and fabric manipulation such as tie-dye and batik.
- Constructional techniques such as creating basic seams, fastenings, edgings and finishes as well as learning the basics of garment construction and pattern cutting.



# iDiscover

## Turning points in Science

How did we get to where we are in our scientific understanding of the world around us?

This course gives you the opportunity to learn about the people and the stories behind the development of our current understanding of Science. As you progress through the course you will learn about the processes behind scientific discoveries, the nature of scientific research and develop a wider understanding of key scientific ideas and the interconnection of scientific thinking.

During the course, you will study many of the key figures throughout recorded history who have made landmark discoveries or breakthroughs which have altered the way we see the world and how it works. Case studies will be used to help you consider the scientific method - Archimedes, Marie Curie, Louis Pasteur, Charles Darwin, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Robert Boyle, Rosalind Franklin, Stephen Hawking, Aristotle, the list of possibilities is almost endless...

## Food

How does what we eat affect our lives?

Most of us know that eating healthy foods, at least part of the time will help us to feel better and live longer. We have the most abundant food supply in history but the increased consumption of fast foods and processed foods, along with our busy lifestyles, makes choosing healthy foods more of a challenge.

**The problem for most people in developed countries is not that we don't have enough food, but that we too often make the wrong food choices.**

This course will enable you to learn more about the contemporary issues surrounding food along with how to create healthy and imaginative meals safely. As part of this course you have the opportunity to complete the Food Safety/Hygiene courses and gain formal certification.

## Forensics

How can we use the present to reconstruct a crime?

Forensic scientists apply scientific analysis to criminal and civil investigations, producing evidence that's admissible in a court of law. It's a fascinating and rigorous scientific discipline that will build your knowledge of biology and chemistry, as well as your advanced problem solving, data interpretation and communication skills.

Within this course you will work through a number of different units, each looking at a particular aspect of forensic science, culminating in a longer final section involving a crime scene investigation involving all topics and a presentation of evidence. This will involve many scientific investigation skills but also enhance teamwork and communication skills.

If you enjoy problem solving, challenging puzzles, hands-on practical work and have a real passion for Science, then this is the course for you.

## Environmental Science

"It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living." - Sir David Attenborough

Ecology is the study of the relationship between living organisms, including humans, and their physical environment. In this iExplore option you will have the opportunity to discover and explore different ecosystems. We will look at a range of ecosystems such as coral reefs, tropical rainforests, deep sea, open ocean, deserts, mangroves and seagrass, rivers and lakes, as well as mountains and hills. We will delve into how different organisms are specially adapted to survive and thrive in these ecosystems. We will look at how humans are impacting ecosystems directly and indirectly as well as how we as members of a school community can be empowered to take action to reduce our impact on the planet.

The projects conducted will provide an opportunity to make species profiles of your choice from macro to mega fauna and flora. At the end of the course we will aim to put together a British species identification guide for an ecosystem of your choice. We will aim to get guest speakers who are leaders in their ecological fields to broaden our understanding of what employment in this sector looks like.

This iExplore option would be ideal for someone interested in wildlife, conservation and the preservation of our planet.



## Computer Aided Design (CAD)

"There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no, and WOW! Wow is the one to aim for." Milton Glaser

This course gives you the opportunity to design and create imaginative visuals inspired by current Graphic artists. To realise your designs, you will learn the basics of both Photoshop and Illustrator. As you progress through the course you will learn how to use Typography effectively, appreciate good graphic design and develop a wider understanding of modern graphic art.

During the course, you will study a number of graphic artists who have helped visualise the modern graphic world in which we live.

If you want to work in design, graphic art, illustration or simply have an interest in how to use the software to create imaginative designs, this is the course for you.



# iThink

## Enterprise

### Can you make a successful product?

You will have the opportunity to explore the world of product development and ignite your entrepreneurial skills. You will create and market your own product and compete alongside other aspiring entrepreneurs. Throughout the year, you will develop eight fundamental business skills: communication, confidence, financial capability, initiative, organisation, problem solving, teamwork and resilience.

**Could you be the next Henry Patterson, Nina Devani or Ollie Forsyth?**

## Law and Criminology

The study of Law and Criminology provides a unique opportunity for you to become a young Criminologist. Would you like to examine and explore crime and ask yourselves some really difficult questions?

### You will have the chance to explore questions like:

- What does a criminal look like?
- What crimes take place in your area and can you trust the data?
- Do you experience crime differently because of your gender, age or ethnicity?
- Do our police, courts and prisons work effectively?
- Does the media have an impact on how we perceive crime?
- How should we tackle crime?
- Is the law always right?





## Global Citizens

Are you ready to change the world?

In Global Citizens iExplore lessons, you will be encouraged to be an **ACTIVE, INFORMED** and **RESPONSIBLE** citizen of Wales and the Wider World. You will get the chance to explore some of the biggest challenges facing the World today, these include poverty, climate change, war and conflict and inequality.

Throughout the course, you will have the chance to:

- Engage with contemporary issues
- Understand the impacts of our own and others actions
- Respect the needs, rights and opinions of others
- Take committed social action as caring, participative citizens of local, national and global communities

Together we can defeat poverty, demand equality and defend our planet!



