



22 January 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers

We have reached the halfway point of this term, and have now completed three weeks of remote learning for our staff and students.

This lockdown, for some, feels harder than the last especially with the winter weather and darker days. Our Student Wellbeing page, on Frog, contains a wealth of information and guidance on managing mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and has been updated with some new resources on 'lockdown lethargy'. [Young Minds](#) also have many resources for parents on supporting their children at this time.

Examinations and consultation on awarding exams in 2021

Year 11 students have begun completing their 'Trial Exam' assessments at home and will continue to do these during lesson time next week. A reminder that these Year 11 assessments need to be returned to school by Wednesday 3 February – details to follow next week. Feedback from staff is that students are engaging well in these. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure students that the marks received for this work will **not** form a part of any school grade later awarded and the purpose of the 'exams' will be to help the student and the teacher understand areas of strength and areas that require development.

Ofqual and the Department for Education have launched a joint public consultation this week on the approach to awarding GCSE, AS and A level grades and Vocational and Technical qualifications (VTQ) in 2021 following the cancellation of exams. We will of course be submitting a school response, but this consultation is open to parents and students in Years 11, 12 and 13 as well.

[Click here](#) to access the consultation documents for GCSE, AS and A Levels

[Click here](#) to access the consultation documents for Vocational and Technical Qualifications (VTQs)

The consultations will close on Friday 29 January at 11.45 pm. You are welcome to share your replies with us at the school should you so wish. I will be interested to read your thoughts as I draft the school's formal response.

We will of course update all parents and students on the plans for exam results once the detail on this has been finalised and published.

In the meantime, I would urge parents of Year 11 and Year 13 students to plan ahead in the knowledge that these students might stay 'in school' for longer than was the case in previous years. Please do not plan any holidays, for example, during June and July.

COVID-19 Contact Testing Update

We have received confirmation this week from Gavin Williamson, Education Secretary, that plans to conduct daily lateral flow tests for close contacts of positive cases have been paused. At Backwell, as previously communicated, we are carrying on using self-isolation for contacts identified where there is a positive case in school, so this announcement does not affect us.

Lateral Flow Tests are still in use for mass testing – so we will continue to offer these tests to our staff and the small group of students currently accessing in-school supervision to identify asymptomatic cases in those on the school site.

I await further information from the Government on what testing we should be offering as a secondary school going forward - again we will keep you all updated and informed as this develops.

Reminder: Remote Learning Survey

Thank you to all parents and students who have already completed our Remote Learning surveys. Students can access their survey via Frog and parents who still wish to submit feedback can do so by [clicking here](#). Both surveys will close at 8.00 am on Monday 25 January.

Jon Nunes
Headteacher

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OTHER MESSAGES ...

Year 9 Options

Normally, at this time of the year we would hold our Year 9 Options Parents' Information Evening at which we explain the options process and talk to parents about the range of subjects and courses available to pupils for study in Years 10 and 11. However, under the current restrictions we are clearly unable to hold this in person. Instead, we will be running an online programme to help students and parents consider subject choices for their GCSE studies. Further details and more information, including videos, will be available on Frog from Wednesday 27 January.

Sixth Form Interviews

We are pleased that a high number of current Year 11 students have applied to join Backwell Sixth Form in September - we have now processed all applications, thank you. The next stage of the application process will be interviews and as we are unable to hold these in school, they will now take place remotely using Microsoft Teams. Please note that interviews will take place in either the last week of Term 3 or the first week of Term 4. We will write to all parents of Sixth Form applicants by Friday 29 January with the date and time of their interview as well as any further instructions.

Year 10 Work Experience

We can now confirm that physical work experience will not take place this academic year due to COVID 19 restrictions. Therefore, your child does not need to seek and confirm a work experience placement **at this time**. We are considering options for virtual work experience and will contact you again soon with further details. In the meantime, please continue to check the Careers Bulletin (see below) for careers-related opportunities for your child.

Careers Bulletin

Please find below a link to the Careers Bulletin on our school website. This bulletin includes a section on online and virtual careers resources, including the school's online careers platform, Unifrog.

[Current Careers Events and Opportunities \(22 January 2021\)](#)

If you have any queries regarding future plans Mrs Ball can be contacted on her school email cball@backwellschool.net.

Year 9 Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY), Diphtheria, Polio and Tetanus (DPT) Vaccinations

The School Nursing Team has advised us that they are hoping to be able to conduct the MenACWY and DPT vaccinations in local clinics rather than here at school. You will remember that Year 9 pupils were scheduled to have the vaccinations at school earlier this month. The School Nursing Team are planning to collect the consent forms currently held by our Student Services Team sometime in the near future. So if you have not already done so, please do return the consent forms to Student Services as soon as possible, so that we are ready for when they call. A copy of the form is attached. We are happy to receive scanned copies emailed to studentservices@backwellschool.net. Thank you very much to those parents who have already submitted their consent form

Netball opportunity for girls in Years 9 - 11

Miss Rae in the PE department has emailed all girls in Years 9 – 11 to let them know about an opportunity where the netball coach from Weston College will be hosting a live fitness session only for Backwell students. Sessions will take place every Wednesday starting at 3.30 pm and they will last around 45 mins -1 hour. So if any girl in Year 9 -11 is interested in attending these fun fitness sessions, please see the email sent by Miss Rae for full details of the Zoom login and pass code. Any queries should be addressed to Miss Rae.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday 27 January	Information re Year 9 options for GCSE subject choices available to view online on Frog from Wednesday 27 January
Thursday 4 February	Year 9 Parents' Evening Opens for bookings on Thursday 28 January at 6.00 pm
Thursday 11 February	Year 8 Parents' Evening (<i>more information coming soon</i>)
Friday 12 February	INSET day and last day of term
Monday 22 February	Start of Term 4

LETTERS HOME ...

[Year 9 Parents' Evening and Online Options Information](#) – Parents/Carers of Year 9 students

[Sixth Form Bulletin \(week beg 25 January 2021\)](#) – Parents/Carers of Sixth Form students