



Tuesday 28th April

Dear Year 10 students and parents of our Year 10 students,

Important Updates

Arguably, Year 10 students and their parents and teachers, have the potential to be the most anxious about the time we are missing in school at the moment. The GCSE courses are packed full of content and it is understandable that we are all concerned about completing these courses in the time that will be left available.

The Department for Education and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (*Ofqual*) have already stated that Year 10 will not be disadvantaged in the Summer 2021 season. This will mean that allowances of some kind will need to be made to take account of the time missed, as outlined in the following article which you may find useful:

<https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-gcses-year-10s-wont-be-disadvantaged>

This has partly influenced our thinking, because we know that it simply cannot be business as usual in the way that outcomes are assessed. We know that there will be further discussions about this, but we are also aware that this is not the top of the priority list for them at the moment, while Year 11 data is still to be finalised.

Having said that, we know that Year 10 students are still very much in their thinking and any discussion about a phased return for secondary schools will have Year 10 front and centre. This is in our forward planning, although timescales at this stage are purely speculative.

We are aware that some schools are currently continuing with content coverage and you know that this is not an approach we favour. What we know to be true is that the input of the teacher is so vital in understanding. Even in cases where students are highly motivated and very capable, the potential for misunderstanding and error is high. As such it is our view that a roll out of new content that would be self-taught (which might also include the contribution of well-meaning family members) would be counterproductive at this stage.

One thing we have been able to do is review how we were intending to spend the remainder of the time we might have had left with our Year 10 students, should they return before the summer break. On this note we have made a number of key decisions.

Work Experience

It is with huge regret that we have cancelled the work experience placement week for our Year 10 students in order to gain back curriculum time. This is an opportunity that has been highly valued with previous year groups, and has had tremendous impact, and it is therefore a genuine disappointment that, on balance, we are not proceeding.

Where a fee has been paid in relation to Health and Safety appraisals for work experience purposes, this will be refunded in full. We are currently compiling a schedule of payments received and will be processing refunds within the next 5-10 working days.

Where payments were made using the cashless system, refunds will be credited back through the system to the debit card originally used and/or other debit card details that have been more recently registered on the system. In the very few cases where this is not the case, we will contact those individuals in the next 5-10 working days to make the necessary arrangements for a refund.

Any trips that were due to run during this week have already been cancelled and once we have confirmation regarding potential refunds from insurance companies, you will be notified.

Internal Examination Schedule

It would usually be the case that we would have a full suite of exams towards the end of Year 10 and two practice examination periods in Year 11. In prioritising curriculum coverage time, we have decided to cancel Year 10 exams and to move to a single period of practice exams in Year 11.

This will secure a significant chunk of time back for curriculum coverage. The exam weeks themselves (usually two weeks each period) plus the time usually spent in class preparing for these exams is part of the planning in usual times. Given the need to prioritise coverage, this will gain another six weeks back into the curriculum.

Time lost and time gained

The time since we went into partial closure, up until the May half term break would have equated to 38 school days.

By cancelling work experience week, the exam periods mentioned above and any end of term activities that would usually take place in the last week of July, we will have gained 39 days of curriculum coverage time.

Individual contact and motivation

During this time and continuing up to the May half term, we have been working hard to ensure all our Year 10 students are becoming acquainted with this way of working. We have inevitably been reviewing the engagement that each of our students has had with their individual subjects.

It is now our intention to contact students directly on a more regular basis where there has been a lack of engagement. This will help us establish any reasons for this, and to work more closely with our students where it is a matter of motivation or if there is difficulty in accessing the work.

In conclusion

Should Year 10 return to school in any physical way after the May half term, we are confident that by making these decisions we will have gained sufficient time to provide some reasonable coverage of the remainder of the course content.

If this physical return is delayed further, we believe that our students and teachers will have sufficiently adapted to home learning, to the extent that we may be in a position to consider successfully approaching the challenge of delivering new content.

In the interim we will ensure our voice is heard by fully representing to the DfE, Ofqual and our professional associations, the disadvantages and disruption that our Year 10 students have all been subject to in these challenging times.

And through all of this, as important as their exam outcomes are, our priority will remain the overall health and wellbeing of our students and staff as we reach difficult decisions with the best of intentions.

Thank you for your ongoing support and understanding.

Mrs L.A. Gwinnett (Executive Head) and all our staff