

08 February 2021

Dear Parents/Carers

A snowy landscape greeted me this morning. We continue to open for around 40 key worker and vulnerable students but otherwise the school is eerily quiet. I know that our students are doing a great job studying online from all the positive feedback I have received from their teachers. However, this is no substitute for coming to school and learning alongside peers.



With a week to go before we all have a well-deserved half-term break, there is a growing case for schools to return on 8 March, as Covid infection rates abate and the Vaccination Programme rolls out. I can certainly see a situation where Primary Schools and Year 11 & 13 return before Easter – it is likely that there will be an announcement over half term so at least we will know where we stand when we return.

If we see, therefore, the next three school weeks (excluding half-term) as a continuation of current provision and practice, we just need to continue to ‘stick to the knitting’ with the vast majority of our students working from home, following their timetable and trying to make sure they stay healthy and safe.

Unfortunately, we are still waiting for guidance from Ofqual with regards to the assessment of GCSE and Post-16 qualifications and I will share these with you as soon as we know. Year 11 and 13 students certainly seem to understand that it will be their teacher and the school that decides their grade. The unknown element is to what extent external exam papers or sampling moderation will affect these judgements.

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Thank you for your continued support during these challenging times.

Yours sincerely

*Chris Ingate*

Dr Chris Ingate  
Principal

**Some Diary updates:**

**WB 8 February** – Offer letters sent home to Year 11 Sixth Form Applicants – we have been so impressed with the 150 students who have applied to continue their education at Birchwood next year.

**Tuesday 9 February** – No lessons period 5 in lieu of preparation time for Year 10 Parents' Evening.

**Wellbeing afternoon - Friday 12 February** – Period 5 – students who have completed work and who are on track can have the afternoon off – those behind can use as catch-up. Staff can also enjoy the half-day.

**Online Parents Evenings:**

Tuesday 2 March – Year 8

Tuesday 9 March – Year 9

Tuesday 16 March – Year 12

**WB 12 April - Year 13 will have Internal Exams** – further details to follow.