



**Mountain Ash Comprehensive School**  
**Annual Report to Parents: 2023-24**

2023-24 was another very successful year at Mountain Ash Comprehensive School. We are delighted to share a summary of some of the work that is going on at the school and wish to take this opportunity to thank all parents and carers for your unstinting co-operation and support over the last year.

This report is a summary of the steps taken by the Governing Body in the discharge of its functions since the last report was published.

**1. Clerk to the Governing Body**

The Clerk to the Governing Body is Mr Gavin Higgins, Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

**2. Chairperson of the Governing Body**

The Chairperson of the Governing Body is Mr Gareth Thomas, c/o Mountain Ash Comprehensive School.

**3. Members of the Governing Body**

The following people are currently members of the Governing Body.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Category of Governor</b>	<b>Appointed By</b>	<b>Retirement Date</b>
Alison Carter Scott Treeby	<b>LEA</b>	<b>Council Members</b>	November 2027 July 2027
Andrew Flaherty Gareth Newton Gareth Thomas Katrina Williams Andrew James	<b>Community Governors</b>	<b>Governing Body</b>	September 2026 July 2027 September 2026 January 2028 May 2028
Leah Jervis Isaac Mensah Ian Murphy Claire Lewis Jonathan Jones Emma Rasmussen	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Parents</b>	September 2025 July 2027 September 2025 November 2027 April 2028 April 2028
Chris Badman Nicola Bevan	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teaching Staff</b>	November 2028 November 2028
Gemma Phillips	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Non-teaching Staff</b>	September 2028
Samantha Evans	<b>Headteacher</b>		



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When fully constituted this governing body is made up as follows:

LEA Governors	5
Community Governors	5
Parent Governors	6
Teacher Governors	2
Staff Governor	1
Headteacher	1
Total	20

There are currently vacancies on the Governing Body that the school is actively working to fill:

**LA – 2 Vacancies**

**4. Resolutions**

Governors received and approved a range of documents and policies during the year.

**5. Election of Parent Governors**

If any Parent Governor(s) resign, arrangements will be made for an election to be undertaken at the appropriate time.

**6. School Performance Information**

The New Curriculum for Wales provides progression information for the pupils. National tests for Literacy and Numeracy are still taken at KS3. The school continues to perform well in line with similar schools.

Interim reports are issued to parents termly and a comprehensive written report is issued to parents annually.





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**7. Financial Statement – Period Covered 2023-24**

Enclosed, as appendix A is a copy of the school's financial statement for the Financial Year 2023-24.

**8. School Prospectus**

The School Prospectus is updated annually to include any changes required by Welsh Government or other related bodies. A copy of the prospectus is generally issued to parents whose children are starting school for the first time or transferring from Junior/Primary to Comprehensive School. Excellent links exist between our school and our cluster primaries which enables learners to settle quickly between KS2 and KS3.

**9. School Improvement Plan**

The School Improvement Plan directs the focus for the school each year. The School Improvement Plan and progress against its objectives is regularly reviewed by the Governing Body. Our current priorities are as follows:-

<b>IA1: Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>To further improve the quality of teaching to effectively meet the needs of all learners, including disadvantaged learners</b>
	<b>To improve the planning for, and monitoring of, progression in learners' skills</b>
<b>IA2: Wellbeing, Care, Support and Guidance</b>	<b>To continue to improve attendance</b>
	<b>To develop a culture of positive behaviour and attitudes to learning to further improve learner outcomes and reduce exclusions</b>
<b>IA3: Leading and Improving</b>	<b>To improve consistency in the quality and impact of self-evaluation and improvement planning</b>

**Teaching, Learning, Skills and our Curriculum:** We endeavour to make the curriculum as exciting and engaging as possible to engage and enthuse our learners. KS3 learners follow the Curriculum for Wales across all subjects with the aim of developing the four purposes of:-

- Ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work



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- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

The Curriculum for Wales also supports learners' development of literacy, numeracy and digital competency skills. To complement the new Curriculum, valuable vocational qualifications such as Equality & Diversity are taught from Year 8 onwards. Learners who have additional learning needs may be placed in smaller teaching groups. Learners may also receive additional support in literacy and numeracy, where this is required.

