



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

Telephone: 01531 820550

Community Enquiries: 01531 828916

Sixth Form: 01531 828915

Watery Lane, Newent, Gloucestershire GL18 1QF **www.newent.gloucs.sch.uk** **Email:** admin@newent.gloucs.sch.uk

19th March, 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

Home Testing Kits

As you are aware we have been supporting students with asymptomatic testing every day since we returned to school after the Christmas holidays. They have all coped amazingly well with such a strange addition to their regular academic diet. Today we reached a new milestone in our response to Covid-19, the point where every young person in Y11, Y12 and Y13 has been offered three tests in school. Therefore, they will be given testing kits to be completed twice a week at home. Other year groups will also be issued testing kits to take home as soon as they have reached the same milestone next week. For Y9 and Y10 this will be Monday, for Y8 Tuesday and for Y7 Wednesday. I am sure that it will come as a massive relief to everyone that that will not have to put up with my vain attempts at humour as I have attempted to put them at their ease over the last few weeks.

The kits contain detailed instructions, although your sons and daughters are now past masters at the whole process. I must warn you that I am a little surprised at the small quantity of tests contained within each box and can only assume that more kits will be sent to us shortly to cover the weeks ahead. As ever as soon as I have any more information I will share it with you.

As the Easter Holidays rapidly approach and with them my final few weeks as Principal of Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre it occurs to me that my teaching career ends as it started at a point of international crisis. Believe it or not my very first position as a newly qualified teacher was at school in the Middle East during the outbreak of the first Gulf War. At the time it was often quite surreal responding to events that were outside anything covered in initial teacher training, like what to do with a splinter from a 1000lb bomb bought in as a present for me by one of the children.

The importance of maintaining a warm, caring and consistent educational experience for young people at a time when there was such turmoil in the world has stayed with me throughout my career. As has the value of good clear communication between home and school, especially after hearing [Rumsfeld's](#) briefing on known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns back in 1990 and listening in awe to many of the Covid-19 briefings over the past year.

As we move out of the current crisis caused by the global pandemic I want to pay tribute again to the hard work of everyone who works at this wonderful school and all of their efforts to support your sons and daughters. This last year has not been an easy one for any of us, not for you with children at school or for us trying desperately to support them educationally and emotionally through each successive lockdown. It has been an absolute joy to welcome everyone back to school. I only wish that all of you could see just how happy the children are as they begin to get back a sense of normality, the real normal of happy school life, rather than this hideous 'new one' that we have all been living with for too long.

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I am confident that I can move on to the next chapter in my life secure in the knowledge that our fantastic school is in the best place it has ever been. I leave it in the very safe hands of my experienced Vice Principal, Mr Phillips. As you all know Mr Phillips was my first appointment upon joining the school and what a fantastic appointment he has been. I know that he will continue to drive forward the rapid progress that the school has made over the last five years whilst maintaining the caring ethos the school is known for. Under his leadership Newent will remain a place where every individual is encouraged to be just that, an individual, and a place where every child is supported to achieve their full artistic, academic, technical and sporting potential. Please offer him the same high level of support that you have given me.

National Day of Reflection Tuesday 23 March, 2021

St. Mary's Newent is supporting the National Day of Reflection on 23 March, the first anniversary of the UK lockdown, to commemorate this tragic loss of life and to stand together with everyone who is grieving.

There are a number of ways to get involved on the day:

- Plant a seed, bulb, or bush as a sign of hope.
- Tie a Yellow Ribbon – At St. Mary's Newent, from Tuesday 23 March, we are inviting people to tie yellow ribbons to the churchyard railings as a sign of prayer and support for all who are bereaved and inviting the wider community to join in, remembering those we have lost over the year wherever they were. These ribbons will stay in place until after Easter. Please follow the instructions on the railings.
- Use the 8.00pm 'Share the Light' moment to light candles and lanterns in windows. Watch out for the Candle and Prayers from St. Mary's on Youtube.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alan Johnson
Principal