

27 August '20

Dear Parent(s)/Carer(s):

I am writing with a further update with some thoughts on events in the recent past and our plans for the next few weeks.

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your support and feedback over the past few months, as we have been responding to the changes in Government advice. This has included putting in place, and developing, home learning programmes and making adjustments, based on risk assessment, to our on-site operations. We provided a full-time on-site programme for students who are the children of key workers and other students who were prioritised for support. Also, consistent with Government expectations, over the last few weeks of the summer term, our face-to-face provision expanded to include a rota of lessons for students in years 10 and 12.

During these unprecedented challenges, we have worked hard to communicate clearly and regularly with you and to do our best to provide extra support where it has been needed. We recognise that many families will be facing severe challenges – socially and financially – during this time and will continue to do all that we can to support families in need.

For some of our students, there has been an additional sources of stress - caused by the examinations fiasco. At Chase Terrace, teaching and learning is improving strongly and the so-called algorithm that was initially applied to generate grades resulted in some very unfair outcomes for some of our students and for some of our courses - outcomes that bore no sensible relationship to the information that we had provided to the exam boards. Thankfully, albeit clumsily and rather too late, the Government reversed its decision (for A Level students, after the grades had already been awarded) and Centre Assessment Grades were then used wherever they were greater than the algorithm-generated grades. However, for BTEC courses, students have had an even more prolonged period of waiting for finalised results, as the nature of the information submitted by schools to exam boards was different for these vocational courses, so it was less straightforward to use Centre Assessed Grades. As I write, some students still do not have their full set of results – we have been told that we will receive all of these vocational grades by the end of this week and we are, of course, sending them on to students as soon as they arrive.

It is difficult to summarise and report on exam results this year, as they have been arrived at in a different way than in previous years. You will, no doubt, have heard that the use of Centre Assessment Grades has resulted in some national 'grade inflation', with a higher than usual number of top grades. Nevertheless, even taking the potential for this into account, both our A Level and GCSE results this year indicate a strongly improving profile.

At GCSE, the proportion of entries that were awarded grade 5 (strong pass) or above increased from 46% to 59%, including very significant uplifts in English Language (up from 40% to 56%), Maths (43% to 60%) and Science (49% to 62%). Having run two mock

exam series during Year 11, and taking into account the relative accuracy of predicted grades in previous years, we are very pleased with this year's results profile. This year, eight students (four boys and four girls) achieved five or more grades 9/8.

A level results were also very strong, with an overall increase in the average grade per entry for C- to B-. Amongst this group of high achievers was Jack Hollingworth, who is now set to study Law at Cambridge, having achieved three A* grades.

There is clearly a challenge for the students returning to school, as (for most students) online learning is an imperfect substitute for classroom teaching. We have, of course, been adjusting our programmes of study to respond to the changing circumstances. Pressure is still being applied (by teachers' professional associations) to the Government to make significant changes to the content coverage expected and the style of examinations, in order to ease the pressure that students in years 11 and 13 will now face. Ofqual, the regulatory body that oversees such decisions, have so far announced that there will be changes in the way that content is assessed in GCSE English Literature, History and Geography (with some choice of topics to ease workload pressure). Changes are also planned for: GCSE French and German (with more flexibility over the way that the oral component is assessed); GCSE Food (changes to the NEA coursework element); and both GCSE and A Level Geography (with regard to the fieldwork requirement). More detail is available from the Ofqual website but, if the last few weeks are anything to go by, this may be subject to change.

Arrangements for starting back at school are as follows: Year 7 attend from Wednesday 2 Sep., with a full induction programme over the first few days; Year 12 are in on Wednesday morning and then in for lessons from Thursday 3 Sep.; and all other year groups are invited in for a one hour session on either Thursday or Friday, before starting lessons from Monday 7 Sep. Please check the details on the school website. The one hour sessions have been organised to help students to understand how the new arrangements will work – with the range of safety measures that have been put in place. Please also take the time to view the 'September 2020 Student Video' with your son(s)/daughter(s), (using the link from the home page).

Further detail about the changes we have made for the full-time return are detailed in the Social Distancing and Infection Policy and the COVID-19 Risk Assessment (in the Coronavirus Updates section). These are updated regularly to keep pace with national and local changes. On a practical level, a few issues to highlight are as follows:

- Students may not wear a face mask during lessons. Those using school (or public) transport must use them for the journey. Where a student wishes to use a face mask on the school site (other than in lessons), e.g. at break and lunch time, this will be permitted. Face masks must be worn responsibly.
- On the days when students have PE, they should attend in their PE kits to avoid the need to use the changing rooms – black/navy tracksuit bottoms can be worn.
- For food purchases, please try to ensure that there is sufficient money in your son's/daughter's account, using Parent Pay, in order to avoid the need to use the biometric system.

- As a parent/carer, other than in an emergency, please telephone in to make an appointment, rather than turning up at Reception without an appointment. This is a control measure, as detailed in the risk assessment.

Finally, please be assured that we take very seriously the health and wellbeing of all members of our community and we have worked very hard to make the school a safe place to be. As a staff team, we very much are looking forward to welcoming all of our students back – helping them to achieve strongly, develop as mature and responsible young people and open up a range of ambitious opportunities for their futures.

Best wishes:

Stuart Jones
Executive Headteacher