

Re: Summer 2021 Exams Cancelled

Dear Parent/Carer,

We hope that your family had a restful Christmas period and that you and your child is coping as well as possible with the current lockdown and home-learning situation. We have been really impressed with how the year group have again adapted and re-embraced online learning this week. We know how hard learning at home can be, if your child is struggling in any way please ask them to contact their teachers through Teams.

The Prime Minister on Monday stated that not all summer exams would go ahead as normal. We are sure that this statement caused some concern and worry in your household. Unfortunately, we know as much as you and are following the press briefings in the same way. Today the Secretary of State for Education has added some more details to that statement. This was a little clearer and a summary is as follows:

- Students will not sit GCSE, AS and A Level examinations this summer.
- A consultation will be launched next week and conclude swiftly to give certainty to schools, colleges and students.
- We expect Ofqual to consider a teacher-assessed system as a replacement.
- Teachers will be given training and support to ensure that these marks are awarded fairly and consistently.

There unfortunately was no mention of BTEC or vocational qualifications but like last year we would expect them to be treated in the same way. There was no added detail on what these teacher-assessments may look like. As soon as we know more details we will continue to write and inform you.

We do know that the GCSE grades that the students will receive in the summer will have the same value as grades given in the past and in the future. They will be a reflection of the hard work and effort put in. These are not easy times for any of us, students, parents and staff but we need to keep going with a positive mindset and we are with you every step of the way.

To help the year group prepare we hope to still run a full mock examination period in examination conditions from 22/02/21 until 05/03/21. We are aware that this would be the first two weeks back after a period of lockdown and will of course review the dates after more information is given by Ofqual in the next few weeks and/or the lockdown situation changes.

It is vitally important that your child prepares themselves fully for this set of mock examinations as they could form part of a Centre Assessed Grade.

Our Revision advice and guidance can be found on the school website under 'revision'.

<https://www.birchwoodhigh.org/revision/>

Year 11 Parents' Evening will continue to be on the 14 January 2021. Because of the Covid restrictions, this year it will take place virtually via an online provider called School Cloud. This may sound daunting, but the School Cloud system makes the evening run very smoothly and automatically lines up the appointments for you leaving you with very little to do on a technical front.

You will need to register and book appointments by logging into

<https://birchwoodhigh.schoolcloud.co.uk>.

The booking system is now live. The name that you use to log in would normally need to exactly match the name that is first priority on our school system. Please contact me at school if you have any issues.

On the evening you will access your video appointments by logging into School Cloud as above, email reminders with hyperlinks will be sent from School Cloud prior to the evening to make things easy for you. At the time of your meetings you will be prompted to 'join the meeting'. All appointments will last a maximum of 4 minutes; there will be a timer displayed within the meeting so you will know when it ends. The video link will close when the 4 minutes is up irrespective of whether your conversation has finished. We appreciate that this may seem quite blunt but it is the only way to keep a virtual evening running to time. We will ask teachers to try and end a conversation politely before the video cuts off but this is going to be a new experience for us all so we may not get it right first time, and we ask for your patience and support with this.

We also ask that you don't ask your child's teachers about the current exam situation. They know as much as I have told you in this letter and like I said earlier, I will write to you with more information as soon as I have it.

It is recommended that you log-on in advance of your first appointment to check that you can access School Cloud. There is a sound and video test that the website helps you with to try and avoid any technical issues. If your child has more than one teacher for a subject only one of the teachers will be available on the evening. Some teachers may have multiple classes; because of this, they may not be able to see all parents or may not be able to answer all of your questions in the allocated time. If there is a teacher that you cannot get an appointment with, but would like to speak to, then please contact them via their school email address, which can be found on the school website.

Thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely



Mr D Heaton
Associate Assistant Headteacher