

Our Ref: PJS/LRS

15 July 2020

Dear Year 11

I hope you and your families are all well. I wanted to touch base with you about a few 'closing' matters and to just let you know about our current plans for GCSE results and scotch some worrying misinformation which seems to be doing the rounds of social media.

We have become aware of a petition which has been doing the rounds which has suggested that grades are going to be reduced by 33% this year. This is a misinterpretation of some data which has been whipped up in the media. All schools have submitted their data for the exam results. Inevitably teachers have been positive, in that if someone is on a borderline between grades they have suggested the grade above rather than the lower grade. This has happened nationally and so initial analysis suggests that the overall predictions are not wildly out – but on average one third of a grade higher than last year. That is not the same as 33% off your mark. In order to give your GCSE parity and credibility with previous years the exam board are going to nationally adjust the grades, which will probably mean that they will remove that optimism. The guidance says that every school should expect to have their results adjusted, so the school is not deciding your results, the exam boards will calculate a result and we are not given those calculation methods. The results you actually get in August will be a mystery to us too – although hopefully they will be broadly correct. The exam boards will just be making a national adjustment to ensure that your GCSEs are future-proof because they have a similar spread to previous years – if they took 33% off them they would look calamitous, but that's not going to happen. The government have officially refuted this too, since I started writing the letter, see the link below.

<https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/08/inaccurate-petition-on-a-level-and-gcse-grades-this-year/>

Ofqual are still consulting on how the GCSE appeal system will work, but it looks likely that if you are unhappy with the exam board grade there will be only limited grounds for an individual appeal. You will be able to request the grade the school submitted for you (which may be different to the exam board grade) and your rank. The grounds for appeal are if the school notices an administration error on our side, or the exam board's. We can't appeal their adjustments or their methodology, however we might feel about it. If you don't get the grade you might have hoped for then you will have the chance to re-sit the GCSE in the autumn.

As the government have now announced that all GCSEs will be ready for a re-take in November, we are awaiting further details about the practicalities of this. It appears those will have to be administered and sat by the school, even though you are in college. It may well be that, despite some possible initial disappointment, that once you start college you are less bothered about the grade than you initially felt. It will be a key decision to decide whether to dedicate some time to revise for re-sitting your GCSEs or keep your focus on your new courses. When we have an idea about how many students want to re-take, we will look at how we can best support you through that – although re-takes should be the exception and not the rule. If you miss the grades you need for a course by a tiny amount then we'll be happy to talk to the college, which could make a difference. There will be staff on hand on results day to help you if necessary.

I have attached a letter from Mrs Keep regarding collection of results. This is obviously subject to change depending on government guidelines. Some schools are purely emailing the results out to students, but we feel it would be another moment snatched away from you, so we'd like to host it, albeit in a limited way.

We are still grappling with the issues around Prom/Certificate evening to mark the end of your time with us. We will be sending out a questionnaire next week to elicit your opinions on it so that we can be sure that any decisions we make will be well-supported. With a high number of weddings having been cancelled over the lockdown period it is going to be potentially both hard and expensive to book dates later in the year. We want to ensure that anything we organise will be well-attended, so we'd appreciate as many people as possible completing the form in order for us to make an informed decision. We have a few ideas and we'd appreciate yours, although we also recognise that if it gets postponed too long then it may just be that we've missed the moment. We would like all students to complete the survey and if you do not complete it then we will count you as someone who is not interested in further events, which is fine – but if we don't have sufficient feedback and interest then it won't be financial or practically viable to run an event.

I hope that you are all gearing up for college now and are looking forward to getting back to education – I know we all are. It's annoying that there's still so much uncertainty around everything, but that's just the way of the world at the moment. Stay safe.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Jenkins', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Jenkins
Headteacher