

Friday 3rd April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Coronavirus Update

The Examination Board Regulator, Ofqual, has today published guidance for schools, students and families regarding the means of accrediting the achievements of students in Year 11 and Year 13. Sally Collier, Chief Regulator at Ofqual, has also published a letter for students and their families which I am sending with this letter.

Schools are being asked to submit their professional assessment as to how they believe a student would have performed in their summer examinations were they to have taken place as normal. Teachers are expected to use a wide range of evidence including internal assessments, coursework and homework completed by the student. Ofqual make it clear that a student should not be disadvantaged if they have not been able to continue completing work since schools were closed. Whilst schools will not be asked to submit evidence of students' work to justify the grade submitted, it is made clear that there will be a moderation process whereby some schools will be asked to provide such evidence of students' work in support of the grades submitted by the school. This is a point I had predicted and shared with our Year 11 and Year 13 students in the last days before schools were closed.

Schools will be asked in the summer term (no earlier than 29th May) to submit two key pieces of data for each student in each of their subjects:

The grade the student was expected to achieve for the subject;

A rank order number for the student compared with all students in the school that have been assigned the same grade for that subject. For example, for our Year 11 of 240 students, if 50 are awarded a grade 9 by their maths teachers we would have to place the 50 students in rank order from 1 to 50 with student ranked 1 being considered the strongest performing GCSE maths student in our school.

This approach will be used across all subjects at GCSE, A level, BTEC and so on.

Schools are not allowed to reveal their grades and rank order information to students or their families for understandable reasons. Some schools may find, after the moderation (or checking) process has been undertaken by the examination boards, that the final grade awarded to the student is higher or lower than the grade submitted by the school. Clearly students and their families across the country cannot have any influence whatsoever on the grade that their school or college assigns to them.

We do not know which schools will be asked to provide evidence to back up the grade that they assign a student in June, but I am pleased that our students continued with their learning over the last two weeks in this extraordinary time as we waited for more information about accreditation.. As I have stated in a previous letter we asked our students in Year 11 and Year 13 to keep up with their learning, not only in the short term because of the immediate benefit of learning and keeping mentally active, but also in the longer term of making the next stage of their learning easier as well as in the medium term because it has helped to provide us with the evidence to support our teacher assessments along with all our other data.

It was of course also important that our other students maintained their learning over the last two weeks in order that we work against as much as possible the disruption to their education in the longer term.

Today would have been the day that the school closed for the Easter holidays and so we will pause the setting of work for our students through Show My Home Work and / or the Sixth Form App in order that they enjoy some rest and relaxation. This applies to all students in Years 7 to 13. These are exceptional times and it is important that we keep a sense of perspective. All our students and members of staff should now enjoy a complete break for the next two weeks. To be clear, students should not submit work; teachers will not be expected to accept any work and will not be expected to set any work over the next fortnight. This applies to all students including our students in Year 11 and Year 13.

I will be sending another letter to families when the school would have re-opened week commencing Monday 20th April.

Thank you for what you and your family are doing to help us as a nation to combat the Covid-19 outbreak. This global situation is something we have never encountered before, and it may prove to be unsettling for some of our students, particularly for our students in Year 11 and Year 13. Now however is the time for all our students, including those in Year 11 and Year 13, to enjoy a well-deserved break. I hope that together we can ensure that our young people feel supported at this time.

On behalf of the staff and governors of our school I thank you for your continued support and understanding at this time.

I hope that you and your family stay safe and well.

With my best wishes to you and your family

Philip Stack
Headteacher