



# Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

*Striving for Excellence*

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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10<sup>th</sup> July, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we move ever closer to reopening our school to all children in September, I thought it would be helpful to share with you some key elements that are underpinning our planning. The government issued guidance to all schools at the end of last week that was split into three sections. The first section sets out what the government calls the 'system of controls' – basically, a set of actions that schools must take. These are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection'. Much of what is contained in the 'prevention' section is exactly what we have been doing in school since the start of the crisis including handwashing, 'catch it, bin it, kill it', enhanced cleaning, etc. The main differences are in the requirements around minimising contact and maintaining social distancing wherever possible.

Schools are being asked to reintroduce as much as possible 'education as usual', with additional precautions to make this as safe as possible. This is to be achieved by keeping students in the smallest groups possible while still providing them with the education they need. Frustratingly, rather than allowing schools to develop and implement detailed protocols appropriate to their context, the guidance adopts a 'one size fits all' approach. In fully complying with this latest guidance I am forced to temporarily abandon our highly successful vertical tutoring system until the guidance changes again. There is also no account taken of the obvious challenge of operating a school with extensive bus routes where pressure on public transport capacity is a serious concern. However, despite the challenges, I am confident that we can ensure both safety and educational continuity for all students come September by:

- Zoning the KS3 classroom space, so that where possible, year group bubbles occupy certain rooms in the school. We plan to adopt a model more familiar in primary school where we will teach KS3 classes (Y7 and Y8) in their class groups for all or most lessons allowing us to keep them safe in class-sized bubbles. This will reduce movement around the school, with teachers now moving to students. KS3 students will move between rooms only where specialist spaces are needed.
- We will stagger break and lunch times in order to reduce pressure on social spaces and keep year group bubbles apart. In addition, we will increase the number of locations at which food is served. Social areas will also be 'zoned', so that where students from different year group bubbles are on break or lunch at the same time, they are kept separate from one another.
- Our KS4 & KS5 provision will ensure that the core features of our planned timetable for September can be retained and will involve a greater use of specialist spaces.
- We will implement an enhanced version of the site-specific arrangements identified in our existing risk assessment to include washing and sanitising facilities to every classroom that is in use.
- One final change that is important given the scale and scope of what we have been asked to implement in the final two weeks concerns the start of the new term. Our new Y7 students have not yet had the opportunity to experience a normal transition. Therefore I have changed the format of the new term to allow us to ensure that all children, including our new Y7 students are best equipped to meet the challenge of another new way of working.

Monday 31st August	Tuesday 1st September	Wednesday 2nd September	Thursday 3rd September	Friday 4th September
Bank Holiday School Closed	Staff Training	Staff Training	Open to students in Y7 & Y12 only	Open to all students

Despite the challenges ahead I remain incredibly optimistic about the future. I am confident in our staff and confident in the ability of our students to move forward with their learning. While the impact of this crisis on education has been unavoidable, there are some suggestions that keep popping up in the media that are deeply unhelpful and should be resisted at all costs. Our young people have had their education disrupted enough already without deliberately limiting their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. I was horrified by the suggestion that some schools, may be reducing the number of GCSEs pupils take to ensure they focus on maths and English rather than what they describe as the soft stuff...art, music, drama etc. At our school, these subjects are not regarded as a luxury; rather they form a vital part of a balanced education. It is equally short sighted in my opinion to suggest that children could drop examination subjects in order to 'catch-up' on other areas.

This crisis will end, and our incredibly talented staff will enable students to catch up on lost learning. At Newent, we believe that giving young people a broad portfolio of high value qualifications provides them with future choices and forms a vital stepping-stone to further study, an apprenticeship and the world of work. However well-meaning, this current obsession with academic "catch up" at the expense of future opportunity and student wellbeing must be avoided as it risks damaging our children, both in the short term, and I fear will have disastrous long-term consequences on the opportunities open to them. Now more than ever what we must give young people is all the skills possible to enter society and the world of work with confidence, creativity and resilience.

Einstein famously said that: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand."

### **New Beginnings**

I am incredibly proud of the tremendous efforts made by all staff at our wonderful school since the start of this current crisis. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that our students have received as much support as is humanly possible during this difficult time. The warmth and creativity shown in some of the extra activities and events that they have organised throughout lock down has at times been truly humbling and has demonstrated the amazing capacity of our school community to pull together in the best interests of children and their families.

At this time of year, we would normally take the time to mark the contribution of those staff who are leaving us for pastures new. Sadly, this cannot happen at this time for obvious reasons and yet these wonderful people have served our community for a total of 89 years! If you would like to send in your thanks for their dedication to the young people at our school, please do so through the admin email. We are hoping to celebrate more formally their service to our school community in September should you wish to add a small gift.

In order of service:

- Di Harrill has worked at Newent for 38 years.
- Jo Collins for 22 years
- Dean Fisher for 16 years
- Rebecca Coleman for 7 years
- Steph Ferraby for 1 year

I will write to you again next week with further details about the reopening of our school to all students in September and with details of arrangements for both GCSE and A' Level results day. The end of year reports for Years 7 -10 this year will not follow the traditional format, due to the current crisis, but will be sent home to you towards the end of next week.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alan Johnson', written in a cursive style.

Alan Johnson  
Principal