



Castle Connect

Friday 17th April 2026

Dear Families,

Welcome to the very first edition of the Castle Connect. Moving forward, you can expect this newsletter in your inbox every Friday. It is designed to be a weekly window into school life, a way to keep you up to speed with the wonderful things happening in our classrooms, as well as a dedicated space for key messages and updates. I will always look for your feedback, so if you think we are missing something please do let me know.

As I reflect on my first week as Principal, I have to start with the heart of our school: your children. To be honest, I have been overwhelmed. In my first five days, I have encountered young people who are remarkably polite, kind, articulate, and all-round impressive individuals. Whether it was a thoughtful conversation in the playground or seeing their focus in lessons, the calibre of pupils at Castle Newnham is truly impressive. You must be incredibly proud of them as parents; I certainly feel a deep sense of pride to be leading them.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for the welcome you have given me this week, I have loved meeting so many of you. I am a firm believer in visible leadership, so for me, that means being present where it matters, and although we have five different entry points across both our North and South sites, I will be rotating my position every morning and afternoon to see as many of you as possible. Whether we spoke for a few moments at the gate or through other interactions this week, your kindness has been incredibly heart-warming. It has made me feel truly settled in my first week. I knew this school was special before I arrived, but now I can feel it for myself.

I am finishing this week with a real sense of belonging. Castle Newnham already feels like home. I am already looking forward to getting back to it next week and continuing this journey with you all. Thank you for being such a wonderful, supportive community.

I wish you and your families a restful and lovely weekend.

Warm regards,

Donna Neely-Hayes
Principal





Senior Leadership Team



Donna Newell-Royes
Principal



Hannah Harwood
Senior Vice Principal



Hayley Grady
Vice Principal



Matt Hemidge
Vice Principal



Paul Dawson
Assistant Principal



Hannah Baxter
Assistant Principal



Luke Steel
Assistant Principal



Jon Mills
Assistant Principal



Shaun Stevens
Assistant Principal



Matt Cleaver
DSL - Primary



Beverly McWilliams
DSL - Secondary



Lauren Crowley
Business Manager



CORE Values

CN CORE School Values

Community

Treating everyone kindly
Supporting and caring for people who need help
Following the school rules
Being good friends and neighbours

CN CORE School Values

Opportunity

Taking part in school life
Considering our own strengths
Setting goals and trying hard
Growing as a person

CN CORE School Values

Respect

Valuing everyone around us
Listening to others ideas and opinions
Using good manners
Looking after our school

CN CORE School Values

Excellence

Being proud of our achievements
Working our hardest all the time
Overcoming challenges
Making best use of our talents, time and resources

OUR VISION

Our vision is for a highly successful educational journey through which each of our pupils can flourish in a safe, happy and stimulating school community from age 4-16. We set and ensure high expectations of ourselves and of others as we strive to teach knowledge and inspire curiosity about the world. We encourage positive attitudes, contribution to community, resilience, creativity, integrity and kindness.



A warm welcome to

Hannah Harwood

Senior Vice Principal

I am delighted to introduce myself as the new Senior Vice Principal here at Castle Newnham. Joining this vibrant community is a privilege, and I have been truly overwhelmed by the incredibly warm welcome I've already received from pupils, staff, and parents alike.

I come to Castle Newnham following 18 years at an "Outstanding" school in Luton, where I developed a deep passion and expertise in Pastoral care, Attendance, Safeguarding, and SEND. Ensuring that every child feels safe, supported, and empowered to attend and excel in school is at the heart of everything I do. I am incredibly excited to bring that experience to Castle Newnham and to build on the wonderful work already happening here. I look forward to meeting many more of you at the gates and around the school over the coming weeks!



Leonie Molloy-Cook

Geography Teacher

Head of Pupil Character, Aspiration & Personal Growth

I am grateful to have joined Castle Newnham as a Geography Teacher and Head of Pupil Character, Aspiration and Personal Growth. I moved here from a school in Luton, having transitioned into teaching in 2021 after a previous career in the geotechnical and environmental engineering industry. During my time at my previous school, I held several key roles, including: Head of Year 7, Transition Manager (KS2-KS3 and KS3-KS4), Head of Geography and Duke of Edinburgh Co-ordinator.

