

Our Ref: DWt/LPu

26th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carers,

I hope the week has gone well for you and please do forgive me for writing twice in one week, there is an awful lot going on that I feel that I need to make you aware of.

One thing I know that will not be popular with some is me saying that all have to wear plain face-coverings in the classroom as well as when moving around the school where social distancing cannot be maintained. There will always be some that are exempt of course but I will need the appropriate documentation supporting that.

Just so we are all clear, this is recommended by the government and as Dr Jenny Harries said: *'Face coverings are there to help others – we are protecting others by wearing them.'* She went on to say: *'There are a number of different conditions at the moment. For example, we have a new variant, and while we are understanding that more, then obviously taking additional precautions makes sense.'*

The face-covering guidance is in line with what Public Health England is saying and it is *'a temporary measure to support the return of schools and will be in place until Easter, when it is reviewed.'* The Schools Minister Nick Gibb said yesterday that the wearing of face coverings in secondary schools was not compulsory but instead was being *'highly recommended'*. He went on: *'we are saying it is not mandatory for schools to have masks in classrooms but it is highly recommended because we want to do everything we can to reduce the risk of transmission in the school.'*

I have a duty of care for our youngsters and staff and when the government, backed by scientific advice say that a safety measure is *'highly recommended'* I would be foolish not to do all I can to keep all as safe as can be.

Whilst the science points to the virus having very little effect on young people, it can have a devastating effect on staff. I feel sure that you do not want to be in a situation where your youngster does not have a teacher for a long period of time as they caught COVID from one of the pupils at school. More lost learning time, not to mention the fact that a member of staff could become seriously ill, or worse. Or that I will be forced to close the school again because I just don't have the staff to run the school safely and effectively. I am more than happy to discuss any of this but I feel sure that you understand the reasons for my decision.

This letter will not bombard you with huge amounts of information and will mainly focus on the detail released yesterday on what will replace Year 11 exams.

Year 11 exam replacement

There will be a great deal more here to follow in due course but I wanted to share with you what we know so far after the release yesterday of the Ofqual consultations decisions document *'Decisions on how GCSE, AS and A level grades will be determined in summer 2021'*.

The headlines are:

- **There will be no compulsory assessments provided by the exam boards.** Teachers must assess their students' performance, only on what content has been delivered to them by their teachers, to determine the grade each student should receive. They may use a broad range of evidence from throughout the course, including PPEs, coursework and classwork.
- **Exam boards will provide a package of support materials** to include questions, mark schemes, data about how students typically performed in individual questions and exemplar materials, as well as advice for teachers about content coverage, topic selection, marking and making grading judgements. This will be largely based on past questions but will include a proportion of previously unpublished questions for every subject.
- **It is not compulsory that teachers use these materials to arrive at a grade**, but this package of support materials should help teachers make grading decisions. **Exam boards are set to provide these materials by Easter.**
- **Teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18th June.** They should determine the grades as late in the academic year as is practicable to enable teaching to continue for as long as possible.
- **Students should continue to work on their non-exam assessment (NEA).** NEA will be marked by teachers and will contribute to the overall grade, whether or not it has been completed, but this will not be moderated by exam boards.
- **Schools will conduct their own internal quality assurance process**, where schools will need to consider their performance in recent years, what evidence will be utilised and how a consistent approach to marking decisions has been ensured.
- **An external quality assurance process will follow**, where exam boards will check each schools internal quality assurance process, and sample evidence from one or more subjects. Schools will be selected for an external quality assurance process at random, or where the exam board feels there is a risk that grades submitted are not representative.
- **Schools will be expected to tell their students the evidence on which their grades will be based**, before the grades are submitted to exam boards.
- **Students will be able to appeal their grades** if they believe there has been an administrative or procedural error. They should appeal directly to the school who can issue a revised grade if an appeal is upheld. If the appeal is not upheld the student can request that a further appeal is made to the exam board by the school, on their behalf.
- **Results day has been moved to August 12th for GCSEs**, later than the early July date tabled in the consultation. As set out in the consultation, teachers will not be able to tell pupils' their final grade before results days.



- **Ofqual will consult on whether to hold an Autumn exam series this year.**

A great deal of work is needed here and it was really good to have two huge pieces of work released from the government just days apart. We were all looking for a little more to do and thankfully we have been given a couple of things to get our teeth stuck in to.

I will write again next week and let you know how we will be testing all from 8th March along with more detail on the testing arrangements and process from between Easter and the end of the summer term. As ever a fluid situation which may well change as we go along.

Thank you once again for your on-going support, it does make a huge difference to everyone here at Woodlands.

Very best wishes,

Mr David Wright
Head Teacher