The wellbeing of learners is vitally important to us; we run a comprehensive PSE (Pastoral and Social Education) programme which is taught for one hour per fortnight by a specialist teacher alongside a series of PSE days which focus on skills development, team-work, pastoral and social issues, including RSE (Relationships and Sex Education). Additionally, a wide range of wellbeing and interventions run alongside the main curriculum to support learners.



**Trips/ visits and extra-curricular activities:** Extra-curricular activities and opportunities run alongside the traditional curriculum. In 2023-24 there were trips to Llangrannog, Cardiff Bay, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, numerous sporting activities, Oxford University, West Midlands Safari Park and many more.







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Our sixth form at KS5 is part of the Cynon Valley Consortium, with St.John Baptist School and Aberdare Community School. The consortium offer consists of academic and vocational Level 3 courses. Learners travel between the 3 sites to access these, with their home school as their base for registration.

#### **10. Use of the Welsh Language - Communication**

Mountain Ash Comprehensive School is an English medium school but we work very hard to promote the Welsh language by using incidental Welsh, celebrating our Welsh heritage and culture across the school year including an annual Eisteddfod and other cultural events, Shwmae Day and a Welsh in the Workplace event for learners in KS4.



Learners from Mountain Ash Comprehensive School supported the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in August 2024.





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Learners for whom English is a second language are catered for according to their needs with input from appropriate personnel.

#### **11. Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)**

The school was last inspected in November 2018. Estyn congratulated the school on the progress that had been made on the PIAP in March 2021 and the school was removed from monitoring. The school is now working towards current priorities which are outlined in the School Improvement Plan.

#### **12. Community Focused Schools**

A community-focused school is one that: 'provides a range of services and activities', often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its learners, their families and the wider community. We work closely with parents, the Governing Body and with a range of multi-agencies including Eye to Eye Counselling, the Educational Psychology Service, Attendance Welfare Service, Resilient Families, Behaviour Support Services, Youth Offending Service, Careers Service, Additional Learning Needs services and Social Services.

Wellbeing support also includes 'drop-in' sessions and extra-curricular activities with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS), sessions with Empire Fighting Chance and the Premier League Inspires programme with Cardiff City Football Club and with the police through the School Beat programme. Our latest addition to our programme are our Therapy Dogs, Cali and Myfi – our newest members of staff!



Some learners also follow our 'Calon MACS' programme in KS4, which includes working with external agencies such as ARK and Hen Felin and engaging in work experience placements. Younger learners are also able to access 'Calon MACS' provision which includes small group intervention, literacy and numeracy support and wellbeing interventions such as Lego Therapy. These specialist provisions support our inclusive ethos and help us to effectively meet the wellbeing needs of our learners.

Our rich and well established curriculum links include universities, AGENDA, local businesses, Careers Wales, Cluster Primary schools, the Children's Commissioner for Wales (see the photographs below), our local AM Vicky Howells and organisations such as the



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Welsh Youth Parliament, all of which help to broaden the experiences of our learners. Additionally, the school engages regularly with local churches, charities and community initiatives and actively participates in community events such as Remembrance services.



