

February 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

I hope that you are keeping safe and well and had a good break over half term.

This week has certainly been a week of announcements for schools. The purpose of this letter is to outline for you what we know about how your GCSE and A-level grades will be decided this summer and to reassure you about the trial exams which you've got coming up over the next few weeks.

Firstly, this summer's GCSE and A-level grades. Well the good news is that there won't be any mathematical formula applied (commonly known as an algorithm) to decide results this year. In the government's words, they are 'trusting your teachers' to arrive at judgments about your grades, which we hope you would agree is the best outcome given the circumstances we find ourselves in, with those who know you best in terms of your achievements, making these judgments. The other main points we found out in yesterday's announcement are:-

- Grades will be based only on what has been taught (not on what hasn't been taught).
- A range of evidence (such as trial exams, coursework, homework, in-class tests and essays) can be used towards your final grade. Your teachers will decide on which evidence to use and will inform you of this.
- Non-exam assessments (NEAs) and coursework can provide evidence towards your final grade, even if it isn't finished. Your teachers will speak to you about this if it applies to their subjects.
- Exam boards will provide optional assessments which schools can choose to use as further evidence towards your final grade. It is down to schools to decide whether to use these, having taken into account their other evidence.
- There will be an appeals system if you are unhappy with your grades, as well as the opportunity to re-sit your exams in the autumn if you wish to do so.
- Results day for A-levels will be on Tuesday 10 August and GCSEs on Thursday 12 August.

As you can imagine, there is a great deal still to come out about how the process will work, along with further work for your teachers to do in terms of gathering and assessing the evidence. When we have additional information from the exam boards or Ofqual, which we feel you need to know about, we will share this with you. For instance, you may be wondering about what will happen after the forthcoming internal assessments. At present we are discussing what you will work on after these, and will let you know once we have the additional information from the exam boards or Ofqual. We appreciate that you will be anxious about what lies ahead, but please be assured that your teachers will be working hard to ensure that you receive the grades you deserve. We have also been through a similar process with last year's Year 11s and 13s and so have experience of awarding GCSE and A-level grades. I have attached two documents produced by Ofqual (one for GCSEs and A-levels and the other for vocational qualifications) which summarise the main points from yesterday's announcement.

Secondly, the trial exams. These will still take place on the dates we gave you before half term.

Yesterday's announcement means that these will no longer be treated as a trial run for later exams, but will instead become just one of several forms of evidence which we will use towards deciding your final grades. (To reflect the fact that they will no longer be a trial for other exams, we will be referring to them as 'internal assessments' from now on). We appreciate again that you may be anxious about the prospect of sitting these internal assessments. We want to reassure you that they will form just one part of the evidence your teachers will be using towards your final grades and

there will be other opportunities to provide evidence to improve your grade. Your teachers have also done all that they can to give you the best-possible chance to perform well in these internal assessments, through providing the list of topics you will be assessed on and also reducing the number and length of papers from what was originally planned.

I hope that this has answered some of the questions you may have about yesterday's announcement. We understand that you may have further questions and would encourage you to contact your teacher if this is the case. We don't have all of the answers as yet but will provide you with any further information when we receive it.

Finally, it is important for you to keep working hard and remaining focused for the remaining weeks, but WHY? I'd like you to consider the following:-

1. It will positively influence your grades.
2. It will develop your knowledge, skills and understanding which is vital for your next steps, whatever they may be.
3. It will give you ownership. You have some control over your future and you can shape it over the next few months.

I'd like to wish you well over the remaining weeks and look forward to celebrating with you on your results day.

Best wishes,

Mr P. Banks
Deputy Headteacher