

Virtual Open Evenings 6th and 7th October 2020: Frequently Asked Questions

General

What sets Newlands apart from the other schools in the borough?

We are the only all-girls school in Maidenhead and the only one currently graded as an OFSTED '1'.

How much time would you have at lunch?

You would have 40 minutes for lunch and 20 minutes for morning break.

How do you support girls who may find a particular subject challenging?

Most of the support comes from the expertise of the specialist subject teacher. We have sets in English and Maths and an excellent Learning Support Department. Senior Girls offer support, too.

How much do you see girls from Year 7 progressing into the top sets year on year and is this something you would facilitate/allow?

The sets are timetabled at the same time, so that there can be movement between them. It is, however, important to remember that even in a set, the rate at which new skills are mastered varies between learners. Girls in sets 2 and 3 often show potential for top GCSE grades and there is nothing to prevent them from achieving those outcomes.

What time do you start and finish school?

Morning registration starts at 8.45 a.m. and the last lesson finishes at 3.05 a.m.

Can the Year 7 girls get involved in a drama production?

Yes.

How often are the Drama productions?

We are aiming to do a whole-school one every other year. For pupils studying GCSE and A-Level Drama, they will be involved in frequent rehearsals and performances.

How are you dealing with remote learning during this time, if a pupil/class is in quarantine? Is Teams used to set/submit work?

Yes, we use Teams for live remote teaching as well as the uploading of work.

Is the plan to use Teams for homework?

Teams can be used for homework, but in the lower part of the school we prefer to use the Student Planner.

On average how much homework is set per day?

We publish a homework timetable and most tasks are not required to be completed for the next day. This means that girls can plan their time effectively, aiming to spend between half an hour and an hour each evening on homework in Year 7. This will increase as they move up the school.

Will the children need a computer or an i-pad of their own when starting Year 7?

No.

Homework- is it in a digital format?

There will be a combination of digital and pen/paper activities.

What would you do differently if another Lock Down occurred?

For partial or whole lock-downs, we will adhere to the cohort's usual timetable and implement distance teaching through Microsoft Teams. The first part of each lesson will be taught 'live' and the remainder will be for pupils to carry out independent tasks.

Please can you provide information on transportation- was a school bus mentioned?

We have two mini-buses, but they are for transporting pupils during the day – e.g. on school trips or to sports fixtures. Most of our pupils live close enough to walk or cycle, but for those who don't, there are municipal buses available.

Have you got any extra classes for specific subjects like science classes to encourage medicine students?

We offer GCSE Combined Science and the Separate Science qualifications. We have A-Levels in Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Further Maths. Our Medical Society brings in outside speakers, such as practising surgeons. For girls who have been offered a place at University for medicine, we provide a mock interview with a local doctor.

Do you offer GCSE subject according to ability sets or are girls free to choose subjects?

Girls are free to make their own GCSE choices.

Do you offer careers advice and help with choosing options?

Yes, to both! We have an in-house Careers Leader and all girls receive help with choosing both GCSE and A-Level combinations. The Sixth Form Bulletin, published weekly, contains a wealth of information about Higher Education and Careers.

How do you provide support for remote/home learning and what tools do you use?

We use Microsoft Teams. We have worked hard to help ensure that all girls can access a suitable device at home and our staff are becoming increasingly skilled in creating blended learning – i.e. lessons that can be delivered both in a classroom and through Teams.

Do you hold assemblies? And what time does the school day start and end please?

Assemblies are held in the Hall during morning registration. Tuesday – Years 7 and 8, Wednesday – Years 9 and 10, Thursday – Years 11, 12 and 13. Morning registration is at 8.45 a.m. and the last lesson finishes at 3.05 p.m.

Admissions

If we don't get in first time do we automatically get on the waiting list?

No. You will need to ask RBWM to put your daughter's name on the waiting list.

Is it then allocated on distance?

Yes.

What are the criteria for school entry selection?

Distance between the family home and Newlands.

Admissions - continued

What if you live closer than 1.7 miles?

You stand a good chance of being allocated a place.

Are there any thoughts on school tours in the near future?

We will do school tours as soon as the Covid 19 restrictions are lifted.

What are the key requirements for getting into Newlands? is it just distance?

It is just distance.

Hi, what would be the chances of getting in to your school if we live in the river area?

The distance over which places are offered varies every year. On the RBWM website, there is information about this as well as a tool whereby you can enter your postcode and ours (SL6 5JB) to ascertain the distance from your house to Newlands.

Sports

What sports do Year 7 do?

Year 7 will enjoy a carousel of the sports on offer, according to the seasons.

Which sports do girls do at Newlands?

Netball, hockey, rounders, swimming, gym, dance, football, lacrosse, tennis, cricket, badminton, trampolining, volleyball, athletics, basketball and orienteering.

How often is the swimming pool used?

Every day! All girls will do swimming either as part of their PE lessons or as part of a team.

Is Team Training by selection? If you don't get selected initially are there opportunities to be selected in the future?