### **13. School Holiday Dates 2024-25**

Term	Begin	Half term		End	No. of School Days
		Begin	End		
Autumn 2024	Mon 2 Sept 2024	Monday 28 Oct 2024	Friday 1 Nov 2024	Friday 20 Dec 2024	75
Spring 2025	Monday 6 Jan 2025	Monday 24 Feb 2025	Friday 28 Feb 2025	Friday 11 Apr 2025	65
Summer 2025	Monday 28 April 2025	Monday 26 May 2025	Friday 30 May 2025	*Monday 21 July 2025	55



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	TOTAL	195
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- i. **Mon 2 Sept 2024 and \*Monday 21 July 2025** will be designated INSET days for **all** LEA Maintained Schools. The remaining three INSET days to be taken will be at the discretion of each individual school following appropriate consultation with staff. **\*It is intended that this INSET Day will either be taken on Mon 21 July 2025 or at an alternative time for example in the form of twilight sessions.**

All schools will be closed on **Monday 5 May 2025** for the May Day Bank Holiday.

Significant dates:

Christmas                      Wednesday 25 December 2024

Easter                          Good Friday 18 April 2025  
Easter Monday 21 April 2025

May Bank Holidays Monday 5 May 2025  
Monday 26 May 2025

The Welsh Government may decide to allocate additional INSET days, schools will be informed of these at the appropriate time.

The School day is organised as follows;

Morning session	08.45a.m.-1.25p.m.
Break	11.05a.m.to 11.25a.m
Lunch	1.25p.m.- 2.00p.m.
Afternoon session	2.00p.m.-3.00p.m.

#### **14. Review of School Policies**

The school has a large number of Policy documents covering both curriculum and non-subject areas. These documents are regularly reviewed/revised by staff/governors to incorporate changing trends and legislation. Further information is available on the school website or by contacting the Headteacher during the school day.

#### **15. Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

The School's Policy for the Assessment of and Provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs is summarised as follows:





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The School's policy for the identification, assessment and provision for learners with Additional Learning Needs is consistent with the requirements of The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill.

The School's Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) ensures that all staff are updated on learners identified with barriers to their learning, to ensure their needs are met through high quality universal provision in the classroom. The ALNCo has provided training to all staff on the implications of the ALNET Bill, including specialist training such as Speech, Language and Communication this academic year.

Our ALNCo also liaises with all members of staff, to ensure that the progress of all learners is regularly monitored and assessed and to ensure that each learner reaches his or her potential.

From January 2022 in line with the new ALNET Bill, some learners who previously had statements have moved to the new ALN register, if they required an IDP (Individual Development Plan) with enhanced provision to meet their ALN. We currently have 26 learners identified as ALN with an IDP in place.

During the 2023-24 financial year, the school was allocated funding through the formula funded budget to meet the requirements of learners with Additional Learning Needs. The school deploys this funding appropriately to support learners with Additional Learning Needs and reports regularly to Governors as part of our monitoring processes.

The policy was updated during the 2023-24 academic year.

#### **16. Access for Disabled Learners**

The governing body is mindful of the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 and The Special Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2005 in drawing up the School Improvement Plan/Post Inspection Action Plan, and the day to day operation of the whole site. The school's Strategic Equality Plan outlines our commitment to equal opportunities for all.

The school is committed to ensuring that all learners are able to participate in the school curriculum and (where they desire) in activities such as after school clubs, leisure/sporting events and educational visits. All aspects of accessibility, including access to written information are included in the planning process.

The Authority has in place an Accessibility Strategy and in line with this strategy has had an audit of the school site undertaken, as part of an Authority wide brief, to identify any potential barriers and (ultimately) improve the access to the school.

#### **17. Fabric of the Building & Provision of Toilet Facilities**



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The building is generally in a good state of repair. Over the past year the following refurbishment/repairs have been carried out.

- New furniture (desks/chairs & bookcases) in Language faculty classrooms
- New internal and double doors in some areas
- New windows in the two storey block
- New lighting in Caffi MACS and upgraded lighting in other areas of the school
- New CCTV across the site

There are 4 permanent sets of designated learner toilets located across the school:-

- ground floor corridor near Technology Faculty
- ground floor corridor Maths Faculty
- ground floor corridor near reception
- ground floor corridor near Sports barn

A cleaner is employed to maintain high standards in the toilets during the school day.

