

17th January 2021

Dear parents and carers,

I hope you are all keeping well, staying safe during the lockdown, and enjoying the learning that our teachers are delivering to all students across the school. The live lessons are working very, very well due to the hard work of our teaching staff and the support from you – thank you!

Just to remind you that more details and guidance on our live lessons can be found on our website <https://www.jcsc.co.uk/home-learning/> along with the email address for our ICT support team who are ready to help you with any problems.

If ICT access is an issue, please let us know – we would love to help.

Again, I'll try and be brief, but here are the latest updates from another week in education:

It has now been officially confirmed that:

- **Vocational exams scheduled for February [Y11 BTEC ICT] and in the summer will not go ahead.** Instead, grades will be awarded using a similar method to that which will be decided for A-level and GCSE courses.

There were two consultation papers published late on Friday which outline a proposal for the way exam boards will be asked to award GCSE, A-level and vocational grades this summer, in the light of the exam cancellations. Some of you will be aware that there were reports in the press earlier this week that suggested the cancelled exams may be replaced by...some different exams. The consultation paper doesn't quite suggest that will be the case, and it does seem to reflect the Education Secretary's initial statement that it should be teacher judgement that prevails.

[The full consultation paper is available to read on the Ofqual website](#), along with a similar paper around the [vocational qualifications such as BTEC and Cambridge Technicals](#), and details of how to make your views known on the [response website](#).

Here is a very brief summary taken from the Times Educational Supplement:

What will happen when?

- Teachers will assess students in May and the start of June, and then submit grades mid-June. Exam boards would then perform quality assurance and students will receive their results in mid July. Students will be allowed to appeal these grades, and in the first case, the appeals will be heard by the school.
- Coursework should still be completed, and could inform the teacher-assessed grade (TAG).

What will these grades be comparable to?

- The grades, like the 2020 CAGs, will be the same as other years. The consultation document proposes that teachers won't be asked to predict what students might have achieved if the pandemic had not happened, and instead will be basing their assessments on the "standard at which their students are performing".

What will the assessments look like?

- The consultation proposes that the TAGs are evidence based, and this evidence needs to be recorded. Exam boards will be supporting teachers with guidance and training, including supplying exam papers that teachers can use, and offering moderation sampling.

- The papers provided by the exam boards will be similar in style and format to those in normal exam papers, and provide a range to allow teachers to choose topics that their students have covered.
- Teachers will also be able to use formal tests and mock exam results, and any completed coursework required for their subject. Work completed closer to the end of the academic year will be given more weighting.

What will the consultation be asking?

- The consultation will invite views on whether these papers should be compulsory or optional, and whether the teachers should be able to choose which topics their students can answer. It will also ask if teachers should be required to assess a certain percentage of the overall subject content for each subject, and if the marking should be carried out by teachers.

Whatever the outcome of this consultation, the students in years 11, 12 and 13 should remember the key message as it is the only thing that we know for sure, and the only thing that matters. That message is **don't worry and keep working to the very best of your ability**. If you do that, we will make sure you achieve the grades you deserve in the summer.

Another high-profile story in the press this week is around the provision of lunches for those children who are learning at home whilst entitled to a free school meal. In recent weeks we have successfully used the Northumberland HUGGG system for distributing vouchers to those families, and have now decided to continue doing so for the duration of the national lockdown. Initially we had looked into providing food parcels but, after careful consideration, we accept the flexibility of providing vouchers would be more appropriate for many families.

I would like to thank our wonderful catering manager Mrs Embleton for her hard work and passion in putting together the parcels we had planned to deliver, and to the Amble branch of Morrisons who have been unbelievably helpful and understanding.

We started our routine coronavirus testing in school last week with all members of staff and students at the Acklington Road site being successfully tested. Parents and carers of students in year 7 and above - we will send you more details about the programme and asking for you to consent to your child's involvement once we have a timeline for the full reopening of our school.

Please do keep in touch with us, and make sure you check our Facebook page – it's updated regularly with all the essential information.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the weekend!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Neil Rodgers'.

Neil Rodgers
Executive Headteacher