

5th February 2021

Dear All,

Thank you very much for all your continuing hard work, persistence and positive mind set throughout the uncertainties of the past few weeks. Your approach to home learning has been tremendous and we are all looking forward to welcoming you back in school as soon as we possibly can.

As I outlined in my last email to you, we expected that detailed information about public exams this year would be slow to be released from the Government and the exam boards, and this has indeed been the case. In this light, we do have a little more information that we can give you, much of which has emerged over the last 48 hours:

1. **It is now clear that IGCSE, Pre-U and International A Level exams will almost certainly not take place.** Edexcel (who run our IGCSE Maths and Further Pure Maths exams) confirmed the cancellation of their exams on Wednesday this week, and Cambridge Assessment (who run our IGCSE History, Computer Science, DT and ESL courses as well as Pre-U Physics and International AS and A Level English Language) have said in the last 24 hours that they expect to make an announcement next week about replacing exams in the UK with some form of teacher assessment.
2. **Ofqual expect to release details of how teacher assessment will be conducted for GCSEs and A Levels on or after 22 February.** This follows a consultation exercise, in which schools and colleges were asked for their views on how teacher assessment should happen. No doubt, this will involve a huge amount of information for us to digest: therefore, we are tentatively scheduling an online live webinar for pupils and parents on the evening of Monday 1st March to present the new information we have and give you the chance to ask questions. We will confirm the date and timings for this nearer the event.
3. **The methods of teacher assessment - or the ways in which grades are determined - could vary** between exam boards (including those for standard GCSEs and A Levels as well as the subjects listed in [1.] above), vocational qualifications (Creative iMedia, ICT, BTEC Sport, Functional Skills or Core Maths), and subjects with a significant bias towards non-examined assessment (Art, Drama, Theatre Studies etc.). A number of assessment options have been suggested for all of these: coursework, mock exams, shorter in-school assessments in the summer term, and continuous assessment grades from teachers all may contribute in different ways, but until we know what the Government's (and exam boards') requirements are, we cannot tell you anything more concrete, unfortunately.
4. **Your teachers won't be able to tell you your grades before results day, but there is likely to be a mechanism in place for appeals afterwards.** The timing of the release of results, and the details of any appeals process, are two of the most contentious aspects of the Government's

consultation exercise. It appears that their preference is for an early release of results (sometime in July), but this may change.

Finally, we know from talking to many of you, and from School Council, that one of the things that is worrying you the most is the timing and significance of mock exams. We have huge sympathy for you in this, and it is a real frustration that circumstances have not allowed us to give you more clarity. The difficulty with this is that there are two huge unknown factors: 1. how, or even if the results of mocks will be an important part of determining your results this summer, and 2. the timing of when we can return to school.

It remains our strong preference for you to have some experience of sitting formal mock exams when you are able to return to school. These may take the form of traditional mocks with full-length papers, or we may reduce the length of the papers in response to the Government guidelines, when these are published. The longer the lockdown persists, the less likely it is that you will return to school to face immediate mocks: ideally, we would like you to have at least one week of face-to-face time with your teachers beforehand. We are not ruling out the possibility, even, that mocks could happen just before, or just after Easter. Obviously, though, we won't be in a position to confirm final details until we know more about grading requirements, and that crucial return date to school.

Keep going, everyone: we're right behind you. If you have any questions, or are worried about anything in particular, please get in touch with us, with your teachers, tutor or HSM. We're all here for you.

With very best wishes,

Dr Michael Truss
Deputy Head (Academic)

Mrs F E Beadnell
Deputy Head (i/c Sixth Form)