

11th March 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you are all safe and well.

I am writing to provide you with further information of our plans for the replacement of GCSE examinations this summer. Our priority is to provide all students with a fair and accurate judgement of their ability in every subject (this will also be assessed against a national standard). The senior leadership team and subject leaders have been working hard to establish a system which will enable this to happen. Given our experience last year, I am confident that we can achieve high standards of accuracy in this and I hope you will feel reassured that this will be the case.

As I write this letter, we have still to receive final confirmation from Ofqual regarding the exact detail surrounding the grading of GCSE exams in the summer. This also includes the individual subject specific exam board guidelines and associated resources. However, I feel we are in a position to provide a broad outline of our plans in order to reduce the anxiety that you and your child are currently facing. I will update you in due course as more information is provided.

What are the key dates I need to be aware of?

The official GCSE results day is to be held on **Thursday 12th August**. Students will not know their final grades before this date. More details will follow in terms of organisation for the day. We are hopeful that this will be a face-to-face collection but we will need to follow the national guidance at the time. The date that exam boards have given us to ensure all grades have been submitted to them is **Friday 18th June**.

How will my child demonstrate their ability?

This will be done primarily through the outcome of internal assessments. Students will be involved in two internal assessment weeks. We have decided to provide two weeks in order that students are given maximum opportunity to achieve the highest grade they can. Revision lists will be used to support students in preparing for the assessments. If students are having to self-isolate as a result of COVID, they will be given opportunity to sit assessments on their return.

The timetable for the assessment weeks is detailed below.

Assessment week 1 (w/b 29th March 2021)

	Period 1	Period 3	Period 5
Monday	English Lang 1	Science 1	Maths 1
Tuesday	RE	Maths 2	Hist/Geog 1
Wednesday	Hist/Geog 2	Science 2	English Lang 2
Thursday	Option A	Option B	Option C

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Assessment week 2 (w/b 10th May 2021)

	Period 1	Period 3	Period 5
Monday	English Lit 1	Science 1	Maths 1
Tuesday	RE	Maths 2	Hist/Geog 1
Wednesday	Hist/Geog 2	Science 2	English Lit 2
Thursday	Option A	Option B	Option C
Friday	Option C	Option B	Option A

All assessments will be completed in class as opposed to in the main exams hall. All questions will be taken from official exam board material. Official mark schemes will also be used to mark the papers. Each subject assessment will undergo a series of quality assurance checks to ensure they meet the requirements needed to be able to evidence the full grade range.

What else will be used?

We are able to draw upon a range of evidence. This may include class and homework. There is no requirement to use one type of assessment. However, the main evidence we will be using will come from the evidence gathered from the two assessment weeks.

What about lost learning?

Due to the amount of disruption caused by the pandemic in the last 12 months, students will only be assessed on what has been taught. This means the students will not be disadvantaged.

How I can be reassured my child is not subject to bias or discrimination?

Following the final assessments, we will conduct internal quality assurance of each student's work. As you will appreciate, this must be a robust process and one which cannot be rushed. Once final grades have been submitted to the exam boards, the exam boards will begin their external quality assurance processes.

Subject staff will be involved in both standardisation and moderation training to ensure we can be confident of the grades provided. In addition, we will also use a statistical analysis of previous cohorts and national subject grade data to ensure that students are not unfairly treated. It is important to note that the Ofqual guidance places particular emphasis on students' current performance when deciding on grades.

In order to ensure complete fairness in the marking process, all subject specialist staff will be involved in marking student assessments. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the regular class teacher will mark the work of their students. Students will be recognised on written papers by exam numbers only.

Full access arrangements for students with additional needs will be provided during both assessment weeks.

How will I find out the grades?

Unfortunately, we are unable to share the final grade we submit to the exam boards. However, we will aim to provide you with as much information as possible throughout the process. At the end of each assessment week, we will provide every student with a mark and percentage score for each subject. After both assessment weeks have been conducted, we will review all of the data before making final judgements.

Can I, or my child, discuss the grades with teachers?

It is important to share with you at this point that the Ofqual rules prevent us from sharing detailed information about our considerations during the grading process. Students and/or parents must not pressure teachers to reveal the grades they are submitting or to try to manipulate an increase in the marks. We ask that you give individual teachers and leaders the space and time to make these important decisions. As was the case last year, exam boards will consider any undue pressure on staff a serious issue.

What should my child do now?

For now, it is important that each student attends school every day and works hard to be able to demonstrate their ability in the internal assessments. Thorough revision will be vital. High standards of classwork and homework will also ensure we have extra evidence should it be required.

Once again, please be assured that we are working very hard to understand the ongoing guidance being shared with us and to carefully consider how we should apply this to protect the interests of our students and the integrity of the grades they receive.

We will continue to communicate with you as much as we can to ensure that we are supporting everyone in what we know is a difficult situation. Thank you for your patience and understanding in the meantime.

I will be sharing the information contained in this letter with students via video in tutor time in the current absence of whole school assemblies.

Yours sincerely



Mr R Hall
Deputy Headteacher