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Headmaster: David Clark, BA, M Phil (Cantab)

29th April 2020

Dear Year 13 Students,

I hope that you are all well and staying fit and healthy during these challenging and unusual times. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the clear majority of you who have continued to attend the online lessons, submit work and stay in touch in general. I understand that for many of you this is an unsettling time, with university places dependent upon predicted exam grades and the cancellation of exams this summer. Please be assured that we are working hard to plan and support you as much as possible.

EXAMINATIONS

We are, however, aware that there has been some frustration and uncertainty about the OFQUAL announcement especially about the re-submission of work. Below is what they sent to all schools:

Should schools and colleges be setting students new work to inform the grade they submit?

There is no requirement to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed. Where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Heads of Centre should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

It is clear from speaking to our contacts in the exam boards that there is no requirement to set additional work and this was done to protect the students who find themselves in schools and colleges where no virtual lessons or support were provided. However, work can be submitted after 20th March and the head of center (the headteacher) has the final say as to the predictions.

The reason the head of center has the final say is just so that certain circumstances can be taken into account e.g. the wellbeing of students, health issues and personal concerns – i.e. special consideration may need to be applied. Also, experience tells us that many students who don't achieve well in their mock exams in January, often do much better in June – so we have to be a bit careful about just submitting mock grades – as that could disadvantage students who were either having a bad time in January or simply didn't work hard enough then. There is another important reason for you to continue working until the deadline and that is because OFQUAL have introduced a ranking system and we are keen that you have the chance to improve your rankings in the coming days.

The exam boards have also asked us to assemble evidence of your work to justify our predicted grades. - ***so please keep all of your written work and do all you can to ensure that it is in a fit state to submit to the exam boards if they ask for that evidence to be sent to them after 29th May.***

We are therefore working within the rules set by the exam boards and are in the process of gathering evidence to support grades entered and student rankings for A Level subjects. Definitive guidance is still to come from BTEC, but we believe we are on top of this. Attending lessons and submitting work is therefore still important in the short run therefore ***it is important that you continue to attend every virtual lesson and complete all work set by your teachers. NB - normal teaching of Year 13 classes will continue until 15 May.***

THE POST 'A' LEVEL/BTEC PROGRAMME

Behind the scenes, we have been working hard to prepare a new Year 13 programme that will provide additional opportunities that will help prepare you for the next stage of your life. We have a draft programme in place, ***but I would really appreciate your input into this.*** I have asked your mentors to canvass you for ideas on what you think we could offer that would be interesting and/or useful for you. As it stands, the current draft has potential courses in conversational French/Spanish, writing a CV, learning how to research at university level, an introduction to government, current affairs and geo-politics and managing your finances on it. It will then sit alongside academic and subject specific studies and will be launched on Monday 18th May 2020. ***So, once again, please let me know asap if you would like an additional course / option included and we will do our best to accommodate your requests.***

Many of you have responsibilities in the school and I would be grateful for you to reach out to students, teachers and other members of the school community to help. Equally, you are all school leaders and I am sure you would be keen to continue to contribute to the 'Battle Abbey Family'. For example, we would be grateful if you could offer to do one or more of the following:

- Post a mini lecture on BAS TV on a topic of your choice – e.g. your EPQ (No more than 20 mins)
- Offer guidance to Year 12 students about Ucas and university courses
- Ask teachers to put you in touch with younger students who may need academic mentoring
- Contribute interesting activities, competitions, challenges to our social media platforms via Mr Dennett
- Share ideas with us on how best to support the school and each other going forwards

Also, of course, I and the school would love to run as many of the leavers' events over the summer term as possible, but we will need to be guided by government advice before confirming anything. ***In the meantime, please let me know the sort of events and activities that you would like to stage – and we will see if they can take place either in June / July or even in September if necessary.***

Finally, I would like to reflect that just over a month ago it was school as usual, preparing for your exams and so forth. Yet, with very little notice we have all had to adjust to a 'new normal' to quote a phrase much in use currently. This has meant that in a few short weeks, the school has had to move to teaching on-line, re-calibrate the school day, review the calendar of school events, get to grips with the requirements of exam boards and re-write a curriculum so that you can have new opportunities which previous leavers could not. Therefore, please work with us and communicate any issues, concerns or problems that you may have.

I very much look forward to seeing you in person soon and receiving your feedback on the new course and leavers' programme. Please keep in touch, stay safe and do all you can to support each other during these strange and difficult times.

Yours sincerely

Mr Usher
Deputy Head