**Ysgol Tan y Gaer: Prospectus**

**Welcome to Ysgol Tan y Gaer**

At Ysgol Tan y Gaer, we are committed to providing an exceptional educational experience for young people living in care. Our alternative provision (AP) caters to their unique needs, ensuring they thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. A place where they can belong, learn and grow.

Below, you’ll find essential information about our school.

**Our Vision and Values**

A place to belong, learn and grow and provide ‘A Life Worth Living’.

We are a unique setting dedicated to fostering growth and empowerment among children and young people living in care. We firmly believe that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, deserves an extraordinary education.

Our core mission is to equip young minds with the necessary skills to embrace learning and embrace a life filled with purpose. We offer our children and young people the opportunity to start again and to start a new journey. Our curriculum reflects a wealth of enriching subjects that will engage children and young people, offering a wide range of skills that may ignite a spark of interest that could lead to a new passion and open career options.

**Our guiding principles:**

Empathy and Kindness: We understand that empathy is the foundation of growth and development. Within our nurturing and inclusive environment, people are valued, respected, and supported.

Curiosity: We recognise that curiosity fuels knowledge acquisition. We actively encourage people to ask thought-provoking questions, explore novel concepts, and take academic risks.

Resilience: We firmly believe that challenges foster the greatest learning experiences. Through delivering exceptional experiences tailored to individual needs, we empower people to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

Growth Mindset: We embrace a limitless mindset. We inspire people to dream big, persistently pursue their aspirations, and how to deal with setbacks.

Safety: We acknowledge the significance of a secure learning environment. By cultivating a positive and supportive atmosphere, we empower people to step out of their comfort zones, venture into uncharted territories, and unlock their true potential.

Courage: We understand that courage is an essential ingredient for success. We encourage people to demonstrate bravery, stand up for their beliefs, and contribute to positive change.

**Who We Are**

Our dynamic team provides a flexible environment that meets the needs of our children ensuring that we promote Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence skills in all that we do.

We embrace an alternative approach, providing unparalleled support and challenge. Our dedicated staff constantly adapt to the ever-evolving landscape, drawing inspiration from effective practices while fearlessly challenging outdated conventions.

**Curriculum**

Our comprehensive curriculum follows three pathways, Academic, Vocational and Enrichment. Each pathway covers a variety of learning and skill development at an appropriate level and pace for the individual. It is likely that each person will have a combination of each pathway.

We tailor the curriculum to suit pupils’ ages and aptitudes, including support for identified additional learning needs.

On emphasis on skills in speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy mean that we can prepare our young people for the next step in their journey and give them the best opportunity to lead a life worth living.

We work with the Careers Wales team and ensure our young people get the guidance and support they need. Alongside this we work on the development of life skills in preparation for adult life experiences.

**Teaching Approach:**

We are committed to fostering intellectual, physical, and creative growth among our young people. Our approach encompasses several key elements:

**Well-Planned Sessions:** Our team design sessions that engage and challenge. These well-structured learning experiences form the foundation for their journey.

**Effective Teaching Methods:** We employ a variety of teaching techniques, tailored to individual needs. Whether it’s interactive discussions, hands-on activities, or multimedia presentations, our goal is to facilitate meaningful learning**.**

**Understanding Pupils’ Aptitudes:** Recognising each individuals unique abilities and prior achievements is crucial. By assessing their aptitudes we can tailor our teaching strategies to maximize their potential.

**Encouraging Independent Thinking:** We empower our young people to think critically and explore ideas independently. This fosters creativity, problem-solving skills, and a sense of ownership over their learning.

**We actively involve young people in shaping our school community:**

**Young People’s Contributions:**

**Student Forum:** A platform where students share ideas and concerns, actively participating in decision-making.

**Creative Projects:** Art, writing, and other expressive endeavours allow our young people to showcase their talents and perspectives.

**Regular Surveys:** Gathering feedback directly from our young people ensures continuous improvement.

**Peer Support:** Encouraging mentorship and collaboration among young people strengthens our community bonds.

We believe that by embracing these approaches and valuing young peoples voices, we create a supportive and enriching learning environment.

**Governance**

At Tan y Gaer we have governance systems that are designed to ensure robust scrutiny and accountability across all aspects of our work.

We use the following measures to uphold effective governance:

**Organisational Vision and Intent**: We articulate the actions we will take to achieve our goals in our statement of purpose. This clear vision guides our efforts.

**Policies and Procedures**: We establish and regularly review the foundational policies and procedures that support our service, managers, and staff. These guidelines ensure alignment with our aims.

**Sound Management Structures**: Our management structures are carefully crafted to oversee and monitor operations, ensuring safety and effectiveness for the individuals in our care.

**Quality Assurance and Review**: We maintain an ongoing cycle of quality assurance and review. This process provides assurance that our School operates in accordance with statutory requirements and supports individuals in achieving their personal outcomes. Insights gained from monitoring inform continuous improvement.

