



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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Dear Parents/Carers

You will no doubt have heard by now that the Government is pressing ahead with its plan to re-open primary schools to children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 on Monday although it is fair to say that most primary schools have been operating for the children of key workers since the lockdown began in March. The Prime Minister announced that England had met the five tests which will allow an easing of the lockdown including the reopening of some shops and letting people meet in parks in groups of six. However, since my last letter, the introduction of some limited face to face contact for students sitting examinations next year in our secondary schools and sixth forms has been rolled back until June 15th to reduce the risk of increasing transmission.

Like our Primary colleagues we have been preparing our school, getting classrooms ready and completing risk assessments for a number of weeks now to minimise the risk of the coronavirus being transmitted. All of these preparations while essential, feel completely unnatural in a school that prides itself on its' warmth and welcoming atmosphere. However in these strange times I find myself pacing our school with an electronic tape measure and deciding on where best to install hand sanitisers and distancing markers like the ones seen in our supermarkets. All part of our 'new normal' for when more of our students return. I will provide detailed information to all parents next week on how we will increase face to face contact with students in Y10 and Y12 from the week commencing 15th June.

Free School Meals

One of the hardest things about navigating a school through this crisis has been the shifting sands in terms of the guidance provided centrally. For example, I have written to you on a number of occasions about our strategy for supporting students entitled to Free School Meals. You know that I refused to come on board with the government scheme run by private supplier Edenred, believing instead that our Finance Team had sourced a better solution. Thankfully our families have not been plagued by the long delays and uncertainty that many others have suffered with the government scheme. In such uncertain times I saw this as an opportunity to take away one worry and give some clarity and consistency for our families. Which is why when earlier this month the DfE announced that their scheme was to be term-time-only I decided to fund our FSM provision internally over half-term. As I said I believed that it was too soon to cut this lifeline. I can now report that on Wednesday this week the Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb, told the Commons Education Select Committee that FSM provision over half term would be funded after all. I am sure this will come as a relief for families with children in other schools.

Distance Learning Model

Our Distance Learning model continues to develop and evolve with an announcement by Mr Phillips that should arrive in your inbox at roughly the same time as you receive this letter. This latest iteration will place much greater emphasis on feedback and student engagement.

Sixth Form

All students that will be joining our Sixth Form in September will have received their welcome letter from Miss Rogers and Mr Britten last week. Sixth Form is in many ways very different from what they have experienced in Year 11 with much more of a focus on independence. To help them prepare for life in the Sixth Form they will soon receive 'bridging' work from the teachers of the subjects they have selected to study. The tasks they are set will be relevant to the curriculum and will prepare them for the challenges of studying at a higher level.

In addition, please encourage them to sign up and participate in the free online course/courses related to their subject choices using the 'FutureLearn' platform (www.Futurelearn.com) to develop their understanding of the different subject areas. If you have any questions do feel free to contact either Miss Rogers (lr Rogers@newent.gloucs.sch.uk) or (if related to subject changes) Mr. Phillips (rphillips@newent.gloucs.sch.uk).

Y11 Video – Last Call

I have already talked a lot about my deep regret that our students in Y11 and Y13 ended their time with us in such an abrupt fashion. Every one of my staff is desperate to keep this vital connection with the school alive. Given the sense of loneliness and social isolation that many students across the country will be feeling, we believe that embracing every opportunity to engage with them on a social and emotional level will help ease their transition back to effective learning behaviours when this lock down is over. The two staff videos created by Mrs O'Regan went down so well that we would like to create one for our students in Y11. If you have a son or daughter in Y11 please encourage them to share a picture of themselves dressed in smart attire or prom wear with Mrs O'Regan who will use them to create a special memory for our students. Email to: eoregan@newent.gloucs.sch.uk

Covid 19- Children and Youth Memories

Newent Town Council is reaching out to all young people in our town and surrounding areas to send in how this situation has affected you, for instance, what are your feelings, what has made you smile, what do you miss from not going to school, what have you discovered and really enjoyed about being home so much.

You can write a poem, draw a picture, write a short story and send to:

townclerk@newenttowncouncil.gov.uk

Their aim is to have a book published and presented to each school taking part.

Quick Quiz Question

With all the negativity in the news right now I thought I would sign off with something that may make you smile, another of my creations, and a mini competition. Now you will see from the picture that it is not as elegant as the copper flowers from last week but it is something that I am getting really excited about. I made this thing long before the start of the lock down and yet just this week it has started to get some interest. The first three students who email into my PA (btibbles@newent.gloucs.sch.uk) with what it is and what I am hoping for will receive a £10 Amazon Gift Voucher. As bit of a cryptic clue I have made the inside smell of Lemon Grass.



Regards,

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

Alan Johnson
Principal