

26th February 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

It really did feel like spring this week due to the significant upturn in weather conditions and some unseasonably warm temperatures. It is fair to say that we are extremely hopeful that such weather conditions remain throughout the remainder of the spring term as this will assist all schools in ensuring that school buildings can be well ventilated and that young people can spend as much time in outdoor spaces as possible from 8th March onwards.

My colleagues and I have spent much of this week preparing for the wider reopening of the school in just over a week's time and I would like to thank all parents and carers who have taken the time to respond to the my letter on Monday, which among other things requested parents and carers to give consent for their child to be tested for COVID-19 on their return. If any parent or carer has yet to respond then I would strongly encourage them to do so today as this will enable us to finalise and communicate our plans for the wider reopening. I am hoping to be able to write to parents and carers on this coming Monday to provide more extensive information related to our wider reopening plans.

As part of our planning, we have decided to make some adjustments to the dates for Parental Consultation Evenings. Evenings will go ahead online as planned for students in Year 9 (Thursday 4th March) and Year 8 (Thursday 11th March) as this will allow parents and carers to speak to a range of subject teachers prior to making options choices. However, Consultation Evenings for students in Year 10 (29th April) and Year 7 (13th May) have been postponed until after the Easter break. The rationale for these changes is that it will allow classroom teachers to have face-to-face classroom interaction before giving meaningful feedback to parents and carers. We will be providing information to parents about their child's attitude to learning and academic engagement prior to these points.

This week, we also learnt about the outcome of the Ofqual consultation for GCSE, A-level and vocational award grading for 2021. Overall, it is now clear that teacher assessment will be the key evidence that will enable schools to calculate grades and that exam boards will support this process by providing training to all professionals involved. Exam boards will also supply support materials for schools, such as exam style questions and mark schemes but the use of such materials will not be compulsory and it will be for each school to decide their individual approach. One key point that should be acknowledged is that students should only be assessed on the content that they have been taught by their teachers. However, there does need to be a fair coverage of the specification to ensure that any grades awarded are comparable to previous years. I believe that this is a strength of the process as it accounts for the fact that students in different regions across the country will have had very different experiences with regard to their learning over the past year.

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The challenge now for all schools will be to finalise plans that will enable them to provide fair and reasonable opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities in the courses that they are currently studying. We are working hard to ensure that this happens. In the meantime, I would ask parents, carers and students not to contact classroom teachers about this matter as they will not be in a position to give further clarification. Students should continue to work hard based on the information that has been shared by their subject teachers as this will have a positive impact on their outcomes. We will, as always, update parents, carers and students as soon as we possibly can as we do appreciate that this is a stressful time for the young people involved.

Have a peaceful and safe weekend.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Mullings', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gary Mullings
Headteacher