



Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Striving for Excellence

Principal • Mr Alan Johnson

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Dear Parents/Carers,

When I asked my younger sister if she was looking forward to Monday and to children starting their return to school her answer surprised me. "If I had known I was going to be home-schooling them, I wouldn't have had so many!" she replied. That said she is now an expert at diagnosing connectivity issues and managing a timetable that covers KS2, KS3, KS4 and KS5 (yes children at each key stage). However, even at this late stage daily life with video conferencing can still be shocking. She told me that she was happily listening to the Y1 teachers asking all the children (bear in mind these are 5 & 6 year olds) what they were going to dress up as for World Book Day on Zoom. She was enjoying a cup of tea in the next room, only half listening. She smiled as she heard the cute girls voices saying they were going to dress up as characters such as Cinderella or Snow White. When the teacher asked her daughter what she was going to be, without a pause she blurted out "I'm going to be CHUCKIE THE KILLER DOLL!" My sister told me that it is impossible to imagine how silent the whole Zoom call became as she rushed to close the lid of the laptop to end the call. Common sense prevailed and you can see Kitty in the picture below as Mary Poppins instead. Thankfully the trials and tribulations of home schooling are hopefully at an end for everyone as children begin to return to school from Monday.



Although you have already seen the rolling programme of testing that is being offered by the school at the request of government and are aware of which year groups are returning on which day I would ask you to share this information with friends and families with children at the school. I say this because I have received more than a dozen calls from parents this week who have indicated that they have not read a single communication from the school since last March. This is incredibly frustrating as I have tried to navigate a humane path though this pandemic keeping parents informed of every change and decision each week, every week. A nightmare scenario is that someone sends a child in early from a year group we are not expecting, completely sabotaging the Covid secure planning that we have in place and embarrassing the poor child.

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I am also very concerned about some of the telephone calls and emails received this week from a small minority of parents voicing their concerns with regards to lateral flow testing. The comments made directly to my staff I consider to be somewhat unreasonable. I completely understand that there are some very polarised views held on many issues to do with the current crisis. I have included the very latest guidance from the government which details their expectations on us and all schools which I hope will enable everyone to understand that schools are being placed between the proverbial rock and hard place with these issues.

[Latest Government Guidance for Schools](#)

If you have still not completed a consent form and wish to do so it is available [here](#)
[Consent-Form-Information.pdf \(newent.gloucs.sch.uk\)](#)

As previously stated just before schools broke up for the Christmas holidays the government informed us that we would be expected to offer lateral flow tests in school when children return. Each member of staff who is involved in the testing process has completed the required NHS training for each of the roles and have been supporting children with these tests ever since. Are they something that I want to do? No, but if they can detect asymptomatic cases and help our country beat this pandemic and enable children to return to school then I am happy to play my part. Please understand that as of today out of 150 staff at the school only 4 people have had the first dose of the vaccine. Like many of you they are anxious about the return, yet they will put that anxiety aside and continue to be here for your children, just as they have been, every day since the start of this pandemic. Please help us to help you by giving your consent for lateral flow testing and ensuring that your sons and daughters return on the appropriate day with a face covering (unless exempt for medical reasons). If your consent is not given then your child will not be tested and they will join their peers in face to face lessons, which to a simple man like me undermines the entire process and potentially puts everyone at risk.

School Buses

Just to confirm that all school transport will be operating in full from 8th March.

The arrangement on transport will be the same as they were in the autumn term for face coverings, seating bubbles, waiting at the bus stop and cleaning of vehicles. Below is a reminder from the bus company of the detail of these points:

1. **Face coverings:** Secondary school students must wear face coverings on all school transport and public transport, this includes any students that are brought to school by taxi/minibus.
2. **Seating bubbles:** Students that travel on GCC contracted routes (those which only take GCC pass holding students) will need to sit in their 'year group bubbles' on the bus as they did in the autumn term. Obviously the driver is not going to know each child and what year group they are in so we need the students to sit in their correct bubbles and not try to sit by their friend in a different year. On busy routes where every seat needs to be used there will be students from different year groups sat by each other as this is unavoidable where bubbles are adjacent.
3. **Waiting at the bus stop:** Students need to social distance from each other whilst waiting at bus stops, only students from the same household or year group should stand together. Like many of the above measures we are dependant on students taking responsibility for this themselves and being sensible.
4. **Cleaning of vehicles:** We can assure you that our operators have increased their cleaning schedules on the vehicles and they will be thoroughly cleaned each day and cleaned between different bubbles using the vehicle.

Regards



Alan Johnson
Principal