



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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Dear Parent/Carer,

Thank you to those who attended Yr 11 Parents' Evening yesterday. Although I miss seeing you in person, I totally understand how much more convenient many of you are finding these virtual events. It goes without saying that these new ways of working help keep us all safe in these troubling times.

On Monday Miss Rogers and Mr Britten will be sending out further details regarding study at Newent Sixth Form. The information will include a link to an online application form which, as well as capturing course preferences, will have an option to request a phone call home for individual advice and guidance on Post 16 studies from a member of our Sixth Form Team.

Update on the testing programme and daily contact testing

Another roller coaster week of announcements about mass testing has caused a great deal of confusion. Especially given that recent media coverage has suggested that the programme of mass testing of staff and pupils in secondary schools and colleges has paused. This we are told is incorrect.

The government restated their position that the main schools and colleges testing programme, using rapid lateral flow tests to identify asymptomatic staff and pupils, is playing an important role in breaking chains of transmission and is to continue. However, they have clarified their position by informing us on Thursday this week that in response to new advice that they have received from NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England (PHE), they are temporarily pausing the daily contact testing element of the testing programme, which was in place as an alternative to self-isolation for those who came into contact with positive cases in schools.

They go on to state that daily contact testing was initially introduced into secondary schools and colleges with the agreement of Public Health England, based on the best scientific understanding available at the time. NHS Test and Trace and PHE have reviewed their initial advice in light of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of the new variant, and concluded that these changes in the virus warrant further evaluation work. This evaluation will consider the impact of using daily contact testing instead of self-isolation to make sure it is achieving its aim of breaking chains of transmission and reducing cases of the virus in the community.

So, to be clear, it is only the daily contact testing element of the testing programme that is currently paused, not the whole programme.

Distance Learning

Again, I am delighted to hear from our teachers about the excellent engagement with Distance Learning so far this term. Our Distance Learning model has evolved many times since March and will continue to evolve to best meet the incredibly diverse needs and very different family circumstances served by our community comprehensive school. We have designed a model to reach the widest audience in a way that supports families with low or no connectivity, and those families with siblings in multiple year groups, whilst still enabling those young people who thrive on independent work and extension activities to deepen their understanding during their learning at home. I would like to remind students and parents that during lesson times that are not delivered 'live' on Teams they will still be able to contact their individual teachers (following their school timetable) via email to ask questions, look for advice and receive specific help and feedback with any of the work that they are completing. Although this facility is available, it seems that many students are also finding it convenient to post queries directly through their TEAMS classes. The only caveat being that although available throughout the week, there is the potential for delayed response during the days on which teachers are supporting vulnerable children and the children of keyworkers within school. If you would like to offer any feedback on our current Distance Learning provision please email rphillips@newent.gloucs.sch.uk and we will continue to make improvements where possible.

Chess Club

If your children fancy themselves as the next Magnus Carlsen then Mr Price has the answer for you. He has just started an online lockdown chess club for Newent Community School & Sixth Form Centre. Please see his message on MILK or email tprice@newent.gloucs.sch.uk if your sons and daughters are interested in joining the club and are ready for their first en passant.

Drama Competition

The Drama Department are currently running a 'Newent Film Stars' competition. Students and their families are invited to re-create either a film poster or a moment from their favourite film using themselves as stars. Full details can be found in the @newentdrama pinned post on Twitter.

In other exciting news a wonderful team of students from Year 7 all the way through to Year 13 are currently rehearsing a radio play. 'The Marvellous Mellow Melodrama of the Mislaid Minor' will be shared in February for everyone to enjoy! We are hugely grateful to all the students who volunteered to be a part of #TeamMarvellous and can't wait for your performance!

Careers Update

Miss Llewellyn is now producing a regular Careers update for every student in year 10 and above. The link to the latest version of this really useful information can be found below but please keep a look out for them on MILK.

[Careers update link](#)

International School Award

Newent Community School has been awarded an International School Award Intermediate Certificate. This has been awarded by the British Council as part of their Connecting Classrooms initiative in recognition of the strong link between Newent Community School and our partner school, St George's Sianda Secondary School in Kisumu, Kenya. The link has been going strong for nearly 20 years, and includes (up until this pandemic) a reciprocal student exchange every two years. We hope to continue our partnership with our colleagues in Kenya for many years to come!

English Text Books

All the English textbooks are now ready for collection. If you have paid for books on Parentpay then please email lillyrogers@newent.gloucs.sch.uk to make an appointment to collect the books from school next week.

I'm Still Here

I am always very proud to say that that our school is a community school, a true community school. Before lockdown our students took part in an amazing community project to raise awareness of dementia. I am delighted to be able to inform you that the film 'I'm Still Here', that included a number of our wonderful students, is now live on the GHLL website. Please follow this link to watch their outstanding work:

<https://www.ghll.org.uk/dementia/>

I have just discovered a fantastic show on TV called the 'Great Pottery Throw Down'. It is very similar to the 'Great British Bake Off' but showcasing creativity with clay rather than cooking. It's incredibly addictive! In the latest episode one of the judges was so moved by the artistry in front of him that he shed a tear. It reminded me of myself every time I see your wonderful children perform in one of our school productions. I must be getting old because on Wednesday night I experienced the same sensation as I watched the amazing Amanda Gorman read her poem at President Biden's inauguration. Although we are all living with a great deal of worry, stress and anxiety, the capacity of young people never ceases to amaze me. Hearing Amanda gave me fresh hope for all of our futures.

Have a lovely weekend.

Regards

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

Alan Johnson
Principal