

25th March 2020

Dear Parents and Year 11 Students,

After the emotion and sadness of the final goodbye assembly and shirt signing, there have been further developments in how year 11 students may be assessed.

I spoke to year 11 in their assembly about turning this difficult time to their advantage. Clearly, staying safe is the most important thing. However, we reassured students that they are in a strong position as nearly all of our subjects had taught the full course content. This must allow us to think about learning for the sake of learning, not just exams. We talked of ensuring that this summer term isn't wasted and that it is a great time to revisit topics regularly and not think about exams, but think about the topic. They have the opportunity to research and delve deeper. The chance to read, ask questions and find answers. A chance to genuinely understand and find what they enjoy and love. This is an excellent foundation for any further study. We have also advised younger students of the critical importance of reading as much and as often as possible. This is the same for year 11.

The most recent announcements make it clear that GCSEs are cancelled. The information from the government says that a process will be developed:

The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.

To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.

We have not been given any more information than this. Therefore, we are translating this as the emphasis will be placed on schools to create accurate grade data. Again, we are in a strong position here with mock data along with previous assessments. We know that mocks are difficult and that children approach them differently. We also have a proven track record of accuracy in our internal predictions, but again this will take time to come through. **I am conscious that some students will be worrying, but please help up reassure them. We can't worry about a system that we don't know yet! If mocks were a fair reflection of effort over the GCSE course then we will use it. If it wasn't, then we won't.**

There was also talk of an appeals process as well as a potential resit opportunities. With such uncertainty, we will still be placing some revision materials on SMHW, but as I said earlier, time will best spent re-reading, testing and reading again and developing a wider understanding of the topics they may take at college.

With these challenges of an emergency system in mind, it is important that the integrity of the process is maintained and that staff are not approached for information or warning of potential grades. Anything they say at this stage can not be guaranteed and we know there is plenty of scope in the emergency system to amend and alter the school grades. We are not doing anything with the data until we hear more from the government and we will act with honesty, integrity and compassion to be as fair as possible to our students.

I recognise motivation for some will be an issue in the short term, but this is the term that would usually see students with a 10-14 week summer break. A little down time now is fine, but once settled, finding self-motivation will be vital. We will put some careers information and liaise with you with any information from the colleges, but as we all know by now, these are genuinely unprecedented times.

Please stay safe and we will keep in touch.

Yours sincerely



Ray Baker
Headteacher