#### **18. Target Setting**

Targets for the school are noted in the SIP. Pupils no longer have targets but are measured on achievement of progression steps.

#### **19. Attendance Information**

School attendance has been affected considerably since the pandemic and the school works closely with parents and the AWS (Attendance and Wellbeing Service) to improve attendance at school.

The school attendance was 84.5% for 2023/24. The target for 2024/25 is 86%. Attendance of all pupils is closely monitored.

Mountain Ash Comprehensive School has high expectations for learner attendance. Good attendance at school is essential for learners to reach their full potential and achieve the best possible outcomes. There is a direct correlation between good attendance and good performance in examination results and therefore we strive to instil good habits from Year 7 onwards. We reward and celebrate good attendance with end of term celebration assemblies and attendance is a key component of our new MACS Award.

We have robust monitoring procedures to tackle poor attendance which includes working closely with the AWS service. As part of our graduated response, we send updates via letters, make home visits, make use of fixed penalty notices and in rare cases may pursue prosecution through the court system. Daily contact is required for learners who are unable to attend school. Our Family Engagement Officer works closely with families where attendance is a concern to support and improve engagement with school.

#### **20. Admission/Transition Arrangements**





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The County Borough Council is the Admissions Authority for all schools (other than Church schools where the school's governing body is the admissions authority) within the Authority's boundary. The school's admission arrangements are, therefore, operated in line with the Authority's policy on school admissions which is contained in the publication Starting School book. The book is made available to parents at the point of their application for their child's admission to school. The contents of this book can also be accessed online on the Authority's website.

**Transition from Primary School:** We have a very successful and busy KS2-3 Transition programme across the academic year, where a variety of activities and visits occur to build relationships between learners in years 5 and 6 to help them prepare for their transition to secondary school. Alongside the traditional visits in the summer term, inter-school sporting competitions help learners to get to know each other.



**KS4/5 Transition:** Learners will usually remain in the school until they complete year eleven and then either remain as part of the Cynon Valley Consortium sixth form, which comprises of Mountain Ash Comprehensive School, St.John Baptist School and Aberdare Community School or they transfer to college, apprenticeship or the workplace.

## **21. School Leavers**

Destination	Number of learners
University	20
College	119
Training e.g.apprenticeships	8



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Employment	16
Seeking employment	0
Other e.g Gap year	1
Unknown	20

## **22. Sporting Aims and Achievements**

The school takes part in numerous sporting activities throughout the year including football, rugby, athletics, netball and hockey. The school participates in local and national competitions and tournaments, with some success.



The school has an established partnership with the Welsh Rugby Union; a full time WRU Hub Officer supports health and fitness as well as rugby and sporting skills, across the school and across the MACS Cluster. We also work with the Cardiff City Premier League Inspires programme. Our sports facilities include a gymnasium, multi-gym, Sports Barn, all weather pitch, MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) and numerous grass pitches for rugby and/ or football on the school grounds

The school has healthy numbers of learners participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme each year, where learners undertake an expedition, learn orienteering and camping skills.

## **23. Healthy Eating**

The school works hard to promote healthy eating and drinking through the curriculum. The Personal Development, Health and Wellbeing faculty thematic approach for the New Curriculum in Year 7 is Positive Mental Health. Within this teaching and learning programme across PSE, PE and Food leaders study the importance of healthy food as part of maintaining positive mental health and helping them feel good, inside and out. The Food curriculum in Years 7 and 8 has been adapted to include healthier recipes that the learners



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can make with ease whether they are in school or at home. They are encouraged to use the 'Eat Well' plate when thinking about a meal and also the importance of a balanced diet.

Learners learn about eating the right food when carrying out a physical activity/sport. If learners study PE or Food at GCSE they learn about nutrition, calorie intake and eating a balanced diet. Learners are encouraged to drink water and to keep hydrated to facilitate good concentration and effective learning. This is also encouraged when participating in PE lessons.

**The school's financial report for 2023-24 is attached separately**