



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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Dear Parents and Carers,

My day started today with one of our students reminding me to maintain my 'social distance' as I moved to greet him on arrival at our school. It strikes me that schools are inherently social places and that I am not hard wired to social distance, none of us are, but will do what we must to protect each other and navigate a way through this crisis. There is not much new information from the DfE to share with you in addition to my letter home on Wednesday this week. I am aware that there is a key meeting happening today so I hope to be able to provide you with greater clarity next week.

Y11 Prom

When our schools closed so abruptly on Friday, March 20 due to the coronavirus crisis I witnessed an immediate outpouring of emotion from our Y11 students. We had all been working so hard to support and prepare them for examinations that were now suddenly cancelled. Looking into their faces I took the decision to allow two of our traditional 'rites of passage' to happen despite knowing that I was inviting criticism at a time of crisis. I am extremely grateful to our Heads of House, Mr John and Mr Phillips who organised at very short notice a leaver's assembly and shirt signing. To do otherwise, I felt, was to sell our Y11 short. Therefore given the ongoing coronavirus crisis while I am forced to cancel our Y11 prom at this current time it is my firm intention to reschedule it for a later date. I believe that our Y11 students deserve a prom and I will be in touch as soon as I am able to plan one for our class of 2020 with any certainty.

Y9 Camp

Another event that is dear to my heart is Y9 Camp. The opportunity to get an entire year group under canvas, six to a tent is amazing and yet again given the current crisis I cannot allow this to happen this year. In addition I feel it would be wrong of me to promise that I will be able to simply postpone this event as much as I would like to. It is of course a decision that I will keep under review but in the meantime I would like to offer a refund of the money that you have paid to the school to run this event. The Finance Office will be in touch next week to start the process of issuing refunds to parents. This work will happen as quickly as possible, however, due to the number of refunds involved please bear with the staff as they work through the task.

Free School Meals

I am sure that you will all have seen in the media that the government free school meal scheme has been plagued with difficulties with some families still not able to access this vital service. Despite mounting pressure on schools to move to the government scheme I cannot in good conscience do so at this point and risk families not receiving this crucial support. In addition you may already be aware that the government have decided that free school meal vouchers will not be offered over the May half term holiday. This again causes me real concern as I believe that it is too early to cut this lifeline. As such I have decided to continue to fund our Wonde free school meal vouchers for the half term and hope that the government will reverse this decision. Please understand that I do not have the capacity to do this over the summer break but hope that by this time the national picture will have settled somewhat.

Distance Learning

Thank you again for all of your feedback to Mr Phillips. We are continuing to develop what we offer to our students and I hope to announce shortly the next incarnation of distance learning that will incorporate targeted feedback to students to support their next steps in learning. More details will follow from Mr Phillips shortly.

School Video

If you haven't seen the latest staff video that has been put together by Miss O'Regan, Head of Music, then please have a look. <https://youtu.be/i2PDIqnFheY>

I thought I would finish on a happier note with another lock down family birthday. The little boy hiding behind his sister is Finley. Unfortunately Finley has already faced a number of challenges in his young life including Subglottic Stenosis and Gastroesophageal reflux disease. On NHS advice his whole family have shielded themselves to protect him and like many families they have struggled at times, missing contact with family and friends. On his way to work Conor, my nephew, stopped off to drop off a birthday present for Finley. Whilst maintaining strict social distancing he added a little extra joy to Finley's special day. Although I dread to think what his colleagues must have thought when they saw him wearing a Spiderman costume under his uniform when he rocked up to work.



Alan Johnson

Principal