



8 January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Thank you for your continued support this week with reference to remote learning and supporting your child through this process; they may not tell you personally, but what you do matters! I cannot stress how disappointing it is not to be seeing Year 11 in school this week, and I understand the constant changes to the message with regard to how final GCSE grades are to be calculated over recent months have been both confusing and stressful for all concerned.

One element of clarity we now have is that GCSEs exams will not be going ahead. The exams are likely to be replaced by a series of assessments; we do not know the exact form these assessments will take, but there is certainty that teacher assessments will play a very important part.

What is vital is that students do not think their grades are somehow 'set' now. There is no suggestion whatsoever that this is the case. As we continue to complete all GCSE courses with remote learning, teachers will continue to gather evidence, including using previous assessments, classwork (old and new), future assessments and Mock grades, to come up with a fair judgement. We are planning to continue with formal assessments and are currently looking at how we can do this remotely. We are also planning assessments for when students return to school, in order to build the evidence available to us to support our final judgements.

This coming Wednesday Year 11 students will be receiving their Mock results. If a student has under-performed in any of their subjects, these grades are not intended to be their final grades – there is plenty of opportunity for these to be improved. Key to any of this is sustained engagement with remote learning lessons and tutoring (if a student is receiving this). This includes completing work to the highest standard and submitting it on time. They should be aiming for the best grades possible in all their subjects. We are committed to delivering the full courses for all subjects to all students to ensure they receive the knowledge they require for their qualifications and to use these for the next steps in their lives, whether this be university, apprenticeship or work.

It is key for all students to grasp the opportunities that remote learning offers and ensure they are fully engaged with their lessons. By doing so, they have every chance of getting the best final grades they can. The message I have been, and will continue to be promoting, over the next few months to all students is to keep up the good work, remain positive, work hard and they will get the positive results they deserve.

This Wednesday between 5.30–6.30pm I will be offering a ‘drop in’ session on MS Teams for any parents or students to ask any questions or voice any concerns about remote learning, mock results or next steps. I will send further information about the meeting next week.

For your information, the statement released by Ofqual on Wednesday 6 January reads:

‘We know that this is a difficult time for students, their parents and carers, teachers and trainers. Our message to students is this: please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education. That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going in to their school, college or training provider. This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications. It’s important that teachers and students can focus on the knowledge and skills needed to equip students to progress to the next stage, whatever form that might take – whether to college, an apprenticeship, university or employment.

The way ahead is not straightforward: exams and standardised assessments are the fairest way of determining what a student knows and can do. We need to consider a wide range of qualifications – from A levels and GCSEs to many different vocational and technical qualifications – and the solution won’t be the same for all. Following the government’s announcement on Monday evening, we also need to consider how alternative arrangements will work for different students, including those who are independent learners. We are discussing alternative arrangements with the Department for Education. We know that many are seeking clarity as soon as possible. We will provide further updates as soon as we can.

The government has announced that schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams due to take place in January where it is right to do so. This may be particularly important for vocational and technical qualifications which require a ‘licence to practise’, which can only be fulfilled through practical assessment.’

Simon Lebus, Interim Chief Regulator, Ofqual

We will of course remain in close communication with parents and students as we are provided with more information. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further clarification.

Yours sincerely



Mark Taylor

ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

DIRECTOR OF ATTAINMENT, LEARNING AND PROGRESS FOR YEARS 10 & 11

MATaylor@plymstockschool.org.uk

