

March 2021

Dear Parent and Carer

It has been lovely to welcome back our Year 11 students this week and it is already clear to see that they are very keen to impress their staff with what they have been learning during the lockdown. They seem to have taken on board the key message that the way they will be issued GCSE grades this summer, is very different from the Year 11 of summer 2020. With this in mind I want to share an outline of our priorities for the year group over the remaining weeks.

### **Engage and Support.**

Engaging lessons will guide staff and demonstrate any gaps in learning that students require support with. This will guide the work needed between now and the time that the students officially leave. As more information is made available from each exam board, regarding the recommended evidence to use when formulating students' grades, we will share this with students and ensure that they have opportunities to add to this evidence. It is clear that evidence to determine students' grades can come from work undertaken throughout the whole of their course including assessments, coursework, classwork, homework and all other forms of work. However, as students tend to raise their levels of performance towards the end of their Year 11 courses, it is crucial that they fully engage now so that they can demonstrate their levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. The following link is a reminder on how the government has decided that grades will be awarded.

[Decisions on how GCSE, AS and A level grades will be determined in summer 2021](#)

### **Assessments.**

The students are aware that in the remaining weeks they will need to be able to demonstrate their level of performance through regular assessments. We want to manage this carefully and not overload them straight away. In the first two weeks of coming back to school, we are focusing on settling them back into their courses and getting them familiar with the routine of school. Although it is clear that we will be able to use assessment evidence from a range of sources, schools are also expected to have effective systems in place that help to provide quality assurance about the process of awarding final grades. To support this, and to make sure that students in different teaching groups have a consistent experience, we have set aside two periods of time where common assessments will be taken by all students.

- The first common assessments will take place between **Monday 22nd March and Thursday 1st April**. These assessments will be marked and moderated by staff at Budmouth to help standardise the grades that are being awarded. The first common assessment will be between 45 mins and 60 mins in length and will be based in classrooms. They are not mock exams.
- The second common assessments will take place between **Tuesday 4th and Friday 14th May**. These assessments will be marked and moderated by staff at Budmouth. They will then undergo a further moderation by some colleagues at other schools in our Trust. This will be very helpful in providing an extra layer of quality assurance about the grades being awarded. We may use the questions that are being provided by the exam boards for these second assessments, but we will reserve judgement on whether it is in the best interests of our students to use them, until we have seen them. The length of these assessments is yet to be decided.

We understand that students might look at these common assessments and view them as being more important than their other assessed work. We would caution students against taking that approach. They are not a replacement for the cancelled GCSE exams and they are not mock exams. These will form part of our quality assurance process to moderate and standardise work to ensure we have assessed work fairly and accurately. To ensure that students' work can be assessed and moderated fairly, anyone who would have been entitled to special access arrangements e.g. a reader, scribe or extra time, will be given the appropriate support. The students' performance in these common assessments will be considered as part of a range of evidence being used to determine what levels they are working at. As already shared, individual subjects may be given further guidance about how to award final grades. All schools have to submit their final grades to the exam boards by **Friday June 18th**. However, the moderation and standardisation process being used to determine the final grades must be completed beforehand.

### **Completing NEA (coursework).**

We know that some students may be very keen to complete unfinished NEA work. Each department will talk to students where this applies. It is not compulsory to complete this work, but it may be one of the best pieces of evidence for some courses and therefore a focus for the work completed over the next half term. Our staff will decide the best approach.

### **Parental Feedback.**

We were due to provide a report for parents on March 19th, but the latest exams' guidance prevents us from providing 'predictions' and 'working at grades' in the run up to final grades being awarded. It would also be unfair on our students to grade them immediately after returning from remote learning where each individual's personal circumstances have varied. However, we are conscious of the need to keep you updated regarding your child's performance and effort. With this in mind we feel that an **additional Parents' Evening on Wednesday 28th April** would be beneficial and provide an opportunity to discuss progress in each subject and confirm the key aspects for each student to work on in the remaining weeks and in the build up to the second common assessment task.

As Mr Herbert outlined in his recent letter we are unable to confirm the official leavers' date for Year 11 at the moment. We want to make sure we give students the necessary amount of time to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. We are also in discussion with other Dorset and local schools about a common approach for what has traditionally been called 'Leavers' Day'. A reminder that the GCSE Results Day will be on **Thursday 12th August**.

Regardless of when the last compulsory day might be, we are making plans to provide support for our students who are transitioning into our Sixth Form in September 2021. After such a disrupted Year 10 and 11, we want to ensure that they make the best possible start to their Post 16 studies. With this in mind, we will be using the final half term to provide a 'step up' curriculum for their A Level or Vocational courses to make sure they hit the ground running. The interviews for Sixth Form are on the 17th March and the 24th March. If there are any students who have not yet applied, but would like to, Mr Henman (Director of Sixth Form) will be happy to hear from you:

[mhenman@budmouth-aspirations.org](mailto:mhenman@budmouth-aspirations.org)

Thank you for your continued support

Yours sincerely,



Peter Hudson  
Vice Principal