



Blackfen School for Girls

Raising aspirations - releasing potential

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Dear parent/carer of year 13 student,

First of all, I would like to wish you a happy new year. My best wishes to you and your family if you have been affected by the effects of the pandemic. I have written a letter to all students in year 13 and I would be grateful if you could pass this on to them. It is a very challenging time for us all and I feel particularly sorry for young people in examination years as we start 2021. I also appreciate the stresses you feel as a parent/carer at this time, juggling the need to work, the need to physically go to work and the challenges of helping to support remote learning, all the while conscious of the impact of this pandemic on your own family. Our thoughts are very much with you.

The key point in my letter and in the letter from Ms. Minnis is that learning and work is never lost. Teachers will be continuing to set and assess work so that they can make well informed judgements of 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. There continues to be a constant stream of press speculation about assessment and examinations. Please keep calm and keep your daughter/son calm. No decisions have been made yet. There will be a consultation on what is replacing examinations this summer before any decisions are made.

Continued learning also prepares young people for the next step of their learning journey. Remember, education is there for young people to develop skills, knowledge, experiences and understanding. An examination is simply one way of testing what they know and understand. Most importantly, I urge you and them to not go silent on us – if they 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. You, and your respective families, remain very much in our thoughts at this time and you all remain very much part of the Blackfen school community.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Brown
Head Teacher

