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Principal: Stuart Williams

5 January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

I was hoping to be welcoming Year 11 back next week and to start to get them ready for exams. They have worked so hard during their GCSE course and I have been impressed by their resilience and determination to do their best in what has been an unprecedented difficult time for them.

I am sorry for the anxiety that the Prime Minister's announcement last night may have caused and that GCSE examinations will not go ahead as normal. We don't yet know how GCSE grades will be determined, but I will communicate our approach as soon as we are informed of the government's intent. Please be assured we will do our best to ensure that the grades they are awarded are fair and reflect what they are capable of.

In the email we received last night which confirmed the Prime Minister's announcement, the government stated, "In these circumstances, we do not think it is possible for exams to go ahead fairly this summer. The Secretary of State for Education will be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly on an approach for alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly."

It is clear therefore, that an alternative to examinations will take place, this might be a similar process to the centre assessed grades that were issued last year, it may also mean some examinations in core subjects. The grades awarded will need to reflect the work students have completed, or will complete going forward in order that they are fair and comparable across the country. My advice, is that Year 11 students must continue to engage with, and work as hard as they have been in order that they receive grades that best reflect their ability and the effort they have put into their studies.

We had originally intended for mock examinations to take place this term, inevitably these need to be delayed until students return, or perhaps indefinitely. I have therefore asked your child's teacher to recommence their usual Year 11 curriculum from Monday. We will make a final decision about mocks or other assessments once we know what the government's contingency plan is. I am really sorry if your child has spent time revising for these assessments.

I know Year 11 are considering what their next steps will be next year. It is really important that to ensure they are well prepared for their A levels or vocational courses that they continue to work hard and engage in their lessons. Each year I meet with Year 11 students individually to discuss their aspirations and will continue that process during the period of lockdown, albeit using Microsoft Teams. My assistant, Sheryl Wilson, will communicate the timings of these meetings in due course.

Please continue to encourage your child to discuss any concerns they might have with their teachers and form tutor. We will do what we can to help.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Williams