



Birchwood High School

your dreams, your future, our challenge

2 February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

As part of your child's GCSE in Design & Technology, students carry out a combination of written and practical assessments. These are called Non-Examined Assessments (NEA). This means that they are primarily assessed here in school by the subject teachers and then sampled and moderated by the AQA exam board. The NEA is worth 50% of their overall final grade in D&T. There is also a written theory exam, which accounts for the other 50% of their overall final D&T grade.

In June 2023 we handed out the three Context Challenge Titles that the AQA exam board published to all schools:

- Climate change
- Playing games
- Securing or storing personal possessions

Your child has chosen one of these and has identified a specific 'design problem/challenge' that they would like to pursue through their NEA.

The NEA coursework component has already progressed through the stages of initial ideas, product research, client/user interviews, design & modelling. The next stages are making, testing and evaluation.

The accumulated portfolio of their work will be approximately 20 sides of A3 paper. It is **due to be submitted for our final assessment by Monday 15 April**. This is the first day back after the Easter holidays and although there is no D&T lesson that day, they will need to hand-in digitally or on paper on that day. This then gives time for moderation before we send marks off to the AQA exam board in early May. We will share a more detailed breakdown of lessons and interim milestones between now and then, with your child in lessons.

In order for you to be able to fully support your child with their NEA, we thought it would be helpful to share the above and to detail other key strategies and reference points with you. If you haven't already done so, please could you take the opportunity to discuss their chosen NEA title with your child and see what they are working on? We ask this because, although, we regularly do this in class, the students do need to identify a 'Client' for the product they are designing, and then making, in due course. Family members often make great Clients as they are easy to talk to and often readily accessible; you may well have already accepted this Client role and thank you if you have done so. It isn't an onerous role but is a vital one and if students feel you are bought in, they can often become much more highly motivated in this aspect of the course. It requires some conversations with your son/daughter to give them feedback on their ideas and designs, which they must document for their evidence.

All students are expected to engage fully with all classroom and home learning tasks that are set. As the NEA is required to be a very independent assignment, the classroom and HL tasks will be set generically on certain aspects with a guide to time to be invested. If you feel your son/daughter is not spending much/enough time on their NEA tasks, do please challenge them on this. HL tasks will be on Satchel (formerly Show My Homework) app, so do please monitor these through your access route. Please get in touch if you have any issues in this regard.

If/when students fall behind with the tasks set, we will place them into a 'catch-up' intervention session, to help them get back on track ASAP. This might simply mean staying in class at Break or Lunch to finish a task. We prefer not to use the detention system for this initially, but we will do if they refuse to stay without a good reason (like a prior recorded detention with another teacher).

If they do fall significantly behind for any reason, then we will of course alert you and ramp up the level of intervention. This may well only be possible to deliver outside of normal school hours; i.e. before or after school for an hour. We know from many years of teaching NEA that it is best to intervene in this way, otherwise the problems accumulate, and students can lose enthusiasm and motivation to get back on track.

Finally, we need to alert you to the sadly persistent and very serious issue of plagiarism. The Joint Council for Qualifications (which sits above all individual exam boards) defines plagiarism as: "*The failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of another person's work as if it were the candidate's own.*"

This is the weblink to their full document on the subject:

<https://ccea.org.uk/document/3080#:~:text=The%20Joint%20Council's%20Guidelines%20for,WJEC%20Page%202%202%207>

The key points I would like to draw your attention to are:

- To be vigilant please of any work your child is doing where you see or believe that they are, or maybe, copying information from the internet and pasting it into their own portfolio pages. They can take research information from the internet, but it must only be images and small amounts of supporting text and in all cases clearly identified where it has come from; i.e. the web address must be listed clearly on the relevant portfolio page.
- The bulk of written text in their portfolios must be in their own words, representing their unique thoughts, ideas and justified opinions. It is therefore advisable that your child does not share their own work with their peers, as doing this can extend accusations of plagiarism to them too; aiding it to happen. We fully encourage students to discuss ideas between themselves both in and out of class time, but plagiarism does not usually occur from verbal discussions. 'Lending' a friend an electronic or paper copy of their portfolio 'just to look at' is definitely a bad idea and where most plagiarism stems from.
- In terms of any input you may have as a Client for them, they should be doing all of the writing and making it clear that they are quoting your views where appropriate. They may initially ask if they can voice-record their conversations with you, so they can listen back and write them up afterwards.

- Please can you also reinforce these points at home and if you are concerned that any of this may have happened, please alert us. It could save your son/daughter and/or their peers from being removed from the course and 'ungraded' by the exam board, as that can be the worst-case consequence for plagiarism.

So, to conclude on a more positive note, we feel that the three Context Titles for this year offer plenty of exciting potential for your child to explore, be creative with and they can achieve some great outcomes. As with most endeavours in life, regularly invested effort will pay dividends and boost their wellbeing, as the progress with the NEA from week to week is very tangible and satisfying.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the NEA or the wider course, please do get in touch with your child's specific DT teacher or with me.



Yours sincerely

Mr. R Newman
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