



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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Dear Parents/Carers,

I never knew quite how institutionalised I had become until someone reminded me that next week was a half term holiday. Days and weeks seem to just blend together in this new life in lock down. One thing that is helping to keep me sane is learning to do new things. To cheer up my daughter, who was missing her friends at Newent, I used some old copper pipe from the garage to construct a rose (top centre). Then suddenly the rest of my family wanted to know 'where was their flower?' Even my 26 year old son down in Portsmouth, that's his on the top right. Making things for people you care about is incredibly therapeutic and gives the opportunity to let them know that they are in your thoughts during this difficult time. On the underside of his rose I stamped 'A son may outgrow his father's lap but never his heart' which managed to bring a tear to his eyes. So four roses later I'm now done, but I thoroughly recommend trying something new if you have the opportunity to do so.



The Cyber Trust

You may be interested to know that outside school I am a Trustee at The Cyber Trust. The Trust is a Charity, founded in March 2017, and the vision of the Founders is to help children and vulnerable people access the digital world safely and securely and to be able to enjoy the benefits of the technology. One of the things the Trust is doing at the moment is developing an App around internet safety for young people through a gaming environment – some of our Y9 students have produced a video showcasing the idea and our 6th formers are helping with story lines. More news on that soon. The Trust's website is here: <https://thecybertrust.org/> and in particular I draw your attention to their Resources page, here: <https://thecybertrust.org/what-we-do/resources/>, where we have assembled some resources that may be useful for schools, parents and others – especially through the current home isolation period and summer holidays. The list is of useful links relevant to children of all school ages related to cyber and coding activities. This is not by any means a comprehensive listing and is not limited to cyber, nor is it an endorsement, but things we have come across or used that we have found helpful and interesting. Our friends at The Cyber Security Challenge in particular have been working with The National Crime Agency (NCA) to provide access to Cyberland at no cost to all school children in the UK (usually there is a small charge) – the link to that is in the above list, and is proving to be very popular.

London Theatre Experience Trip

I am sorry to share the news that I have been informed that our Tour Operator has elected to cancel the London Theatre Experience Trip scheduled for July. While I totally understand and agree with the decision I suppose that I was naively hoping that at least one of the extra-curricular events that we had planned for the students could go ahead. Everyone who was due to attend will have been informed via MILK and the Finance Office is working through the refund process. Those parents that made payment through ParentPay will receive their refund through their ParentPay account so please monitor your account. For any of you that sent a payment direct to the Finance Office, a member of the Team will be in contact as soon as possible to issue a direct refund to your nominated bank account.

Coast to Coast Cycle Challenge

This event has currently been postponed and re-arranged for 22nd – 25th October 2020.

Y10 and Y12

In my letter home last week I wrote to you in part about the national guidance around the gradual reopening of our schools. As you know, this guidance was predominantly aimed at the primary sector but suggested that secondary schools should try to facilitate “some face-to-face” contact with their Y10 and Y12 students before the end of the summer term. I am very conscious that students, parents and staff will be growing increasingly anxious to get some clarity about our intended plans for Y10 and Y12 after half-term as well as reassurance that we will continue to support our most vulnerable students and those of our critical key workers.

We were assured that more detailed guidance would be with us last Friday, but unfortunately it did not materialise before my deadline to get my weekly letter out to you. Schools were then told to expect further guidance to arrive on Tuesday this week, but again no additional information has been forthcoming. Yesterday afternoon the government did release some additional guidance to schools, which to be fair is very good and provides useful information for students in Y7, Y8, Y9 and Y11. Unfortunately, the information for Y10 and Y12 was missing and again we are told that it will follow shortly. I desperately need this additional detail to allow me to judge what is achievable in our context and what is not. Please understand that while all of us want our children to be back at school as soon as possible, I also have to be confident that it is safe to do so. Safe for our students, safe for staff and safe for all the families they return home to. While it is entirely possible that the government will publish

guidance today that will cause me to reconsider our approach I am going to proceed on the assumption that this clarity will not be forthcoming.

As to the question of our continued ongoing support in school. We have remained open to vulnerable students and those of our critical key workers since the first day of lock down and we will continue to do so until the end of the pandemic. That said, as more people are being encouraged back to work new requests for this provision is stretching our already limited resources to breaking point and ultimately limits the options available for Y10 and Y12 so please only take up this offer if it is absolutely necessary.

Our current planning to introduce some face to face contact for Y10 and Y12 students is based on the assumption that this additional contact will begin on Monday 8th June. In the absence of further guidance I am also assuming that the same expectations and restrictions that have been placed on our primary schools will apply to us. That said the biggest challenge will undoubtedly be delivering meaningful education whilst maintaining current social distancing restrictions. While I can imagine a situation of 'social bubbles' where one member of staff can work with a small group of students in a primary setting, in secondary schools students traditionally move between classrooms, subject options and sets throughout the school day. Therefore what would help me immensely in allocating staffing and ensuring that we are able to maintain safe social distancing on the journey to and from school is to understand if you feel comfortable with face to face contact at this time. I am very conscious of the fact that each family will need to make their own decisions regarding an appropriate return date for their son/daughter so I do not intend to put pressure on parents to send their child to school before you consider it appropriate to do so.

I will do everything possible to keep you updated with respect to our preparations so that you can make an informed judgement as to the best course of action for your family.

Thank you again for your ongoing support for the school.

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

Alan Johnson
Principal