



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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20th November, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I suppose it serves me right that I wrote to you all in good faith last Friday to reassure you that we had no confirmed cases at the school only to have our Covid-19 hotline ring at the weekend to say that one of our students had tested positive. Like much that has happened in the world since that start of this crisis, you couldn't make it up if you tried. That we are all frankly exhausted by living in a constant state of anxiety goes without saying. I see that every day in the eyes of my staff and students, all of whom have all been forced to adapt to a complete change to the way that the school operates to mitigate the risks of Covid-19 in our community. However, the reason that I felt compelled to make the original statement was to try to quell the panic generated by idle speculation on social media. So please, as tired as we all are, it is important that we all work together to ease the tension and anxiety generated by us all living in a constant state of fear. Therefore, in another attempt to provide some clarity to some obviously very anxious parents I thought that it may be helpful to restate my position on certain areas that have become hot topics of conversation on social media.

- **COVID-19 Symptoms**

Please be assured that we have robust procedures in place which we follow rigorously when informed of positive Covid-19 test results.

When informed of a positive Covid-19 tests in one of our students or staff we will immediately contact Public Health England and follow clear guidance regarding contact tracing. When we identify students who are required to self-isolate we will contact these families as a priority, by phone call if possible, or via a MILK message. Once we have contacted students who are required to self-isolate, as in the instance on the weekend, we will then fully inform our whole school community via MILK and a message on our school website.

This measured and strategic approach is intended to reduce anxiety and speculation amongst students and families whilst ensuring only timely and fully accurate information is shared with our school community.

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)

a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

If you have any of the main symptoms of coronavirus:

Get a test to check if you have coronavirus as soon as possible.

You and anyone you live with, including all children, should stay at home and not have visitors until you get your test result – only leave your home to have a test.

Anyone in your support bubble should also stay at home if you have been in close contact with them since your symptoms started or during the 48 hours before they started.

If you receive a positive test result outside of school hours please telephone 07498717490 as soon as possible.

We are grateful for your continued support.

- **Fines for non-attendance**

There has been a great deal anxiety created by the insistence by the government that school leaders issue fines to parents who refuse to send their children to school. Make no mistake, I believe that all children are far better off in school. I believe that we have created the safest possible environment for them to learn and thrive here with us. However, I am also aware that every family is unique and every one of you is trying to find the best way to support and protect your family at this difficult time. Therefore, whilst I cannot authorise the absence of any child who is not required to self-isolate, I will not condone the prosecution of any family despite the external pressure to do so. I originally said back in September that this embargo on prosecution would be until Christmas, I am now extending my refusal to comply with this expectation until Easter 2021 at which time I will review the national picture again.

- **Face coverings**

These things are becoming the bane of my life. Not because they seem to be constantly steaming up my glasses, but because I seem to be spending so much time reminding children about the expectations that are placed upon all of us to wear them. Please send your children into school with an appropriate face covering. My ability to keep our students safe in school, our classrooms open and education continuing depends upon the measures in place to reduce transmission. I really do need your help in this area.

Passwords

In order to ensure that we can ensure the continuity of education if a student needs to self-isolate, it is vital that they all can remember their passwords to Office 365 and MILK. In addition, please remind them that we will only be able to communicate with students through their registered school email address. Please can you check over the weekend that they can access each platform.

A Midsummer Night's Dream- TONIGHT at 7pm

Our virtual production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' will take place tonight, Friday 20th November. Please follow the below link when it goes live at 7pm:

<https://youtu.be/NjGgCxBE8w8>

Newent Neighbourhood Development Plan

Anyone who lives, works or studies in the Newent area (GL18 1** postcodes) can respond anonymously to this online travel and transport survey for the Newent Neighbourhood Development Plan. The information will provide a snapshot of current traffic patterns and needs, and the aim is to plan changes and improvements for the future. The survey can be found at <https://bit.ly/ndp-travel>.

GFirst Careers Hub Launch

This week we formally joined the brand new Gloucestershire Careers Hub as one of the founding members. This means that we will be part of a new collaborative project led by GFirstLEP, which connects educational institutions, local businesses and other stakeholders to strengthen the careers provision and opportunities that are available to our students. Further updates to follow.

Teams4U Shoe Boxes

Thank you to everyone who donated to the shoebox appeal this year. The shoeboxes were collected today and we were told that we were the only Secondary School in the Forest area that had managed to take part this year.



Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alan Johnson'.

Alan Johnson
Principal