

Southborough students share their thoughts about the cancellation of exams with BBC

NEWS NIGHT



Newsnight journalist Lewis Goodall discusses the cancellation of public exams with Year 11 students

Early last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the closure of both primary and secondary schools across England as part of another national lockdown to quash the spread of corona virus. Whilst many schools have, in practice, remained physically opened to children of critical workers and teachers now juggle the demands of delivering remote learning to the majority of their class whilst other students are also present in the classroom, it was decided by the Government that, once again, GCSE and A level exams would be cancelled this summer.

Understandably, this news created a mix of emotions amongst students, parents and teachers. So when journalist and policy editor Lewis Goodall of BBC Newsnight got in touch with Southborough High School to ask if some of our students would be happy to share their views on the situation for the Wednesday 6th January edition of the show, we jumped at the chance!

And so it was that on Wednesday afternoon, a small production team – headed by journalist Lewis Goodall – arrived at Southborough to interview a selection of our Year 11 students who were already accessing lessons on site. Year 11 students Taylor T, Charlie E, Jack B and Cameron H were certainly up for the challenge and during a rather entertaining afternoon of interviews with Lewis, they were thrilled to have been able to share their own personal views on the impact that cancelling exams would have on them and their classmates.

That evening at 10.45pm, students and staff waited with bated breath to see if Southborough and the educational feature made the cut (rather than ending on the cutting room floor!) in the programme. Following a 20+ minute feature on the storming of the Capitol by Trump supporters, (continued...)



the educational piece was (thankfully!) featured in all its glory and our boys – along with an interview with our Headteacher Niall Smith – was broadcast to over half a million viewers* across the UK. Suffice to say, they all did the school proud!

The Griffin Reporter caught up with the boys the following day to find out more. Head Prefect Charlie W commented that they hadn't felt like they had been formally interviewed at all. He said: "Lewis Goodall sat with us for a long while before the camera starting rolling, chatting to us about our views and other things. He really put us at ease and earned our trust. Once the filming formally began, we felt we were simply in a pleasant conversation together. This meant we could confidently get our views across without feeling 'camera-shy'."



Taylor T

Gold Tie Prefect Taylor T agreed, adding: "We all appreciated the trust that Mr Smith put in us to speak our minds in front of the camera. I for one felt proud to represent the school on something as important as the cancellation of exams."

Jack B agreed that he could see both sides of the argument regarding the exam situation. "There are many students living in the North of England, for example, who have had their education disrupted since the very start of September. They must have felt a huge sense of relief hearing that they weren't going have to compete in exams



Charlie W and Jack B

with more fortunate students across the country whose first term of school had largely been uninterrupted". Whilst expressing his own personal disappointment in their cancellation, Jack also noted how students without proper resources or easy access to laptops and the Internet must have felt the pressure lift from their shoulders.

Cameron H spoke on behalf of all four boys when he said that the chance to speak on BBC Newsnight was a 'once in a life time' opportunity and certainly something to add to their CVs and UCAS Personal Statements in the future!

Anyone who watched the programme last week would agree that the boys were a real credit to the school.

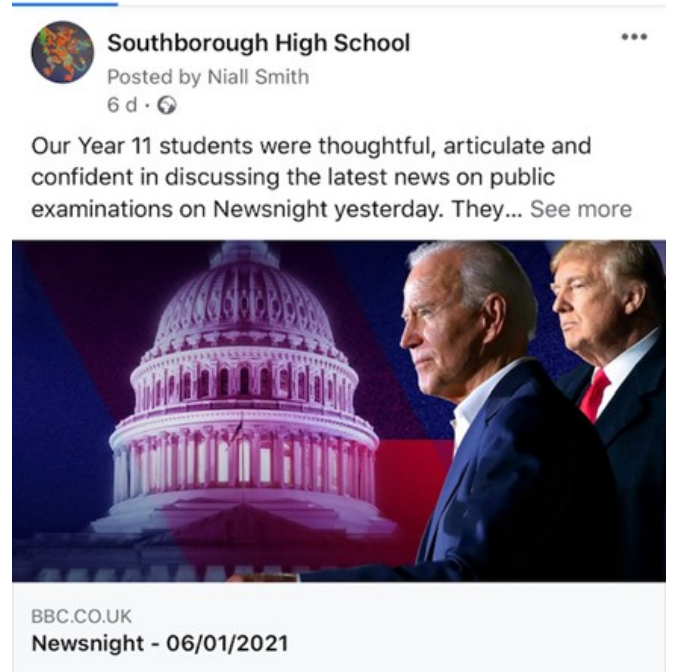
(continued ...)



Cameron H



As an aside, when editor Lewis Goodall got home after filming, he couldn't help but share via Twitter a few photos that he'd taken on his travels around the school. He had been particularly taken with some of our painted doors, which had been inspired by World Book Day. Suffice to say, his Tweet went viral, receiving many compliments from educators far and wide across the country!



On behalf of everyone at Southborough, we'd like to say a very big thank you to Lewis Goodall and his production team for putting together and including Southborough in such an interesting and timely feature for the BBC Newsnight programme. His professionalism ensured that he got the very best from our boys, guaranteeing that they will remember the experience for many years to come!



For those who may have missed the programme, it can be viewed via iPlayer on catch up – NEWSNIGHT 06/01/2021 and accessed by scanning this QR code. . The School feature plays approximately 20 minutes or so into the programme.

Scan this QR code to view the programme

*Average viewing figures for BBC Newsnight are around 500,000 but this doesn't include people watching from around the globe on BBC World News, neither does it include those watching on catch up services.