

12 January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you are aware there have not been any formal GCSE exams since 2019, with schools submitting teacher assessed grades. Students nationally have lost a significant proportion of their learning time when schools were locked down, as such the expectations on students will need to alter to ensure that students are allocated fair grades in 2022 given the disruption to their learning. As yet we do not know what changes to grade boundaries and exam questions there might be as this information has not been shared by the examination boards or JCQ (the government body in charge of examinations) however we do know that the expectations of a child in a subject cannot be the same. We do know that there will be a very short period of adjustment to marking to take students back to the same banding/grading as we saw in 2019, but we do not know what this year's initial step means for our students. As a result, we have asked students to sit full GCSE papers and marked them to the 2019/2020 in accordance with 2019/2020 mark schemes; this would reflect the harshest possible return to previous examination norms and is an absolute worst case scenario, one I cannot believe they will allow to happen. I realise that both you and your children want grades, they are by far and away the easiest way to compare performance, but we will not issue mock grades this year.

I think that it is likely that any grades we award to the percentages scored on mock papers would be inaccurate, potentially by grades, so we will not be sending them home to you or sharing grades with students as this would simply be unfair. These exams were an excellent benchmark allowing both the staff and students to assess gaps in knowledge and target support for the months ahead however to allocate the grade boundaries from the 2019/2020 exam series to these papers would be cruel and potentially damaging, we would be giving the wrong grade.

The students have worked so hard despite the challenges they have faced. Their behaviour during the mock exams was excellent highlighting their focus and pride in their own efforts. As a result, we know that they are in an excellent place compared to their peers nationally and locally due to their engagement with home learning, their attendance at school which continues to be above national and regional data, and their positive attitude to learning in the classroom.

We know how our outcomes measure to other schools over time, we know the rank order of students outcomes and we know at least some of the circumstances that might have effected performance in the exams and given the commitment, attendance to school we are seeing, we have no reason to believe that outcomes for students this year will be lower than students in 2019, but the grades we would usually award to mock papers are, because they are marked at 2019/2020 levels, the summer examinations will not be.

We thank both you the parents and the students for their continued hard work and focus and we know if they remain focused and committed, they will achieve the grades their efforts warrant in the summer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'h. davies'.

Mrs Heather Davies
Deputy Headteacher