

19 March 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Two weeks into our return to school, things continue to run smoothly with staff and students delighted to be back. I have just met with both the student council and staff council who are very positive to be back in a three-dimensional world, away from the two-dimensional world of remote learning. The verdict on the quality of teaching in January and February was that it was well structured and engaging but no substitute for being back in the classroom. I would agree with this.

Attendance is averaging 96% compared to the Hertfordshire average of 89% for the same period. Covid infection rates remain low in our area and this was reflected in the completion of over 3500 lateral flow tests without a single positive case. Thank you, as parents, for all your support with this and I hope the home testing regime is not proving too onerous – as a quick reminder, your child should be self-testing twice a week with a 3-4-day gap and they have enough test kits to last until Easter, one week away. The Government are reviewing the use of lateral flow tests and the wearing of face masks in a school setting over Easter and I will inform you in due course how this may affect day-to-day Covid compliancy.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good – as they were during the Autumn Term – and this is really helping teachers get the students back on track and find out who needs any additional support. I have been made aware that there are some uniform supply issues and, of course, shoes are not that easy to buy at the moment unless on-line. We have taken a more flexible approach to uniform but we will be tightening things up after Easter including:

- Coats not to be worn inside – the weather will be warmer and should not be required even with room ventilation.
- PE kit will only be worn in PE lessons so students will be in full school uniform at other times.
- Students in trainers for school without medical notes are going to be picked up first week back. We will then contact you.
- If you do have uniform issues due to unavailable stock, can you please make sure your child returns after the Easter break with a letter. We do have some clean second-hand uniform if this helps. Please contact Mrs Byers at kbyers@birchwoodhigh.org.uk
- We will be looking to start after school clubs after Easter but we are still unable to organise trips and educational visits. As soon as we are allowed to, we will!

Year 11 GCSEs and Year 13 A Levels / BTECs update: By now, you should have some clarity about how your child is to be assessed. A summary is shown in the table below:

	Year 11	Year 13
Assessment Window 1	WB 12 th & WB 19 th April Classroom-based assessments	WB 12 th & WB 19 th April School-based exams in the Hall

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	Year 11	Year 13
Assessment Window 2	WB 10 th , WB 17 th & WB 24 th May School-based exams in the Hall Year 11 last day 28 th May	WB 10 th & WB 17 th May Classroom-based assessments Year 13 last day 28 th May
Moderation	Moderation of assessments WB 7 th June	
Submission of CAGs to Exam Boards	By 18 th June	

It is important to understand that their final grade is a 'best fit' based on examination performance, classroom-based assessment and teacher assessment.

In summary, we have had a very good return to school with students and staff increasingly settled into their old routines. As we hopefully move forward into a post-Covid world, we will be looking to blend with the more traditional organisational practices with some of the elements of lockdown such as the way students have their social and recreational areas, on-line parents' evenings and 'Teams' after school revision lessons. I will discuss this further with our Parent Council.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Chris Ingate

Dr Chris Ingate
Principal