



Tuesday 26th January

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am sure that you will be delighted to hear that schools are highly likely to re-open on Monday 1st February. As the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture said in today's press briefing:

'Thanks to the spirit that binds our community together people have done the right thing, you've stayed at home, worn masks and kept socially distant'.

I would like to add my thanks for all your efforts with remote learning. I know it is not easy managing lots of school subjects, possibly with more than one child to look after, trying to keep your family safe, perhaps working from home, with a household to run too. If only we could award Epraise points to our parents, as well as our students!

On a serious note, it will be school as normal on Monday, with students in full school uniform. If they wish to wear face coverings, that will be entirely up to them. I want to reassure you that we know lockdown has been difficult for many and we will be putting supportive measures in place for those that need them.

School Calendar

This is traditionally a busy time in the school year and we have 'lost' three weeks' of events, which will now have to be re-arranged in an already full calendar. We will inform you of key events via our usual methods.

Year 9 Options Evening

This was scheduled for Monday 1st February. Please see below the reasons why we have decided to run this differently:

- We felt that some people may be nervous about gathering in significant numbers on the first day that lockdown has been lifted. It could even be argued that this is not advisable.
- In moving the Options Evening online this year, we believe that having a detailed presentation that explains the process will be more helpful. Given that a video can be paused, rewind and watched again, this should prove to be much more useful than a 25 minute talk. The information the video will outline would be very difficult to see in a large hall, especially if you are sitting towards the back of the room. The presentation will also outline the other useful features of the Google 'Options' classroom.
- An options assembly will be delivered in the first week back, so students will experience a 'face to face' options presentation as well.
- There will be an opportunity to have a face to face discussion regarding the process or the subjects themselves, on the Academic Tutoring day, due to take place on the 10th February.
- Extra support will be available on request.

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External Examinations

- Ofqual, the organisation that is responsible for examinations, has asked for the views of parents, carers, teachers and students on how we should assess students in place of examinations. The closing date for submissions is Friday 29th January. We are advised that we will not know the outcome of the consultation before early March.

If you would like to have your say, please follow the link that can be found at the bottom of page 6 of the consultation document that can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-how-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades-should-be-awarded-in-summer-2021>

- WJEC is in the process of changing their approach and when we know more, we will share the information with you.
- At the time of writing, Cambridge International has indicated that they will hold external examinations.

Mock Examinations for Years 11 and 13

These will take place the week beginning February 8th (apart from one exam for some Year 11 students, which will take place on Friday 5th February).

The mock exam week schedule has been modified because we now have external exam results in GCSE English, Maths and Science. Individual timetables will be issued to students on the first day back at school.

Although we do not know what the Ofqual Consultation will decide about assessing students' work, the document states that 'mock exams' may be an integral form of the evidence.

Students have been informed about the mocks via Google Classroom, so it should not come as a shock to them.

And Finally

I began with a quote from our Education Minister. I would like to end with a quote from Minister Ashford, who is also a Governor of Ballakermeen High School:

'I would like to thank everyone across our community for all that they have done so far. There is still a way to go, but with a fair wind next week may bring us back ... to the normality that I'm sure we all crave.'

Stay safe and let's all keep looking out for each other.

Adrienne Burnett,
Head Teacher