



Newtownhamilton High School

9 Armagh Road, Newtownhamilton

NEWRY, Co. Down

BT35 ODG

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Friday 29th September 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

Safeguarding Team

Designated Teacher:

Mrs Laverty

Deputy Designated Teacher:

Mr Cousins (Vice Principal)

Principal: Mr Megaw

Designated Governor for Child

Protection: Rev Graham

Chairperson of the Board of

Governors: Mr Bingham

School Counsellor:

Leona Hoey

First Aid

Our defibrillator is located in the main school foyer.

First Aiders: Mrs Alexander, Miss Anderson, Mrs Boyle, Mrs Johnston & Mr Reid.

The start to the new school year has passed quickly. I trust that all our pupils have settled well into school life and that they will have a positive experience during their time with us.

Our new school year commenced on a very positive note with another impressive set of GCSE results in August. This was followed by the arrival of 37 Year 8 pupils. September always proves to be a busy time as we put plans in place for the year ahead, therefore I want to take this opportunity to keep everyone updated on some news and forthcoming events as detailed below:

Emergency School Closures

As we approach the Winter months, I remind all parents about the procedures for emergency school closures (due to adverse weather etc). Deciding to close a school is not an easy decision as I understand the disruption that it causes. However, the health and safety of all school stakeholders is the key factor when I make this difficult decision.

In order to find out if Newtownhamilton High School is closed, parents can tune into BBC Radio Ulster, visit the BBC NI website, or check for updates on our website and Facebook page. Parents will hopefully receive a text from our school messaging service. The aim is to make an early decision (usually before 7.30am) if possible.

Industrial Action Update

Unfortunately, on-going industrial action will result in changes to our normal way of working as follows:

- **Prize Distribution** – similar to 2022, our 2023 Prize Distribution celebrations will take place during the school day on Friday 17th November at 1.15pm. Normal teaching and learning will therefore finish for all pupils at 12 noon on this date. Further information to follow.
- **Formal Assessments 1 & 3** – pupils will not complete FA1 (October 2023) and FA3 (March/April 2024). However, pupils will continue to complete end of term exams (FA2 & FA4) in December 2023 and June 2024 respectively.

Staffing Updates

Thankfully we had no changes to our staff over the Summer holidays, however we do say goodbye to Mrs N Watson (Art & Design and RE) today. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank her for the commitment shown to our pupils over the past 13 months. Miss J Howard will now take on this post and we look forward to welcoming her next week.

It is noted that Mrs C McNiece (Maths & RE) returns from her maternity leave next week and so I thank Mrs Bain for providing cover at a time when substitute teachers are limited.

Year 8 Online Parent-Teacher Meetings

All Year 8 parents/guardians will have the opportunity to meet online with our teachers on Friday 27th October (morning and afternoon slots). Information on how to book an appointment will be shared in the near future.



Energy Drinks & Nut Allergies



It is requested that pupils do not bring high energy drinks (Lucozade, BPM, Red Bull, Boost etc) to school. Healthier options such as bottled water or fully school compliant fruit drinks are available for sale in our vending machines and also the school canteen. Please believe me when I say that our pupils have plenty of energy without these drinks!

I would also be grateful if you would refrain from sending nuts/peanuts into school as we have some pupils with severe nut allergies.

Whole School Policies

Parents/guardians are reminded that the key whole school policies are available to view via our school website through a password protected page. Please follow the instructions below in order to access this more environmentally friendly method of communication.

Access to School Policies/Documents:

1. Log on to www.newtownhamiltonhigh.org.uk
2. Click on 'Key Docs' on the main toolbar and scroll down to 'Policies'
3. Type in the Username and Password

Username

Password



It is noted that Year 8 parents/guardians are normally provided with a hard copy of our Child Protection Policy. However, in the interest of the environment, parents/guardians are encouraged to view this document online but a hard copy can still be provided from the school office on request.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Consultation Reminder

Parents/Guardians are reminded to complete the Department of Education's consultation exercise on the proposed changes to the delivery of RSE in post-primary schools. Further information is contained in my correspondence to all parents/guardians on Monday 11th September.

Since the distribution of my letter, I have received further correspondence from the Department of Education (dated Friday 22nd September) which makes reference to "ongoing activity on social media and public demonstrations against the teaching of RSE in schools, resulting in the circulation of misinformation". I therefore refer parents/guardians back to my initial letter (11th September) as it clearly states the key changes. Finally, I encourage all parents/guardians to express their views via the consultation exercise on or before the closing date of Friday 24th November 2023. As always, I am happy to discuss any concerns or queries.

School Publicity & Use of Social Media

Our school website (www.newtownhamiltonhigh.org.uk) and Facebook page continue to receive a large number of hits. Our Twitter page and text messaging service should also keep parents updated on all the latest news and events within school.



Over recent years, Newtownhamilton High School has used social media positively to promote many aspects of school life. Unfortunately, there is an increasing trend across Northern Ireland of parents and pupils using this communication method to voice frustration about school matters which they are not entirely satisfied with. This often results in inaccurate information being shared publicly, thus quickly damaging the reputation of a school or an individual.

Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to remind parents that **I prefer to discuss any worries or concerns either face-to-face or over the telephone rather than reading about them on social media!**

Finally, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or concerns.

Yours faithfully

Neil Megaw (Principal)

Forthcoming Key Dates - October 2023

Friday 27th October

Year 8 Online Parent-Teacher Meetings

Friday 27th October – Friday 3rd November

Half-Term Holidays (inclusive dates)