

MBA/JSK/Y11SX
12 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As many of you will have seen, the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, made a statement last week to clarify the position regarding examinations in the summer. He stated that the GCSE and A-Level exams scheduled for the summer will not take place and students would instead be assessed by their teachers (though I believe he should technically have said 'by their schools'). He also stated that the system used last summer wasn't going to be replicated and he was asking the exams regulator, Ofqual, to conduct a two-week consultation with the profession to help shape the process by which exam grades would be awarded. So, although we don't have any details of this year's process, we do have an idea of the direction in which things are moving.

I will share some key principles that are helping us to shape the rest of our planning:

- In virtually all instances, the courses students follow at SET are designed to be assessed by final exams. In some subjects there are coursework components that account for a certain percentage of final grades. We will aim to provide opportunities for students to be assessed and to assess projects and coursework to mirror the assessment that students should have faced, as best as we can;
- Students should continue to learn the course content and will then be assessed on that content;
- There is a need to be creative, given the current situation, but we should endeavour to provide students with the opportunities to excel and achieve their potential;
- Teachers will continue to use ongoing assessment during the remainder of the course. This will include the quality of work and contributions in lessons and remote learning, to assess how well students are performing in terms of their ability and understanding. They will also use evidence from all formal and informal tests and other assignments that have been or will be completed;
- We will make assessments based on prior performance, the work currently being completed and what we see from students over the coming months, not on a promise of working harder in the future or the strength of a student's desire for a certain grade.

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We will provide students with the following:

- Regular remote teaching during the period of school closure and then face-to-face teaching as soon as we are able to welcome the students back in school;
- Assessments as part of this regular teaching, which may be completed online or in school when we are face-to-face;
- We hope to be in a position to operate further formal examinations in controlled conditions before the end of the course, but this will be determined by the public health situation at the time and the national deadlines for submitting grades to exam boards.

If students are to optimise their grades, they must ensure they perform well in all of the elements outlined above. This means they must make every effort to engage fully in every lesson in all subjects; be on time and prepared for learning. If students have difficulty accessing online learning because of technological challenges, we would ask parents and carers to make the school aware.

Students have every opportunity to take control of their own situation, to work hard and engage positively in the tasks being set by teachers. Those who do not fully engage nor give us clear evidence of their abilities, will not achieve the grades that could potentially be secured with full engagement. I would ask that you discuss this with your son/daughter and stress the importance of engagement in lessons. Final grades will be determined by what we have seen and not by what students might be capable of producing at some future date. We will not be able to justify the awarding of grades if we do not have the evidence.

I also need to make clear that the awarding of grades will be for the school to determine, based on the expertise of the experienced professionals who have delivered the course content. It is absolutely not appropriate for parents to attempt to influence the decisions made by the school, or any of our staff, as to what grade should be allocated for any assessment. I will ask staff to report any instances of parents attempting to influence grades. Where assessments have already taken place, they will generally have been assessing certain elements of the course, rather than the course entirely. For example, the November Year 11 mock exams will usually have assessed the aspects of the course covered to that point, rather than the whole GCSE.

The purpose of this letter is to reassure parents and carers that we will continue to monitor any developments in the grading process and keep you updated accordingly.

We are very aware of the anxieties caused by the cancellation of the exams and the different pressures some students may feel under. There is absolutely no need to panic.

All students nationally find themselves in the same situation and we will do our very best to provide a high quality learning experience for our students and continue to support them in the face of these new challenges. We have been really impressed with the general attitude and level of engagement in remote learning that we have seen so far this term, and hope this will continue as we progress through the year.

Do take care and stay safe.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lizzie Girling".

Lizzie Girling
Head of School

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Barrow".

Mark Barrow
Chief Executive Officer