



5th January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

Implications of the Government's comments about summer 2021 examinations

I just wanted to write to you following the Prime Minister's comments about the 2021 examinations during his statement on 4th January.

Following the Government's decision to close schools to all students other than those the School recognises as vulnerable, and the children of critical workers until February half term and move to remote learning, the Prime Minister has said:

"In these circumstances, we do not think it is possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly".

As mentioned in the Google Classroom message this morning to Year 11 students from Miss Hemmings and myself, as a school, we entirely appreciate that this message may have left students in Year 11 feeling frustrated, anxious and confused. We know that Year 11 students had prepared for their January trial exams very thoroughly with careful revision and the completion of practice papers, so the timing of this announcement is particularly frustrating.

At this challenging time, we need to work together to ensure your son/daughter remains fully focused and does not make inaccurate assumptions about this development.

In stating that they would be working with Ofqual to consider alternative arrangements, this does not necessarily mean that exams are fully cancelled in all subjects. For example, they could still take place in particular subjects.

There is likely to be some kind of assessment that will replace the original exams. Like you, we don't know what this will be yet. But we do know that all students in Year 11 throughout the country will be leaving school with grades for their GCSEs and other qualifications.

Therefore, it is essential that your son/daughter continues working to the best of his/her ability in lessons and continues to attend all lessons on-line. Teachers will continue to teach the GCSE curriculum. Students will need to upload work to their teachers, so that their teachers can provide feedback. Teachers will be keeping a record of the work each student submits.

The work that students complete from now on could be very important if the Government decides that the School will be submitting grades for each student based on the work that they have produced. This is what happened to Year 11s last year for example.

Students maintaining good study habits and continuing to study to the best of their ability will also be important preparation for sixth form or college studies at the end of Year 11.

Whilst the Year 11 trial exams scheduled for January 2021 are clearly not going to take place just yet, they may still be going ahead when students return to school after February half-term, depending on what Ofqual advise. Your son/daughter must keep this in mind and continue to work to the best of their ability over this half term. The trial exams could be an important source of evidence if your son/daughter's teachers are asked to submit grades based on the work students have produced during these exams.

We really understand how challenging and difficult this announcement has been for your son/daughter and for you as parents/carers. It is essential, however, that your son/daughter remains focused so that they can still achieve the best grades they are capable of.

Your son's/daughter's teachers will fully support them over the next few weeks with remote learning and feedback on work in order to be in the best place we can be for when Ofqual informs us of what the alternative assessment arrangements will be.

I will write to you with further updates as and when we receive any further information on this matter.

Thank you for your on-going support. Please do not hesitate to contact your son/daughter's form tutor, Progress Leader or subject teachers if they can be of any further assistance.

Best wishes,

P.Kelly

Headteacher