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Dear Families and Learners,

Many of you who study on our 'new' BTEC courses will have been entered for examinations and controlled assessments this spring, starting tomorrow (Thursday 7th January 2021). You will be aware that, on Monday, the Prime Minister announced that these examinations would be going ahead as planned and that students entered for these exams should sit them.

Last night, the government message was changed. Here is the latest message:

In light of the evolving public health measures, schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so. We understand this is a difficult time but we want to support schools and colleges whose students have worked hard to prepare for assessments and exams where necessary. This may be particularly important for VTQs which require a 'license to practice' which can only be fulfilled through practical assessment, such as an electrician."
Schools and colleges have already implemented extensive protective measures to make them as safe as possible. We will continue to work with Ofqual, awarding organisations and other stakeholders to discuss the next steps and provide more detail on the way forward, including ensuring other students have a way to progress with as little disruption as possible."

This has left the school with a difficult decision for the following reasons:

- Departments have been preparing for these exams and we feel that many of our learners would perform well.
- There is no national directive to cancel these exams/assessments, so there will be a mixed bag across the country with some students sitting the examinations and others not.
- We have not been informed as to what the alternative to sitting these examinations now will be, and do not wish to disadvantage our students either way.
- However, we are in a national lockdown, COVID-19 rates are at their highest point and many learners and parents are anxious about leaving home. Bringing students and a team of staff into college brings with it a level of risk, despite precautions being in place.
- Although some learners have not been impacted by self-isolation and staff absence because of covid-19 in the past terms a considerable number of learners have, meaning many of our learners would be disadvantaged compared to others nationally if they were to sit it at this time.
- We feel we may disadvantage our learners in comparison to others in the Country if they sit exams now when they have had significant disruption to their learning. We also feel that learners who sit the exam now may later be compared to learners who make the decision not to sit the exam now and who will have longer to prepare and are assessed in more favourable methods later in the year.

Since the government have put this decision into the hands of the school this evening, we have heard from many a number of families expressing concerns about coming into school. We understand your sentiments and have therefore taken the decision **not to run BTEC examinations in the spring series. Therefore, all BTEC examinations through January and February are cancelled, including those scheduled for tomorrow.**



We have done this for the safety and well-being of our school community and, although the alternatives are unclear, feel this is the right decision. We will, of course, keep you informed as soon as we know what the alternative arrangements will be.

Yours faithfully,

Steve Morris
Assistant Headteacher