



# Blackfen School for Girls

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

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## Examinations Update: 1

Dear Year 11, Year 12 (Level 2) and Year 13 students, parents and carers,

I am writing to Blackfen School's Year 11, Year 12 (Level 2) and Year 13 examination students in response to the Government's decision to cancel public examinations in the Summer 2021 season. Some families received information from me last week, regarding the January BTEC examinations, which the school is still running but the purpose of this letter is to update all of the students in our examination groups, as well as their parents and carers.

Firstly, I want to assure students that the school will do everything in its capacity to support the achievement of the qualifications for which they - and their teachers - have prepared, during the last two years.

In his speech to the House of Commons on 6.1.21, Gavin Williamson, the Education Secretary, stated that "*While the details will need to be fine-tuned in consultation with Ofqual, the exam boards and teaching representatives, I can confirm now that I wish to use a form of teacher-assessed grades, with training and support provided to ensure these are awarded fairly and consistently*".

Students, parents and carers will be aware of the issues raised by the use of teacher-assessed grades in place of examination grades, last Summer. Despite concerns at national level, I was thoroughly impressed by the diligent and professional performance of Blackfen teachers in working through this process last year and, given the assurance of further training and support, I have every confidence in our teaching team doing an equally proficient job for this year's examination students.

The process of teacher assessment relies on Year 11, Year 12 (Level 2) and Year 13 students completing the full range of examination-level tasks set by their teachers. It is of the utmost importance that they not only finish this work but that it is completed to the best of their ability. Unlike last year's students, whose examinations were cancelled in March and close to the end of their courses, this year's students have every chance to improve their current level of examination attainment – *and they must aim to do so* – so that their academic performance can be assessed.

I have directed teachers to continue to set the full range of examination-level and standard of



work. I look to you, as parents and carers, to support and guide your daughters and sons this week, to establish a robust and balanced routine for working at home for the rest of this term, including school study, family time and genuine rest and relaxation.

The decision to cancel public examinations comes as a bitter blow to school leaders and teachers. The Education Secretary and an array of other politicians have vowed, since September, that Summer examinations in England would run according to schedule, even in a period of lockdown. In school, we have planned and worked towards this goal since the beginning of the academic year. Once again, last-minute changes over which we have no control have brought unnecessary stress and concern to teachers and their students.

However, examination students must not fall into the trap of failing to see the doors that are open, by focusing on the doors that are closed. Summer 2021 examinations may have been cancelled but September 2021 is still on the calendar and will bring a fresh start and a new learning experience for every one of our examination students. We are proud of their resilience, effort and progress, in spite of last term's episodes of Covid illness and self-isolation. Maintaining healthy learning habits, a self-disciplined approach to academic study and aspirations to achieve one's personal best are the qualities of lockdown study that will underpin a successful September start in the Sixth Form, on an Apprenticeship scheme or at University. They are qualities that last a lifetime and there is time, now, to nurture and develop them, with the guidance, care and support of families.

During the coming months, I will keep you updated regarding the work of our examination students and their teachers. We are very grateful to parents and carers for their on-going support and know that your input, in partnership with leaders and teachers in the coming term, will secure the best outcomes for our examination students.

Yours sincerely,



**Miss F Minnis**  
**Deputy Head Teacher**

