

Dear Parent/Carer,

18 January 2021

As I am sure you may have seen in the news recently, Gavin Williamson, Minister for Education yesterday released some further information about the approach that the government are planning to take to assess pupil progress in light of the decision to no longer hold GCSE and A-Level Exams. The exact details are subject to an ongoing consultation period.

The key messages from the Education Minister are:

- 1. A breadth of evidence should inform teachers' judgements.** This means that teachers will look at a range of different examples of your child's work before considering what grade to award and that grades will not be awarded based on a single piece of work such as a mock exam.
- 2. Teacher's final judgement on a student's grade should be as late as possible in the academic year to utilize remaining teaching time.** As yet the government has not given timescales but that they are hoping to be able to invite Year 11 back into school so that they have time to complete extra learning that can be used as evidence towards their grades.
- 3. Gavin Williamson has also asked for Ofqual to look at the "possibility of providing externally set tasks or papers, in order that teachers can draw on this resource to support their assessments of students".** You may have seen the idea of 'mini-exams' or coursework for GCSE and A-Level students in the news, however this idea is still in consultation and is not yet confirmed.
- 4. There will be no use of an algorithm to standardise grades. Schools and colleges should undertake quality assurance of assessments. Gavin Williamson stated "there should also be external checks in place to support fairness and consistency between different institutions and to avoid schools and colleges proposing anomalous grades."** This means that the government will not use a formula to change grades based on previous years' trends like happened last summer.
- 5. In terms of BTEC and other vocational qualifications, exams due to take place in February and March will no longer go ahead and that they will consult over arrangements for the June series.** At present it is still not clear if the BTEC exams in June will go ahead. We will provide you with further information as it is released.

At the moment there is no further guidance on the exact range of evidence that teachers will be asked to draw from when making their assessments, and there is no confirmation that the so called 'mini-exams' or externally set tasks that are being reported in the media will definitely go ahead.

As a result, it is increasingly important that all Year 11 and Year 13 students that they continue to engage with home learning as we will need to use all available evidence to accurately assess them. Please make sure your child is fully engaged with their Teams work each day. This means that they should:

Interim Principal Hannah Fahey

- Log into Teams daily and watch their Audio PowerPoints that their teachers are uploading to Microsoft Stream and posting on the subject Teams page.
- Complete their daily quizzes and engage with their teachers feedback once these are marked and returned
- Complete the extended written tasks and optional stretch tasks

In order to support your child/young person effectively please consider the following top tips on effective home learning:

- Work with your child to create a structure for the day that includes a regular start, break, lunch and end time so that they are able to build effective routines. You may want to create a daily timetable with them that includes their regularly scheduled lessons alongside breaks and time away from screens.
- Agree a quiet space in the house that your child/young person will work from where they can avoid distraction. This might not always be a bedroom but could be a table in the kitchen or this could be a space that moves throughout the day to fit in with family life.
- Ask your child/young person to share with you each day what they have learnt. This could be the topic that they found most interesting, the subject they found most challenging or the topic that they were most excited about learning. These conversations can help you understand more about your child's engagement and where they may need to contact their teachers for further support.
- Encourage your child/young person to use a notebook/paper to make notes on their TEAMS lessons as they work through the activities rather than being reliant simply on listening to the audio lessons. This will help them develop independent learning skills and active note taking which are extremely important skills for moving on to the next stage in education.
- Encourage your child to do something every day to contribute to their wellbeing. This could be some time away from their screens/social media, a walk as part of daily exercise or sometime completing a creative activity such as cooking, drawing or listening to a meditation exercise.

Parents who have children in Year 11 and require further guidance or support with developing their child's revision and work ethic should contact jkhan@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk (Vice Principal in charge of Curriculum Intent). Similarly, parents who have children in Year 13 and require further guidance or support with developing their child's revision and work ethic should contact sbhadare@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk (Director of Science and Sixth Form)

Thank you so much in advance for your ongoing support during this challenging time. We look forward to welcoming your child back to the academy in the coming months and working closely with them to secure their best outcomes to enable them to move on successfully to their next stage of education.

With Love, Hope and Trust
Jennie Khan – Vice Principal – Curriculum Intent.