

14th January 2021

Dear Students and Parents

I appreciate these are difficult times for students and parents. This is not helped by the doubt surrounding how much longer schools will only be open to certain students. In addition, the uncertainty surrounding how exam grades will eventually be awarded for GCSE and sixth form course this summer will be very unsettling for Year 11 and Year 13 students and parents.

Therefore, I think it is even more important than ever to keep students and parents as informed as possible regarding the current situation and our current thinking and planning.

This Letter covers:

- Remote Learning
- 2021 Exams/Centre Assessed Grades
- Year 9 Update
- Year 10 and Year 12 Update
- COVID-19 Testing
- Conclusion

Remote Learning

I am pleased to say that our blended approach to remote learning appears to be going well. Thank you for all your messages of support regarding the combination of live and recorded lessons which is providing the opportunity for student interaction and flexibility that may be required for your home situation.

Please remember if students are having any difficulties accessing work they should contact their teachers and for more general support their Head of Year. Also, if your child is having difficulty accessing our remote learning provision due to a lack of IT at home, please contact the appropriate Head of Year as soon as possible.

Year 11 and Year 13 - 2021 Summer Exams/Centre Assessed Grades Update

As you may be aware, Gavin Williamson wrote to the Head of Ofqual (the exam board regulator) on 13th January 2021, to start a consultation process regarding the awarding of grades.

This was quite a lengthy letter but I have summarised what I consider are the key points below:

- Year 11 and Year 13 students should be taught for as long as possible so that they have every opportunity to catch up and complete their courses.
- Teachers are to be asked to assess their students using a breadth of evidence to calculate a grade.
- GCSE and A Level exams have been cancelled, however, the consultation will explore the possibility of providing externally set tasks or papers for students to take.
- Any change in Centre Assessed Grades after they have been submitted, as a result of the external quality assurance process should be the exception. Changes will only be made if the grades cannot be justified, rather than as a result of marginal differences of opinion.

- For vocational and technical qualifications, including BTECs, the exams in February and March will not go ahead. For these qualifications, it is expected that alternative arrangements will also be needed for the summer exams.

A consultation, is due to start at the end of this week (as I write this letter it is still not available). The consultation will last for two weeks. After this, the DfE and Ofqual will need to consider the responses before any firm announcements are made.

Therefore, and I am sorry to say to Year 11 and Year 13 students and parents, we cannot expect any clarity about exam grades until probably just before February half-term at the earliest. I appreciate the difficulty this causes you, and indeed the school.

My advice to students is to continue to work hard on the remote learning set by teachers and complete the assessments set as part of your courses to the very best of your ability.

Year 9 Update

As you are already aware from previous letters and texts, the **Year 9 Parents Evening** will go ahead remotely. Staff will contact parents who have requested a meeting by phone over a two-week period between Monday 18th January to Friday 29th January.

The **Year 9 GCSE Options process** has also started. I hope students and parents have had a chance to watch the guidance videos on our website that talk you through this process. The online Options Form is available at <https://tinyurl.com/WBHSoptions>. Students should please complete this form by Friday 5th February. Follow up discussions by phone with the GCSE Options Guidance Team will start from 8th February.

Year 10 and Year 12 Update

As I said in my last letter (5th January), while I appreciate this is not easy, students in these very important exam year groups must continue to work hard on their remote learning and complete the assessments set by their teachers to the very best of their ability.

Additional support will be available for Year 10 and Year 12 students to help them achieve their personal best grades as they move through their GCSE and A Level courses.

The second **Yr.10 Progress Check** will be posted home to parents on Tuesday 9th February.

COVID-19 Testing

We are in the process of finalising our COVID-19 testing programme and will be rolling this out next week to those students who are currently attending school. Thank you to all those parents who have already registered and completed the subsequent consent form for testing. If you have not yet done this, please complete the registration form as soon as possible if you wish to be part of this voluntary programme.

Thank you also to all parents who have volunteered to help us deliver this programme. We will require volunteer support when mass testing begins, therefore as soon as we have information regarding full reopening of the school, we will be in touch with those who have volunteered to make arrangements for this.

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Steve Wilson

Deputy Headteachers:
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We are hopeful that, when students return to school, this testing programme will enhance our existing protective measures, helping us to keep students and staff in school safely and reducing time spent in isolation due to close contact.

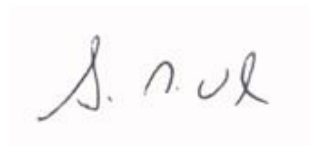
Conclusion

I am sorry I am unable to provide more clarity about when students will be able to return to school. I am also aware that we are still not in a position to provide a clear explanation about how grades for GCSE and sixth form courses will be awarded this year.

I do hope, in the coming weeks, we will be able to share more detailed information with you. Please be assured, I will keep you informed of further information as quickly as it becomes available.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully



STEVE WILSON
Headteacher