**Organisational Culture**: We foster openness, honesty, and candor at all levels within our organisation, promoting a positive and supportive culture.

**Governance Committee Groups**

To enhance transparency, we have established Committee Groups at the company board level. These groups facilitate transparent review and monitoring of our school by board members.

Our scrutiny process includes periodic reviews of systems and ongoing assessments to maintain high standards. By adhering to these governance principles, we create an environment where students can thrive and achieve their full potential.

**Therapeutic Support**

We support the needs of young people who are in need of therapeutic intervention. We have a dedicated therapeutic team who are an integral part of the Team Around the Child and ensure that the young person’s needs are met through appropriate intervention. This includes direct one to one work with the young person; providing training to the staff team; and offering regular supervision, advice and guidance as part of a systemic approach to therapeutic support.

Our therapeutic approach is trauma informed and is based on the work of:

• Dan Hughes and his PACE model (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy).

• Bowlby’s work on Attachment.

• Van der Kolk and Levine’s research on responses to overwhelming life events.

• Sunderland’s work on symbolic communication.

• Winnicott’s concept of the ‘Holding Environment,’ the mirror-role of the mother, ‘good enough parenting’ etc.

• Gerhardt’s work on neurobiology.

Our Ethical Framework for working therapeutically with children and young people is inspired by:

• The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) ethical framework for the counselling professions.

• The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) code of ethics and professional practice.

• The Institute for Arts in Therapy and Education (IATE) code of ethics and professional conduct for working with children and young people.

Therapeutic one to one work with the young person is conducted by the Therapeutic Counsellor. The frequency and format of these sessions will be based around the needs of the young person and how best to achieve positive and meaningful engagement. The therapeutic counsellor utilises the arts to help the young people safely externalise their experiences. This includes the use of painting / drawing, movies, stories, music, drama / role play, sand play, clay, puppets, craft materials.

All staff receive comprehensive training on how to provide therapeutic support. This training will be delivered by the registered Psychotherapeutic Counsellor and focuses on working therapeutically, creatively and compassionately with emotionally wounded young people.

The team will work in a holistic manner and review the needs of each individual young person to ensure that appropriate and relevant additional training packages can be identified and a commitment from the organisation to ensure that staff are trained effectively to respond to the presenting and diverse needs at any given time.

**Arrangements to promote hobbies, recreational and cultural activities**

We value all recreation and sport as a way of helping to develop the young person’s outlook on life and to give them a variety of social options. Young people are encouraged and given age-appropriate opportunities to take part in activities and leisure interests which take account of their race, culture, language, religion, interest, abilities and disabilities. Due to the size of our school, we are able to support a young person in any sport or hobby in which they show a keen interest. These may include things like visits to swimming baths, drama groups, gym, bowling alleys, cinemas, dry ski slope, museums, camping, cycling etc.

Regular social and educational visits occur throughout the year.

We recognise that participation in appropriate physical recreational, sporting and cultural activities are a positive medium for the development of self-esteem, self-determination and self-worth. They can be a positive tool for the engagement for young people with both the staff of Tan y Gaer and with the wider local community. Young people are encouraged to take an active role in the planning of both individual and group activities. Staff will actively encourage young people to talk about, learn and gain from their experiences.

Birthdays, name days, cultural and religious festivals are celebrated where appropriate and young people participate with staff in planning these events together.

**Behaviour**

All behaviour has a function and is a communication that should be respected as such. Young people need adults who can be thoughtful about their presented behaviours and promote a level of understanding together with a discussion of the impact their behaviour has on themselves and others, whilst working within an environment with clear boundaries and expectations. We offer an environment that allows new behaviour patterns to emerge, to rehearse and reinforce positive constructive behaviour.

At Tan y Gaer we believe that positive attitudes and behaviours are developed through the use of understanding and appropriate responses, in the form of praise and encouragement and the recognition of good behaviour. We ensure that all the young people and the adults who care for them are involved as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour and how we as a group should respond to incidents of concerning behaviour.

An effective rewards system, Kindness Currency, is an important tool in supporting young people to develop appropriate behaviour patterns. We have a number of different rewards selected in partnership with the young person. They can then collect and cash in our kindness currency for each reward.

Consequences are used as part of a process, to promote a sense of reparation or restitution, the idea that mistakes can be repaired or ‘made better’. The most significant consequence available to staff is our ability, within the context of a strong and meaningful relationship, to express our concern of unsafe behaviours. However, given the trauma and attachment histories of young people in our care and their need to test out relationships and boundaries as part of their adolescent development, we expect that there will be occasions where more tangible consequences are needed to reinforce appropriate behaviour and personal responsibility. When this is the case, the consequence must be appropriate to the young person and their level of understanding and where possible form a part of their individual support plan.

**Join Us on This Journey**

At Ysgol Tan y Gaer, we believe that every young person deserves an empowering education. Together, we create a supportive environment where students can belong, learn, grow, and prepare for a bright future.

For more information or to arrange a visit, please contact our school office. We look forward to welcoming you.