I am also lucky to have experience in teaching and examining for both the AQA and Edexcel exam boards for Geography GCSE. I am really looking forward to working with pupils across all age ranges and supporting the geography department and wider school.





New Key Stage 1 Leader

Sofia Aden

Key Stage 1 Phase Leader

Having spent a wonderful few years teaching in Years 1 and 2, I am absolutely delighted to be taking on the role of Key Stage 1 Phase Lead at Castle Newnham School. Our school community truly feels like a strong family, and I feel privileged to lead such a talented team of teachers as we head into an exciting summer term. I am looking forward to strengthening my bond with all of our Key Stage 1 families and working together to ensure a fantastic finish to the school year!



Goodbye & Thank you

We are saying goodbye to **Maria Newbury**, Head of Year 7, who is moving onto another school. Thank you to Maria for all her support and dedication to the young people of Castle Newnham. We wish her all the very best.

Welcome back

A very warm welcome back to **Lauren Crowley**, School Business and Operations Manager, and **Holly Baker**, Primary Class Teacher who have returned to Castle Newnham following maternity leave.



All Through School Update

We are excited to announce that we have officially received the legal approval from the Department for Education to become an all-through school. This means we are extending our age range to 4–16, with a total capacity for 1,380 students. This is a huge milestone for our community, allowing us to support our pupils on their entire educational journey from Reception all the way through to their GCSEs.





BEST Maths Competition

We are excited to launch our upcoming Maths Competition for all Key Stages – an opportunity for pupils to showcase not only their mathematical understanding, but also their creativity and flair for design.

Each Key Stage has been given a unique problem to solve, carefully crafted to encourage deep thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. Pupils are asked to complete their entries at home, with opportunities for support and guidance in school where needed.

This is not just about getting the right answer. We are looking for:

- Creative approaches to solving the problem
- Clear mathematical thinking and reasoning
- Imaginative and engaging presentation of solutions

We want pupils to take pride in their work – whether that’s through diagrams, models, illustrations, or beautifully structured explanations. The more original and thoughtfully designed, the better!

[BEST Maths Competition problems](#)

Submissions should be given to class teachers for pupils in Reception- Year 6 and CORE Tutors for pupils in Year7- Year 11. The deadline for submissions is Friday 24th April.

Year 3&4 Reading Morning

This half term pupils in Years 3 & 4 have the opportunity to invite a family member to come into school on a Friday morning and read with them for the first 10 minutes of the school day. This is a wonderful way to promote reading for pleasure and for adults and children to share books together.

We look forward to welcoming you to the remaining reading events later in the half term.





GCSE Spanish Speaking Exams

Congratulations to our Year 11 GCSE Spanish pupils for completing their Speaking Exams this week. Pupils spoke about a variety of themes; school and future projects, health and well-being, Travel and Tourism, their area, ICT, and themselves! The 14 pupils involved have worked very hard, attending revision classes during the Easter holidays, at lunchtime and after school. Now to prepare for their final exams next month.

Year 7 & 8 Flag Football

On Thursday 16 pupils from Years 7 and 8 represented the school at the District Flag football competition which took place at the Bedford Athletic Rugby club. Two teams were entered into the competition and finished 5th and 7th out of the 10 teams competing. A great learning experience for all in a fairly new sport for some of the pupils!

We look forward to taking both our Year 9/10 boys and girls teams through to the regional event in May at Cambridge Rugby Club.



Alumni News



Congratulations to alumni Javai James (Class of 2021) who will be appearing in his debut professional contract in the ensemble of the UK revival of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. During his time at Castle Newnham Javai was involved in many 4SIXTEEN productions including We Will Rock You in 2019. Javai was in our second cohort of GCSE Dance and Drama pupils and continued his Performing Arts studies to sixth form at Emil Dale Academy and then to Arts Educational, London to begin his degree. We are very proud of Javai and can't wait to see what's next for him!

