

Record-breaking results, a serious passion for Welsh and a beady eye for enterprise

The school: Archbishop McGrath is a mixed comprehensive that opened in 1965 in the Brackla area of Bridgend in South Wales. The school has nearly 850 pupils, of whom 16 per cent are eligible for free school meals (a measure of deprivation).

A little fewer than 50 per cent are Catholic with 19 buses collecting students from across a wide catchment area each day. Among other languages spoken at the school are Polish and, more recently, Filipino, due to the school's proximity to a hospital employing medical staff from the Philippines.

Making the grade: Last year, students achieved the best GCSE results ever recorded at the school, with more than 80 per cent getting A*-C in English and 70 per cent achieving the same in maths. Extraordinarily, one pupil, Isabella Carter, got 15 A* grades at GCSE. Meanwhile, at A level, more than a third of results were at A or above and 60 per cent of pupils received offers from Russell Group universities.

Welsh matters: GCSE Welsh is taken by every pupil and there is a strong

Welsh-speaking culture, with a handful of pupils speaking Welsh as their first language.

At a "Welsh as a second language" poetry recital, Karol Niklas won first place despite Welsh being his third language after Polish and English.

Pupils also have the opportunity to attend a residential programme at Glan-llyn Outdoor Activity Centre in North Wales, to improve their Welsh.

Smell to do well: A young enterprise team has developed a collection of scented flash cards to help students with their exam revision. The idea is that associating facts with smells, such as lavender, lemon grass and bergamot, will help with recall during exams.

The cards cost £1.99 for a pack of 40 and are being sold on YE Marketplace or through Twitter at @archways19.

Spirituality: Fr Mark Rowles is school chaplain and Mass is celebrated every Friday. Priests from the local parish are

very involved in school, teaching lessons and offering counselling.

Sixth-formers have recently had "dementia-friendly training" from the Alzheimer's Society, and across the school, pupils volunteer with disadvantaged groups.

Head teacher Angela Keller says: "The nicest thing that has been said to me as a head was when we sent a large group recently to Wellington College. They were there with pupils from many other schools, and afterwards, the deputy head of Wellington emailed me to say that our pupils really stood out as being the most happy and confident. If they can go out and do that, then we're getting it right - the academic results will flow from that. As a head, I know that I'm sending children out into the world who are really good people. I am so proud of this school - I have been employed here for 30 years and my children were pupils."

Collated by Isabel de Bertodano.

