



7th January 2021

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Dear Students, Parents / Carers

Summer Examinations

Yesterday the Secretary of State for Education confirmed that students will not be asked to sit national examinations this summer. For some this will be a relief following a year of disruption, whilst others may have a sense of disappointment.

I fully support the decision to cancel exams. Not only has there been unprecedented disruption but the disruption will have impacted individuals, schools and regions differently. The logistics of holding exams during a period of potential isolations would further disrupt an equitable system.

Many of our students taking vocational exams this week will have rightly felt a sense of indignation at the position they have been put in. Those students with exams in the coming days will continue to have to opportunity to sit the exam if they wish. For some it will allow you to demonstrate your hard work but you should now also be reassured that the sitting (or not) of the paper in these circumstances will not be the only route to achieving a grade.

There continues to be uncertainty around exactly how grades will be awarded. The government and Ofqual are consulting on the process in the coming weeks and we are told plans will be announced in February. It is our view that it will almost certainly be based on a form of moderated school assessment. This may allow schools to tailor assessments based on curriculum coverage, long-established exam board criteria and assessment objectives combined with a robust internal moderation; it may also allow us to consider performance across the whole period of the course.

All of this means it is vitally important that students in exam year groups continue to fully engage in their online learning. It is important for two reasons. Firstly, they will still have course content to cover and the learning of knowledge and skills is hugely important to the development of our students and being able to access the next phase of education. Secondly, whilst there are no national exams the school and the teachers will still need to make a robust assessment to deliver a result for your course. The students have, and I am sure will continue to, fully and positively engage in their online learning; to do so is absolutely in their best interest.

I also want to acknowledge the potential impacts on mental health. Exam years are always stressful. The amount of hard work from staff and students is considerable, as is the pressure to do your best under assessment conditions. Of course, these pressures remain, but with an added uncertainty around exactly how the process will work. The students continue to have access to their tutors and year teams and can access Student Support via email studentsupport@edgbarrowschool.co.uk (we will then organise virtual/face to face meetings as appropriate). We will also keep you updated when we confirm processes. The students should however be assured that we will do everything in our power to provide a supportive, fair and robust system; they are always at the forefront of all our decisions.

Finally, exams are just one element of school life. Along with qualifications, it is important that we support the students to become the best they can in all areas. Their success is not just a grade on a piece of paper, it is about their resilience, how they treat others, their endeavour, their friendships and the fine young people they have become. We are already very proud of their achievements.

Keep up the good work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Matthews', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr S Matthews