Sports squad places are allocated by selection and there are several opportunities throughout the year. As Newlands is a large school, we can often field several teams.

Do you have a hockey squad?

Yes.

I have a sporty daughter who enjoys less traditional female sports like football and cricket. Do you cater for this?

Yes. We have a large range of sports – please see above.

Clubs

Does your school have a football team?

We have a football club and, depending what the other schools are doing, we will be ready to play competitively.

Is there a Cheerleading Club?

Yes, for the older girls.

Clubs - continued

What clubs do you do?

Lots! On our website ((Pastoral/Extra Curricular), you will be able to see the full list (when the Covid19 restrictions are lifted).

Are extra-curricular clubs generally during or after school?

A bit of both, but more of them are after school.

Do you have a breakfast club?

Not a club, per se, but our canteen serves breakfast items in the early morning.

Pastoral**How many girls per form?**

32.

What provisions do you have for pastoral care?

Every girl has a Form Tutor, who is the first port of call for day-to-day issues. Also, each cohort has a Head of Year and a Senior Link who is an Assistant/Deputy Head. At Newlands, all teaching and non-teaching staff care for and support the girls, as do the Prefects. We also have a Well-Being Hub, where girls can receive emotional and practical support. In addition to this, our school counsellor visits on a regular basis and can provide more specialist assistance.

What arrangements are there for Year 7 girls when they start and to help them settle in?

The Head of Year 7, and an Assistant Head, visit all the new girls in their Primary Schools. They will have a sit-down conversation, answer their questions and talk to them about who they might like to be in a Form with.

If friends join the school together, do they stay in the same Form?

We always try to ensure that all girls have a 'familiar face' in their Form Group. We cannot promise, however, that it will be a 'named friend.'

Can you be with your friends from primary school in the same form?

Please see previous question.

How many houses are there?

6. Austin, Brontë, Curie, Darling, Earhart and Frank.

What is the school's policy on bullying?

We take bullying very seriously. No child should be in a position where others are routinely horrible to them. We are very clear with our girls as to what is, and what is not, acceptable here at Newlands. Bullying is rarely a simple issue and our approach is tailored to the situation that has arisen. For example, in some cases, we might use restorative justice. Girls are reminded that they must speak up and tell an adult if they are being treated badly by others. All staff at Newlands have a role in helping girls manage their emotions and behave well. Our strong discipline and outstanding behaviour (referenced in the OFSTED report 2018) ensures that there is little opportunity for girls to step outside of the boundaries, which are embodied in our Golden Rules.

Pastoral - continued

How do you help girls who struggle socially to make friends?

We encourage all girls to take part in at least one extra-curricular activity. This helps to boost confidence and increase opportunities for socialising.

Big Sister Little Sister

What is a big sister? How does this work?

A 'Big Sister' is an older girl, usually from Year 10, who will help her Year 7 'Little Sister' settle in.

If we have an older friend in the school, can my daughter choose her as her 'older sister' or does the school select someone?

We will certainly listen to your daughter's views, but we cannot promise to choose the 'big sister' that she has in mind.

Mobile phones

What is your policy on technology, as in mobile phone use etc? What are the biggest challenges in this regard?

Girls may bring a mobile phone to school, but it must not be used during the day. We have not faced too many challenges with the implementation of this as most pupils understand how distracting mobiles phones can be.

Languages

Is Latin offered?

Yes. We have a Latin Club.

Is it 2 hours per language, per fortnight?

Yes. 2 hours of French, 2 hours of German and 2 hours of Spanish per fortnight.

Sixth Form

What percentage of girls actually do A-Levels vs BTECs?

This is difficult to express in terms of a percentage, as some girls do a mixture of both. However, more girls do A-Levels than BTECs.

Do you have any stats on what the girls do post sixth form?

We publish this information on our website (Sixth Form/Higher Education and Careers).

What percentage of girls go on to the Sixth Form?

It varies from year to year, but the majority of Year 11 go into the Sixth Form. We also accept applications from students in other schools.

Setting and Streaming

How do you approach streaming?

The practice of steaming – i.e. placing children in ability groups for all their subjects – is now fairly uncommon. Setting - grouping children by ability in particular subjects - is used by several schools. We use sets in Maths and English (In Science, too, but that is higher up the school).

Did you say that English and Maths are put into sets based on ability? Is it just these subjects or are there others and is this straight from year 7?

In Year 7, the sets are in English and Maths. We look at how the girls have progressed in Primary School and then see how they are getting on with us. When we are confident that we have a clear picture of their attainment levels, we put together the 4 sets.

SEN

How do you support dyslexia/What is on offer for a child with dyslexia?

Our SENCO ensures that teachers are provided with up-to-date information on all pupils with learning difficulties. Girls are encouraged and supported to develop strategies that work for them. If prospective parents have particular concerns about how their daughter will cope with the secondary school curriculum, they are advised to book a one-to-one telephone call with the Headteacher, Dr Ceska.