



**Bexley Grammar School**  
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Dear Parent/Carer,

In this, our **third week of virtual learning**, the feedback I am receiving from both students and parents is very positive. We are very aware that individual students are in contrasting home circumstances; each face different challenges, just as each parent, and indeed, each teacher, are contending with different parameters. Thank you for the important part that you are playing in supporting us with your children. Advice and documents to support students and parents with virtual learning can be found [here on our website](#).

**Next Tuesday (26th January) is an INSET day** and comes at a good time, mid-half-term, for a **digital detox day**. I encourage you, subject of course to your circumstances, to encourage as much activity away from digital devices as possible on Tuesday. Your children's teachers will have to be online for most of the day for their training, unfortunately, but this is a great opportunity for your children to get some fresh air and do some varied activities, within our current restrictions of course.

**Please continue to report cases of Covid-19 to the school** through the attendance office as you were last term. Although we do not have to trace contacts while most students are working from home, we are still asked to record these cases and report them to Public Health through our systems. Bexley Public Health has also asked me to share important information regarding local [Covid testing centres](#) in the borough of Bexley; there are fixed and mobile centres that cater for people with and without symptoms; the availability of tests has never been better.

In my previous letter, I was conscious of how students in years 11 and 13 may have felt unsettled by the news that the summer GCSE and A level examinations would not go ahead as planned. There has been much in the media since and many of you will be aware that the **DfE and Ofqual are currently consulting on the proposals for the summer examinations (closing date 29th January)**; parents and students are invited to take part in [this joint consultation](#): *"This consultation is open to anyone who wants to respond but will be of most interest to students who had been expecting to take their GCSE, AS or A level exams this summer, their parents and carers, their teachers, school and college leaders, exams officers and those who use the qualifications to make selection decisions, such as further and higher education institutions and employers."*

Whilst that consultation gives a voice to those involved with GCSEs, our Year 13 students have a limited voice in a parallel [Consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs](#) and other general qualifications in 2021. There are two questions that relate to the IB: *Question 1 - Are there any other written exams due to take place from April onwards this academic year, that should be in scope and therefore not go*

*ahead? And Question 12 - Should other general qualifications such as Pre-U, AEA, Core maths and the **International Baccalaureate** be included under the measures proposed for GCSEs, AS and A levels or under the alternative arrangements for awarding VTQs we propose to put in place?*

Whilst I would never wish to influence any response you might choose to make, I would suggest that the IB should have parity with A levels rather than VTQs. Direct consultation by the IB with schools closed today (the IB is ahead of Ofqual in this respect). We have submitted our views, strongly urging the IB to follow Ofqual's recommendations for A levels in order to ensure that IB students have parity this summer with their peers in the eyes of universities and similar.

**It is more important than ever for both Year 11 and Year 13 to remain focused in the weeks to come.** All forms of ongoing assessments and coursework are likely to be used to generate grades, not simply mock grades or report grades. Each piece of work completed during this term of virtual learning provides evidence of achievement and should be treated as opportunities to improve on previous performance. As I mentioned previously, last Spring, a number of students who thought that they could rely on their mock or report grades did not sustain their effort during the Spring term and suffered the consequences. The message is clear: assessment of ongoing work, whether generated by teachers or imposed centrally by Ofqual or the IB, will underpin whatever systems are used to award grades this summer. If any student is having issues accessing their virtual learning from home, please contact the relevant pastoral staff for support.

Please ensure that your child is aware of the contents of this letter as needed.

Best wishes to you all and thank you for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Elphick', written in a cursive style.

Steve Elphick