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5th May 2020

Dear Year 11

I hope that you are all well during these challenging and unusual times. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the clear majority of you who have continued to attend the online lessons, submit work and stay in touch in general. This has not only helped you to keep a routine in preparation for the next stage in your learning at Sixth Form, but has also helped your teachers to gather evidence to defend the grades and rankings that they must prepare for the exam boards (more below).

EXAMINATIONS

We are aware that there has been some frustration and uncertainty about the OFQUAL announcement especially about the re-submission of work. Below is what they sent to all schools:

Should schools and colleges be setting students new work to inform the grade they submit?

There is no requirement to set additional mock exams or homework tasks for the purposes of determining a centre assessment grade, and no student should be disadvantaged if they are unable to complete any work set after schools were closed. Where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Heads of Centre should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done.

It is clear from speaking to our contacts in the exam boards that there is no requirement to set additional work and this was done to protect the students who find themselves in schools and colleges where no virtual lessons or support were provided. However, work can be submitted after 20th March and the head of center (the headteacher) has the final say as to the predictions.

The reason the head of center has the final say is just so that certain circumstances can be taken into account e.g. the wellbeing of students, health issues and personal concerns – i.e. special consideration may need to be applied. Also, experience tells us that many students who don't achieve well in their mock exams in January, often do much better in June – so we have to be a bit careful about just submitting mock grades – as that could disadvantage students who were either having a bad time in January or simply didn't work hard enough then. There is another important reason for you to continue working until the deadline and that is because OFQUAL have introduced a ranking system and we are keen that you have the chance to improve your rankings in the coming days.

The exam boards have also asked us to assemble evidence of your work to justify our predicted grades. - ***so please keep all of your written work and do all you can to ensure that it is in a fit state to submit to the exam boards if they ask for that evidence to be sent to them after 29th May.***

We are therefore working within the rules set by the exam boards and are in the process of gathering evidence to support grades entered and student rankings for your GCSEs. Attending lessons and submitting work is therefore still important in the short run therefore ***it is important that you continue to attend every virtual lesson and complete all work set by your teachers.***

NB - normal teaching of Year 11 classes will continue until 15 May, although it will be increasingly in a form that prepares you for the rigours of Sixth Form Study.

THE BAS PRE-SIXTH PROGRAMME

Before the current lockdown was announced by the UK Government, I remember saying to many of you that this crisis just could play in your favour academically. It will certainly help with your transition to A Levels and we are launching our pre-Sixth Form programme on **Monday 18th May**. A booklet with more details will come out very soon and the programme will give you the opportunity to start A Level and BTEC courses early. Therefore, you can sample the course fully, develop subject related skills and knowledge as well as familiarising yourselves with the Extended Project Qualification. In other words, you will have a significant head start on your future studies, even if you are planning to study elsewhere this autumn.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that, as far as possible, it is 'school as usual'. This means we are all setting the highest expectations of behaviour, attendance and approach to learning and, increasingly, we are also offering virtual activities for you to enjoy and participate in. Some things have clearly needed to change, but in essence our expectations and ethos have not. Equally, we are here to help so please contact a teacher, tutor, head of key stage or me if you need any support.

I very much look forward to seeing you soon in person and teaching some of you on the Economics pre-Sixth course. If you have any questions, please ask.

Yours sincerely

Mr Usher
Deputy Head