

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following on from last week's government announcements regarding the cancellation of all GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations and the plans for how grades will be awarded, I wanted to share with you the information I sent directly to students at the weekend. Please see the document attached to this communication and follow this [link](#) to useful FAQs published by the Department for Education.

We are still waiting for the finer details of how the teacher assessment process will work, but it is likely that teachers will have to draw on a wide range of evidence and data including the quality of students' class and homework, non-exam assessment and their performance under controlled examination conditions. Whilst results from the mock examinations will be one of the pieces of evidence which will be drawn upon, it is highly unlikely that they will be the only form of evidence. This is because students in different schools across the country will have sat different papers at different times, with some using the 2019 exam papers and others creating their own from a range of past papers; schools will also have applied different grade boundaries to generate the grades and thus it would not be fair to make a judgement solely on this measure when there are so many variables involved. In addition, students nationally were not aware at the time that the mock exam results could contribute to their final grade and this knowledge would have undoubtedly affected the amount of time and effort some students put in to preparing for their practice papers.

I am aware that some students and parents/carers are concerned about relative underperformance in the mock exams, but please be reassured that staff will not simply use this crude measure as an indicator of a student's performance. From the information published by the [DFE](#) last Friday, it is clear that teachers will be expected to submit their judgement about the grade that 'they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.' This suggests that staff will be able to consider the progress students have made since the mocks, the quality of the work which has been evidenced throughout the course and their knowledge of the likely trajectory of improvement for individual students had the exams taken place as planned.

Whilst many media reports suggest that results will be purely based on teacher predictions, this is not the case. The examination boards will combine the predicted grades from teachers with other forms of data including prior attainment data (previous grades achieved in standardised examinations) and data from previous years to make sure that the pattern of grades awarded is not out of line with other years' examinations. They will also take into account the past performance of the school which students attend. All of this information will be used to produce a calculated grade which is intended to be an accurate and fair reflection of a student's ability, effort and progress.

Teachers have been asked not to engage in discussions with parents/carers or students regarding predicted grades, in part because predictions will only form one element of the calculated grade. Staff need to be trusted to use their professional judgements, their knowledge of the students and their subjects, to make an accurate assessment of the most likely outcome, working within the parameters of the national framework once it is fully determined. Please be assured that we will do our very best to make sure that students are assessed accurately and predicted grades are awarded fairly and consistently as part of the overall calculated grade.

It is the DFE's intention to publish the final calculated grades by July 2020. Should a student think that the calculated grade is not an accurate reflection of their performance, then there will be an appeals process. In addition, we understand there are plans for students to be able to sit an exam in any subject at the earliest available opportunity, once schools re-open again. This is intended for anyone who believes their awarded grade is too low so that they have the opportunity to show a better performance in exam conditions. We await further details of how exactly this will work alongside the appeals process.

As we have had a couple of queries from year 11 students and parents/carers about the value of continuing with academic work when the main exams have been cancelled, please refer to the notes

below which outline our rationale for us all doing our best to maintain a healthy remote working routine. This is based on the information we have received so far from exam boards and our own collective professional judgement.

- I) **Completing the GCSE syllabus:** Personal circumstances allowing, we are encouraging year 11 students to continue with academic work in their subjects at least until Easter (and possibly, in some subjects, two to three weeks afterwards), and to follow their timetabled lessons in order to complete the syllabus. This could be important in the event that students need or want to sit an exam as part of the appeals process. Continuing with studies now during this period of isolation, will reduce pressure later in the year.
- II) **Keeping in a healthy routine:** Following lessons each day will support students to maintain a healthy routine and will help to structure the day.
- III) **Preparation for the next stage:** After Easter we will ask teachers to start providing students who have applied for post-16 with study materials which will support their transition to the next stage. This will involve wider reading and other preparation tasks in the subjects that they intend to take for AS or A-Level.

For those planning to move to other settings, students are encouraged to contact them directly after the Easter holiday to ascertain any reading, research and/or activities which could form a useful part of their preparation. Mrs Mitchell is also available to answer any college/apprenticeship-related questions by email: [karen.mitchell@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:karen.mitchell@ilkleygs.co.uk)

- IV) **The intrinsic value of learning:** Although in schools exams are obviously a major focus, we often forget that learning in and of itself is valuable as it enables us to grow as individuals and to have a deeper and more complex understanding of the world.

We fully appreciate that this is a difficult and uncertain time for all students as we navigate uncharted waters. Please remind students that their Head of Year, Mrs Hepworth, is available during the school day to provide support and guidance over the phone or by email: [veronica.hepworth@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:veronica.hepworth@ilkleygs.co.uk). In addition, students can always contact their form tutor by email and they will do their best to alleviate any concerns.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions and we will try and respond as quickly as possible.

Kind regards,

Carly Purnell

**Deputy Headteacher**