# iThrive

## Sports Leadership

In this course you will use sport and physical activity to help you develop and hone your leadership skills whilst helping yourself and others stay physically active.

You will learn and demonstrate important life skills such as effective communication and organisation whilst learning to lead basic physical activities for younger people, their peers, older generations and within the community.

You will have the chance to:

- Study the skills and qualities of a leader and different leadership styles
- Learn how to structure and lead sports sessions
- Improve knowledge of the rules and regulations of a variety of sports
- Plan and organise a series of sporting events

## Dance

In this course you will have the opportunity to explore the world of Dance! During a range of practical workshops you'll have the chance to participate in a variety of genres including Contemporary, Jazz, Street and Commercial dance. Working as part of a team you'll rehearse to perfect and perform group routines to the highest standard.

You'll also learn what it takes to be a choreographer; developing your understanding of the process professionals use when creating dance routines. This course enables you to improve a number of important transferable skills including discipline, resilience, confidence and teamwork.

You will have the opportunity to:

- Participate in energetic practical dance classes whilst learning teacher led routines.
- Develop your physical, technical and expressive dance skills.
- Get your creative juices flowing and work with others to develop your own dance sequences.



## Sport Conditioning and Performance

Experience the first steps in a rapidly growing and critical area of sport. Develop your understanding of how to create and implement training and physical fitness programmes to improve athletic performance and maximise physical potential. You will learn about movement analysis, effective coaching, nutrition for performance as well as injury prevention and prehab.

You will have the chance to:

- Gain experience of the latest training methods to help maximise performance.
- Build knowledge and understanding of how professional sports teams ensure their performance and potential is maximised.
- Improve your understanding of performance using technologies the professionals use.



## iLearn FAQs

### Q1. Remind me, what is so different about iLearn?

- Subjects are grouped into six Learning Areas. These are iCommunicate (English, MFL, Welsh); iCalculate (Mathematics, Computing); iDiscover (Science and Technology); iThink (Humanities); iThrive (PE, PSE) and iCreate (Expressive Arts).
- The curriculum is centred around the four purposes outlined in 'Successful Futures' (which was referred to in the foreword). The aim of the four purposes is to encourage pupils to become
  - Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
  - Enterprising and creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
  - Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
  - Healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society

Learning Areas have designed a curriculum that promotes and enhances the four purposes. Pupils are encouraged to apply their skills and knowledge in real world contexts.

### Q2. What is the evidence that iLearn is achieving its goals?

- The goals of iLearn are the four purposes outlined by Professor Donaldson. Both the inspection report and the work of the research team indicate that success is being achieved. The first words of the inspection report are: "nearly all (95%) pupils are ambitious, confident learners."
- Other findings confirm high-level attainment in oracy skills, problem solving capabilities and independent learning; pupils achieve well in the literacy and numeracy tests and pupils' communication skills are notably strong.'
- Moreover, inspectors comment that :  
'The innovative, ambitious and carefully planned iLearn curriculum provides key stage 3 pupils with an extensive range of stimulating and challenging learning experiences. It is effective in helping pupils to develop as reflective, confident and independent learners.'



## iLearn FAQs

### Q3. How will the iLearn curriculum prepare pupils for GCSEs?

- The skills being developed in key stage 3 prepare pupils for the rigours of effective learning and therefore equip them well for GCSE. Ambitious and capable learners, confident and enterprising individuals are well placed to achieve at key stage 4. The evidence from the recent inspection suggests that iLearn is developing resilient and successful learners.
- Learning areas are viewing year 9 as a bridging year. They are very aware of the syllabus requirements at GCSE and what is needed to prepare pupils effectively. The skills that have been built up in years 7 and 8 will be combined with GCSE criteria in order to ensure appropriate coverage during year 9. In other words, certain GCSE content can be experienced in year 9.

### Q4. Pupils have to choose their GCSE subjects next year. How will they know what to choose if they only do the iLearn subjects?

- Learning Areas will be identifying the work that they do as part of a specific GCSE subject. We will also hold an information week before the options are completed where iLearn subjects will identify the GCSE subjects within their curriculum area and give them a flavour of what is in each one.
- There will be an opportunity to ask about subjects in the Parent's Evening in January. Subjects will also have information stands where staff will be happy to answer questions about their GCSE subject.
- Pupils are able to choose from a selection of over twenty GCSE subjects. The freedom of the iLearn curriculum means that pupils will have had the opportunity to experience all of these subjects before choices are made. Before iLearn, subjects like Business Studies, Computer Science and Health and Social Care were amongst the subjects being chosen with no previous experience of the subject.
- The iExplore options allow for pupils to take their subject knowledge and expertise further, even better preparing them for GCSE study.

## iLearn FAQs

### Q5. How is pupil progress measured?

- Teachers have been assessing work and reporting on progress in their Learning Areas according to their own success criteria, and their expectations of individual pupils. The quality of formative feedback is highly commended by inspectors. Nevertheless, if we are still required to report levels at the end of key stage 3, we will be able to do so.







