

**Subject:** Update from Mrs Purnell 07.01.21

**Dear Parents/Carers,**

As we near the end of our first week of remote learning, we wanted to congratulate students on their resilience and high levels of engagement with over 15,500 positives issued on ClassCharts since Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January. I also would like to take the opportunity to share some key updates and reminders, as well as acknowledge yesterday's confirmation of the cancellation of this summer's GCSE, AS and A-Level examinations for students in years 11-13.

#### **Provision for Vulnerable Students/Children of Key Workers**

[Vulnerable students](#) and the children of [key workers](#) who are unable to be supervised at home are still allowed to attend school throughout the lockdown period. Should your child be eligible and you have not already notified us, please make sure you have completed the form [here](#) by 2pm on Friday 8th January at the very latest so we can make the necessary adjustments to on-site staffing levels.

Students will not need to wear full school uniform, but they will need to bring their equipment for the school day (including a fully charged iPad, portable charger and headphones) as well as a packed lunch. As previously communicated, students in this group are likely to be bubbled with students from other year groups. However, we ensure that within classrooms there is a separation of at least 2 metres so they would not be judged to be a close contact in the event of a student testing positive for coronavirus.

#### **Free School Meals**

Our catering team continues to provide food boxes which are available every Wednesday for collection for students eligible for Free School Meals. If you are eligible and have not already signed up to receive a weekly food box, then please contact Mrs Heyworth at [joy.heyworth@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:joy.heyworth@ilkleygs.co.uk)

#### **Remote Learning**

We are very proud of the start students have made to their remote learning with the vast majority engaging in all live lessons on Microsoft Teams and completing work set by teachers to ensure that their learning continues despite school closures. Teaching and learning remotely can be challenging and intense for students and staff, and we continue to learn and adapt our processes as we become more experienced in delivering in this way. You are able to monitor your child's online engagement with lessons through the feed on ClassCharts; where students are not present, an information only icon will appear in order that we can comply with the government expectations to 'inform parents immediately where engagement is a concern'. Given the current situation, as we are unable to ascertain all home circumstances, if you do wish to advise us of any extenuating circumstances which are preventing your child from engaging in their scheduled lessons we would be grateful if you could let us know via [admin@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:admin@ilkleygs.co.uk) so that we can pass this on to teachers and the Head of Year, thus avoiding repeat notifications.

#### **IT Support**

We appreciate that some students have had minor technical issues but we are hoping the majority are now resolved. A reminder that there are a number of FAQs and IT Guides on our website [here](#) which should help you and your child troubleshoot common problems.

For those who might be struggling with internet access, we also have a small bundle of data cards which we can distribute to families who have limited or no internet access. Please contact [admin@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:admin@ilkleygs.co.uk) if this is the case. First priority will be given to students in receipt of the Pupil Premium.

### **Additional Support**

In terms of extra support, if your child has a diagnosis of SEN and is struggling with their work, we are here to help. Please get in contact with [inclusivelearning@ilkleygs.co.uk](mailto:inclusivelearning@ilkleygs.co.uk) so that we can work together to minimise any barriers. Similarly, if your child is struggling emotionally, they know they can raise this with their tutor or contact their Head of Year by email. Of course, you can also do this on their behalf if they are reluctant to communicate how they are feeling.

In addition, all students have a Mental Health and Well-Being Handbook on their iPad and a video outlining key strategies and resources is also on our website [here](#). The [Kooth website](#) is also a great resource and provides free, safe and anonymous support. Where feasible, Place2Be counselling services also continue remotely for those students already accessing this support.

### **GCSE, AS and A-Level Examinations**

As I am sure you are already aware, yesterday Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education confirmed that this summer's examinations will not go ahead. He stated:

*"I can confirm that GCSEs and A and AS Level exams **will not go ahead this summer**. This year we are going to put our trust in teachers rather than algorithms.*

*The department and Ofqual had already worked up a range of contingency options. While the details will need to be fine-tuned in consultation with Ofqual, the exam boards and teaching representatives, **I can confirm now that I wish to use a form of teacher-assessed grades**, with training and support provided to ensure these are awarded fairly and consistently."*

This followed an earlier statement by [Ofqual](#) which stated:

*Our message to students is this: **please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education**. That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going in to their school, college or training provider. **This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications.**"*

At the current time, we have no further information regarding what form the teaching-assessed grades will take, what evidence we may be asked to provide or base our judgements upon. When we had to submit centre assessed grades last year, we looked at a wide range of evidence including a variety of common assessment tasks and performance in mock examinations, and assessed work holistically before entering grades to the exam boards.

Given the timing of the current national lockdown, students in year 11 or year 13 have not had the chance to complete mock examinations as normal this year. We know that this will be a significant cause for concern, but would like to reassure both students and parents/carers that we are carefully considering the next steps to ensure that students have a number of opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in the next few months both in common assessment tasks set by their teachers and in more formal, controlled conditions when they are able to return to school. We will, of course, ensure that students and parents are given sufficient notice and hope to find a healthy balance between giving our students a range of assessment opportunities, both with full examination papers and smaller, more focussed sections, reinforcing that a grade will not rely on the result in one particular paper, whilst also avoiding a culture of over-testing and managing students' anxieties.

We appreciate that students, particularly those in year 11 who have worked very hard over Christmas, will be disappointed that the mocks cannot go ahead as planned. They should be reassured that their efforts will not go to waste, as they will have spent valuable time reinforcing key content which will prepare them well for any assessments which will be scheduled for later this term after students are able to return to school. Any assessment tasks set remotely should also still be seen as an opportunity for students to be able to practise application of their knowledge and skills, thus helping them prepare for future assessments in school, even if they are not eligible to count towards calculation of a final grade.

Ofqual are launching a detailed consultation on the plans for teacher-assessed grades next week which will run for two weeks. We will continue to keep you updated and will ensure that our assessment plans are in line with Ofqual requirements once they are confirmed. In the meantime, there are still many months of education left. We want to place students in the very best position possible through continued teaching of the curriculum and provision of practice opportunities, so they achieve grades which fully and accurately reflect their knowledge and understanding of the courses they study and so they have the necessary foundations to make the best start on whatever progression route they want to pursue.

Finally, thank you for all your kind messages of support to us as school through email and on Twitter; we do share these with all staff and they are very much appreciated.

I hope you and your families stay safe and well.

Kind regards,

Carly Purnell  
**Headteacher**