



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

I wrote to you all midway through this half term and here we find ourselves at the half term break after six weeks of virtual learning, including a week of snowy conditions. Luckily, the school closure on Monday due to adverse weather did not affect most of you. It would have been a difficult week in these freezing conditions had we been fully open, especially as the pumps in our main boiler room chose to fail a fortnight ago and about a third of the school (including my office) have been without heat!

We have a little over a week to wait until we find out when and how schools will fully reopen. Thank you, again, for the important part that you are playing in supporting us with your children. We know that some of them are really struggling after six weeks without their usual routines and social contact and we hope that the end of this lockdown is now in sight. We also know that many of your children are coping extremely well and that generally we are delivering a much-improved experience of virtual learning compared to last summer. Whatever your experience has been, children are always more resilient than we expect and they will bounce back as soon as the conditions allow it.

I hope you are able to encourage as much digital detox as possible in your home during the week ahead. Of course, we are all operating under considerable restrictions and our home circumstances vary a great deal. But whatever you can do to help your children mark a change to their routines (eg. switch off from school work, get away from their screens and get as much exercise as possible) will help them when we return to virtual learning for at least the two weeks from 22nd February.

A few points of which it may be helpful to be aware as we look ahead:

- Year 10 and 12 examinations will not take place immediately after Easter as originally planned but will be prioritised during the summer term when we have a clearer picture of when students will return and what a full return to school will look like. Students will, of course, be given plenty of notice of new examination dates so there is no need to have any concerns.
- We still await the outcomes of the Ofqual/DfE consultation before we can confirm final arrangements for year 11 this summer; I wrote separately to year 13 parents and students last week about the ongoing liaison between the IB and Ofqual which will determine arrangements for year 13. I wish we could provide more certainty for these two year groups right now, but it will not be too long now before we know where we stand.
- We have had a few teething problems introducing, at considerable speed, new software which enables school reports to be emailed efficiently and securely to parents. My apologies to families in years 9 and 10 for the delay this has meant in receiving their reports. (Year 9 parents should all

have received their reports now; year 10 will be issued immediately after half term.) Adopting this software is a very positive development and we plan to continue to use it after students return - no more digging in your child's bag for a scrunched up piece of paper!

- We are also setting up a virtual solution for Parents' Evenings, which some of you will recognise if you work or have children in other schools. SchoolCloud offers virtual meetings, a little like a succession of Zoom meetings, which parents are able to book and manage themselves online. We hope to have this up and running for our first parents' evening near the end of March, and like the solution for reports, we may continue to use this in years to come if it is as successful as our research suggests it will be.
- Our usual Enrichment Week and Summer Fayre arrangements will not take place this summer. Thus we will not be in school on Saturday 12th June and there will be school on Monday 14th June.
- You will remember that the original government plan at the beginning of January, when a full return to school had been expected after a fortnight, was that there would be mass testing of students in school using lateral flow tests which provide a result within 30 minutes. We had an overwhelming response to our appeal to parents for volunteers and we have used a small number of these volunteers who have kindly given up their time to run twice weekly small-scale testing for staff. The plans for mass testing are on hold as we await the announcement about when schools will fully reopen but you may be interested to know that you can get [free Covid-19 no-symptoms rapid testing](#) in Bexley for you and your family.
- And finally, please continue, on our return, to report cases of Covid-19 and other illness/absence to the school through the attendance office.

Please ensure that your child is aware of the contents of this letter as needed. I hope you all get some sort of a break or change of routine alongside your child(ren).

Best wishes to you all.



Steve Elphick