

Dear Year 13 students, parents and carers,

We are aware that there is much uncertainty for you all at the moment and conscious that timely and effective communication is essential as we navigate this rapidly changing landscape.

As a school we are receiving lots of information each day and we are doing our utmost to ensure you are kept up to date. However, we are aware that just forwarding things to you as they come in may be overwhelming so, as a Post-16 team, unless information is 'time critical', we have agreed to try to send out one communication per week (as we have been doing this year with our Y12/13 weekly powerpoints) and to try to ensure that any communications are as targeted as possible.

As a school we are also uploading key official communications that come out from us to a dedicated page on our school website '**IGS Coronavirus communications**' under the 'Parents' tab.

Please also take the time to read the attachments/links on this email which will also soon be uploaded to the website:

1. **The communication sent to Year 13 students on Saturday 21/3 from Mrs Purnell about the announcement from OFQUAL about the awarding of exam grades.** It remains valid and contains some of our key messages.
2. **A letter that has just been sent out from UCAS** asking universities to not adjust offers for 2 weeks while the situation stabilises.
3. **Weekly communication from the Post-16 team to Year 13 students** – information about continuing pastoral care, study routines, Pathways info, Prom update
4. Please also see this useful [link](#) to useful **FAQs regarding A Levels** from gov.co.uk.

Following the cancellation of A-Level, AS and GCSE exams, 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 recent 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.

We are 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 (for year 13 students this will mean previous grades achieved in GCSE 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 some queries from Year 13 students and parents/carers about the value of continuing with academic work please also pay particular attention to the notes below which outline our rationale for us all doing our best to maintain a healthy remote working routine (personal circumstances allowing). This is based on the information we have received so far from exam boards and our own collective professional judgement.

- I) **Completing the A Level syllabus:** Personal circumstances allowing, we are encouraging Year 13 students to continue with academic work in their subjects at least until Easter (and possibly 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. By continuing with your studies now during this period of isolation you may be able to reduce pressure later in the year.
- II) **Keeping in a healthy routine:** Following your lessons each day will support you to maintain a healthy routine and will help you to structure your day. Please do not feel that you have to complete the work, especially if you are not in a position to do so through ill health or family responsibilities. Think of it as a positive opportunity rather than something you should worry about.

- III) **Preparation for your next stage:** After Easter, subject to first completing the syllabus, we are likely to ask your teachers to start providing you with study materials which will support your transition to university or other pathways. These will be clarified but for those planning to go to university these are likely to be in the style of university-style research / 'depth of knowledge' tasks for those of you who wish to engage with that subject (e.g. if you're planning to do Biology at university, you will not want to miss the chance to consolidate your A level learning and may well also be interested in looking at work that will support transition to a university setting). This will be your chance to use this period of increased isolation to enrich your knowledge of your chosen subjects. More details about this will follow over the next few weeks. For those planning to move to other settings you may already be engaged in work-related activity (within the current government guidelines). Mrs Mitchell is available to answer any work/apprenticeship-related questions and her contact details are in the attached Post-16 letter).
- 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. This is the true purpose of further study and the exam result is the important external proof that this process has taken place but it is the learning process itself that is of the deepest value.

Many thanks for your continued trust and support.

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

Very best wishes,

Jamie Gutch

**Assistant Headteacher: Director of Post-16**