

Dear Parents and Carers,

We hope that you and your families are well and thank you for your continued efforts in supporting your child with their remote education. Thank you also for the excellent attendance of pupils to online learning. Staff have reported 100% attendance to some lessons with most above 95%; this is outstanding.

Please find below an update regarding Covid testing, returning to school, exams and remote learning.

### **Mass testing for Covid 19 in school:**

Last week, the government updated its approach with two key changes:

1. Staff can now be tested twice weekly. We will continue the testing of staff once per week for now.
2. Serial 7 day testing has been suspended for close contacts of a positive case and anyone who is a close contact now needs to isolate for 10 days.

The premise of testing all children who have had parental consent on return to school remains and the serial testing is being reviewed in relation to the new variant. Testing of pupils who are currently attending school is now complete and has gone well.

### **Return to school:**

This is still unknown although the secretary of state for education, Gavin Williamson, has announced that two weeks notice will be given for wider opening of schools. I would hope to get children back into school as soon as we can.

### **Exams, predicted grades and consultation:**

Year 11 pupils have been asking staff for predicted grades so that they can complete college applications. We cannot give accurate information here due to the consultation process outlined below. I would ask Year 11 pupils to use the target grades on their latest report for any college applications.

As you will be aware, the Department for Education has stated that exams will not take place this summer but they appreciate that students need accurate grades to continue to the next stage of their education, training, or into employment and that the grades must reflect what a student knows, understands and can do. On Friday 15th January, OFQUAL and the DFE launched their consultation on the process for the grading of qualifications this year. Parents, pupils and staff are able to input to this consultation.

In summary, the proposals outline a process to determine what a pupil knows and can do rather than what they would have achieved in the summer had the pandemic not occurred. This is a significant difference from last year when pupils had almost finished their courses before the forced closure of schools. The proposal includes that exam boards would set papers in order to inform the overall centre-assessed grades. Here is a helpful summary of the guidance from the Association of School and College leaders:

- Grades will be based on teacher/centre assessment. Exam boards will provide advice on a standardised approach between schools, what evidence should be collected, and how



schools should quality assure internally. Grades will be submitted as late as possible to maximise the time for catch-up teaching and ongoing assessment.

- Teacher assessment will be based on the current, ongoing performance of students; rather than a hypothetical prediction of what students may have got had exams run as normal; or what students would have got had the pandemic not disrupted their learning. It's not clear how evidence will translate into a grade at this stage.
- Exam boards may provide some external assessment tasks, which would be based on exam paper questions. DfE and Ofqual are consulting on whether these should be mandatory or not, whether teachers could set their own assessments instead, the percentage of the course that the tasks should cover, and the timing of the external assessment.
- Schools will be expected to provide internal quality assurance, with support and advice from the exam boards.
- Exams will also provide external quality assurance, both during the process of determining grades, and once grades are submitted. If the exam boards are satisfied with the internal quality assurance of a school's or college's judgement, it is unlikely to change grades. A formula or algorithm will not be used to standardise results.
- Students will have the right to appeal grades, which is currently being proposed as being led by schools in the first instance, before being escalated to exam boards.

From a school perspective, we are generally in support of the principles outlined here. The main challenge for pupils is to keep up with their learning and practice assessments at home so that once they do return to school, they will be in the best place to achieve their potential with either the papers set by the board or our own mock examinations or a combination of both.

It is incredibly important that the government also hears from the young people involved in this issue. I would encourage them to discuss the consultation with you and contribute to this where possible. Here is the [link](#) for the consultation that closes on Friday 29th January.

**Remote learning:**

Our statement for remote education is now on our website and can be read by following the link to our [Remote Learning Policy](#).

Staff in school continue to develop and learn new technologies to support learning at home as well as considering the development of how pupils learn remotely.

Finally, a reminder that **Wednesday 3rd February is a catch up day** for all year groups and therefore lessons will not be set on this day.

Kindest regards,

Andy Burton

Headteacher