



Blackfen School for Girls

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

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Dear year 13 student,

First of all, I would like to wish you a happy new year. Normally I would do this in assembly with the background of the furry fable cats setting their new year resolutions. I would also be talking to you about what I planned to do this year and the setting of goals and objectives rather than resolutions. My goal last year was to ride a horse. I was ready to do this and had the lesson booked and raring to go but, then came lockdown. The same, though much more important, has now happened to you and school and examinations and I am so sorry about this. You were working hard, you were preparing for the next steps and most importantly you had May and June in mind (2021) as a time of examinations. That has been taken away and I really feel for you and for your teachers. I know how tough the start of this term has been for you, especially for those of you who have faced BTEC examinations in the first few weeks of term. I also realise your sense of loss at not being in school during your final year of formal compulsory education – the culmination of 13 years of regularly going to school.

However, learning and work is never lost. Teachers will be continuing to set and assess your work so that they can make well informed judgements of your work and progress over the coming months. We are expecting some forthcoming announcements on what is replacing examination grades in the coming weeks and months and we will pass on information to you as and when we have it. Continued learning also prepares you for the next step of your learning journey. As you will find out, learning does not stop when you leave school. Don't take a "learning gap" now as it will be more difficult to pick up further learning opportunities. Keep all those doors firmly available and open to yourself. Remember, education is there for you to develop skills, knowledge, experiences and understanding. An examination is simply one way of testing what you know and understand. There will be plenty of opportunities this year and in the future to show what you have learnt, experienced and understood during this period of time. Don't stop and don't fall off. Most importantly, don't go silent on us – if you are struggling please let us know. Make sure you keep in touch.

Ofqual issued the following statement for students, parents/carers and teachers last week.

We know that this is a difficult time for students, their parents and carers, teachers and trainers. Our message to students is this: please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education. That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going in to their school, college or training provider. This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications. It's important that teachers and students can focus on the knowledge and skills needed to equip students to progress to the next stage, whatever form that might take – whether to college, an apprenticeship, university or employment.



The way ahead is not straightforward: exams and standardised assessments are the fairest way of determining what a student knows and can do. We need to consider a wide range of qualifications – from

A levels and GCSEs to many different vocational and technical qualifications – and the solution won't be the same for all. Following the government's announcement on Monday evening, we also need to consider how alternative arrangements will work for different students, including those who are independent learners. We are discussing alternative arrangements with the Department for Education. We know that many are seeking clarity as soon as possible. We will provide further updates as soon as we can.

Although not in person, my best wishes to you for 2021. Make a year that you remember for all the right reasons. You remain very much in our thoughts at this time and you remain very much part of the Blackfen school community.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Brown
Head Teacher

