



7<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

As you know Year 11 and Year 13 students are currently taking classroom-based assessments in order to provide evidence towards the GCSE and A-Level grades that they will be awarded in the summer. These assessments effectively replace the formal exams which were cancelled this year. As we reach the half-way point in the assessment window, we are following up our previous communications by writing to update you with how the process is going, the key messages we are giving to students, and to update you with the latest official guidance and information.

#### A reminder of how grades will be awarded this summer

- Schools will **assess students against a national standard**, defined by the exam boards.
- Schools will submit grades which will be **internally quality assured** to make sure marking and grading are fair and accurate and in line with national standards. We have put in place a very robust process to ensure this, as outlined in our **Centre Policy**. This policy has been submitted to the exam boards and we are currently waiting for this to be approved. Once it has been approved we will make it available on our school website.
- From June onwards, our grades will go through **external quality assurance** by exam boards. We now know that every school will be required to submit some evidence, although we do not know which subjects and students this will be for.
- Once exam boards are confident in our submitted results, they will award students their final grades. These will be available on results days which are 10<sup>th</sup> August for A-Levels and 12<sup>th</sup> August for GCSEs.
- If students do not think their results are accurate, they will have the right to **appeal**.
- OFQUAL have just confirmed that a **full exam season** will take place in the Autumn Term for students who are still unhappy with their teacher assessed grade. These exams will be in October (A-Levels) and November (GCSEs).

#### How are things are going?

We are now just past the half-way point in the assessment process and we are delighted with the way our students have responded to the challenging and unusual situation we are facing this summer. They are taking their assessments very seriously and most are working incredibly hard to do the very best they can. We are aware that the late government decision to move to teacher assessed grades has been worrying and stressful for students, parents and teachers. At times things have moved so quickly that it has been difficult to keep everyone fully informed through official channels, although we have done our best to do that through our day-to-day communication with students.

Our staff have also risen to this challenge and are working hard to ensure that students are well prepared for the assessments taking place. Staff are also involved in setting, marking, grading and moderating assessments, all of which would normally be done by exam boards, and doing so against a background of additional responsibilities regarding keeping students safe with regard to COVID. We have asked staff

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to prioritise their work in relation to teacher assessed grades over marking and feedback to other year groups in order to keep things manageable.

### What happens next with assessments?

We have advised students to look after themselves physically and mentally during these assessments. They should make sure that they get enough sleep and that they eat well and drink plenty of water. They should take regular breaks from their work, get some exercise, and make sure that they get sufficient 'down time' away from phones and screens. If they need help or support they should talk to us.

Assessments will continue right up to the half term break. It is vital that students maintain good attendance and punctuality for the next three weeks. If students are absent without good reason, and do not complete any assessments in a subject, they could be awarded a U grade in that subject.

It is also important that students maintain their focus right up to their last assessment. They should not get too complacent in subjects where they think they have done well, or get too disheartened in subjects where they think they have done less well. Student perceptions on these things can often be wrong and they should remember that more than one piece of evidence will be used to determine their grade this year. Students should continue to listen to the information provided by their subject teachers so that they are as prepared as they possibly can be for their remaining assessments.

We will soon be asking students to sign a declaration that the work they have submitted is their own work. This is an important part of authenticating the evidence submitted. It is important to point out that should students make a false declaration, we would have to report this to exam boards as potential misconduct. This can have very serious consequences including disqualification in one or more subjects. We know it probably won't come to that, but do need to point this out.

Students will be told how well they have done in their assessments and which pieces of evidence their grade will be based on. They will not be told their final grade which is confidential until results day. Students and parents should not ask for these grades under any circumstances. This is the reason why we had to cancel the Year 11 Progress Report which should have gone home this week.

### What happens after May Half Term Holiday?

After the May half term holiday, students will no longer be doing assessments and they do not need to be in school beyond that point unless they are told otherwise. Miss Bell and Mrs Dunn have already written to Year 11 parents about the Careers, FE and Sixth Form bridging opportunities that will be available during next half term, as well as the Sixth Form Induction Day on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June. If your child has not yet applied for a place in our Sixth Form it is not too late. Online applications can be found on the GSHS school website within the NE12 Sixth Form section under the 'Join Us' tab. There will be leavers assemblies for Year 11 and Year 13 students and these will both take place on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June ahead of the official Year 11 leaving date on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June. The Year 11 prom will hopefully take place on Thursday July 8<sup>th</sup>, restrictions allowing, and Miss Tatters is sending out more information on this.

### What about Results Days?

Results days have been brought forward this year and will take place on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August for A-levels and Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August for GCSEs. Last year we ran these remotely due to the COVID restrictions in place at that time. We are hopeful that if the post-lockdown roadmap continues to go to plan, we may be able to return to running these as face-to-face events, but we await updated guidance from DFE on how the roadmap applies to educational settings moving forwards. We will let you know more details and timings as soon as we can.

### What about Appeals?

Where students disagree with the grade they have been awarded they are able to submit an appeal. There are two stages to the appeals process, the first involving an appeal to the centre itself and the second involving an appeal to the exam board. At both stages of the process you will need to submit your appeal to the school and give us your written consent to conduct the appeal or submit it to the exam board on your behalf. It's important to remember that your grade can go down, as well as up at either

stage of the process. As it is not possible to appeal before results day, we will provide you with further information on the appeals process then.

OFQUAL have also confirmed this week that there will be a full series of GCSE and A-Level exams available in the Autumn Term to students who are still unhappy with their teacher assessed grade. We will again provide further details on the entry processes for these exams after results days.

### Key Dates

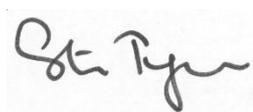
Friday May 28 <sup>th</sup>	Assessments for teacher assessed grades end (Year 11 and Year 13 students no longer need to attend school each unless told otherwise)
Tuesday June 8 <sup>th</sup>	Sixth Form Induction Day (for Year 11 students)
Friday June 18 <sup>th</sup>	Teacher assessed grades submitted to exam boards
Wednesday June 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Year 11 Leavers Assembly. Year 13 Leavers Assembly
Thursday July 8 <sup>th</sup>	Year 11 Prom
Tuesday August 10 <sup>th</sup>	A-Level Results Day
Thursday August 12 <sup>th</sup>	GCSE Results Day

Finally, we would like to thank you for your support during this process. This is not an ideal situation, and it is not where any of us would have wanted to be, but by working together we believe that we have put together a process which is both robust and as fair to our students as it possibly could be. The positive messages we have received from parents and students mean a lot and we thank you for those. We have provided some key website links below so that you can access the latest information from OFQUAL and JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications).

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/summer-2021-arrangements/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/gcse-as-and-a-level-qualifications-in-2021>

Yours sincerely



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