Upcoming Dates



DATE	EVENT
Monday 20th April	Year 11 Art Exam Year 8-10 HPV Vaccination Catch-ups Year 8 Academic Consultation- <u>Year 7-11 early finish at 13.20</u>
Tuesday 21st April	Year 11 Art Exam Year 11 3D Design Exam (Day 2, Group 1)
Wednesday 22nd April	Year 9 Theatre Trip to Wicked Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Thursday 23rd April	Reception Easter Event GCSE French Speaking Exams Year 11 3D Design Exam (Group 2, Day 2) Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Friday 24th April	Year 3 and 4 Reading Morning GCSE French Speaking Exams Year 10 Graphics Mock Exam Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Monday 27th April	GCSE French Speaking Exams Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Tuesday 28th April	Year 5 Assembly at Christ Church Class Photos for pupils in Year 5 to Year 10 GCSE French Speaking Exams Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Wednesday 29th April	Reception Vision Checks Year 4 Caythorpe Residential Trip Starts Key Stage 3 Junior Maths Challenge GCSE French Speaking Exams Year 11 Ark Art Exam
Thursday 30th April	DofE Bronze Practice expedition 1 GCSE French Speaking Exams

Friday 1st May

Year 4 Caythorpe Residential Trip Ends
DofE Bronze Practice expedition 1

Monday 4th May

Bank Holiday (School Closed)

Tuesday 5th May

5BC River Trip
Year 1 Assembly at Christ Church
Year 11 3D Exam (Group 1)

Thursday 7th May

Start of GCSE Exams
Year 3 & 4 Multisports day (hosted on North Site)
5EK River Trip
Year 2 Assembly at Christ Church
Year 11 3D Exam (Group 2)

Friday 8th May

5HQ River Trip
Year 3&4 Reading Morning
Dance Showcase at University of Bedfordshire Theatre
Year 7 Rounders Tournament

Monday 11th May

Year 6 SATs Week Starts
Year 11 3D Exam (In Lesson)

Tuesday 12th May

Class Photos for Pupils in Reception to Year 4

Thursday 14th May

Year 6 SATs Week Ends
DofE Bronze Practice Expedition 2

Friday 15th May

Year 4 Reading Cafe
DofE Bronze Practice Expedition 2
Key Stage 3 District Athletics Championships

Monday 18th May

Year 10 GCSE Art Mock Exam

Wednesday 20th May

Sports Day for pupils in Years 5 and 6
Year 9 to Year 11 District Athletics Championships

Thursday 21st May

Census Day

Friday 22nd May

Sports Day for Pupils in Reception
End of Summer 1

DANCE SHOWCASE 2026




BEST
BEDFORDSHIRE
SCHOOLS TRUST

FRIDAY 8TH MAY, 7PM
UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE THEATRE
TICKETS £6



Safeguarding Team



Mr M Cleaver
DSL Primary



Mrs H Harwood
Senior Vice Principal



Mrs H Grady
Vice Principal



Mr M Herridge
Vice Principal



Miss H Baxter
Assistant Principal



Mrs B McWilliams
DSL Secondary



Miss S Cain
Pupil & Family Support Lead
DDSL



Mr D Chapman
Pastoral Intervention Lead
DDSL



Mrs H Clements
Head of Year
DDSL



SAFEGUARDING CONCERN?

If you are concerned about a child's welfare and safety, contact the safeguarding team via

CN-Safegaurding@bestacademies.org.uk



Social Media

School social media accounts are another useful tool for timely communication, community building, showcasing achievements and advertising upcoming events.



@CastleNewnham.Official



/CastleNewnhamSchool

My Child at School App

MY CHILD AT SCHOOL is the school's platform for families to receive information and communication about their child.



The app can be downloaded from Apple or Google stores onto your phone.
Payments for dinner money and any trips will be via this app.

