



# SIR THOMAS BOTELER

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

THROUGH GOD, WE CARE

GRAMMAR SCHOOL ROAD  
LATCHFORD, WARRINGTON  
WA4 1JL

01925 636414  
01925 417468  
INFO@BOTELER.ORG.UK  
WWW.BOTELER.ORG.UK  
/THOMASBOTELER



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Chester

February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you are all well and keeping safe. I just wanted to reassure you about a few things that might be worrying you.

Before the announcement of the January school closures, Year 11 were due to be sitting their second round of mock exams starting on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March. Due to these closures this set of mock exams of course will not be taking place at this time. Our main priority at the moment is to get the Year 11 settled back into normal school life and routines; calming any anxiety they may have and quickly identifying where the gaps are that we need to support with.

You will have seen the news regarding all the announcements around exams. Some helpful pointers can be found at the end of this article.

Obviously our evidence base for our Year 11 students is really important. We have all their books in school as we kept them during lockdown. However, it is really important that when your child returns to school that they bring their lockdown subject book in with them.

It is important that we check the Year 11s' knowledge and understanding and therefore we will be holding a second set of mock exams which will take place later in the school year to allow more teaching and exam preparation. These mock exams are an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they can do and know and what they have been learning throughout their GCSE courses. Students will be examined on the information they have been taught and there will not be a focus on the information that they may have missed, as no student should be at a disadvantage.

I will write to you again shortly with the exact dates and timetable for these mock exams as we need to work out what date is best for the students and give them the best chances. These mock exams are likely to be in late April or early May. I will also update you with further information regarding teacher assessed grades and how GCSE grades will be awarded as guidance is all starting to come through now. What we do know is that we need to submit the student grades by the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and the results day will now be the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Just to reiterate the mock exams will not test and assess the full course but rather specific areas based on what students have been taught or where teachers have decided students have not had the opportunity to demonstrate what they know or can do.



PART OF THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST | SERVE | CHALLENGE | EMPOWER

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL, BROOMFIELDS ROAD, WARRINGTON, WA4 3AE • COMPANY#: 10689247 • VAT#: 296154966



A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY SERVING THE DIOCESES OF CHESTER AND LIVERPOOL • HIGH EXPECTATIONS | HIGH ASPIRATIONS | HIGH STANDARDS | YOU WILL SUCCEED

I would like to emphasise that whilst the mock exams are an important opportunity for us to assess students knowledge and skills, they are not the only evidence we will use to award GCSE grades. Coursework and other assessment material evidence will also be considered.

Please don't worry as we will do absolutely everything we can to support all our Year 11 students at this time. I know it has been difficult and we are always here for them and to support with any anxieties or worries. We are very proud of their resilience and how they have engaged in their online learning on the whole. We are really looking forward to welcoming our Year 11 back to school from the 8<sup>th</sup> March and I know that the comprehensive details around this are being sent out about this from Mrs Scott-Herron. However, we felt that the Year 11 deserved this personal correspondence because this information is really important.

Please do contact me if you have any questions around assessment or exams:

[jkoltan@boteler.org.uk](mailto:jkoltan@boteler.org.uk)

If you have any other wider school opening questions then please contact Mrs Scott-Herron:

[bscott-herron@boteler.org.k](mailto:bscott-herron@boteler.org.k)

Please can I take this opportunity to thank you for all your continued support. Please take care and continue to stay safe.

Yours faithfully

Mr J Koltan  
**Senior Assistant Headteacher**

### **Some helpful information**

The government has confirmed some of its plans for replacing GCSE, A-level and vocational exams this summer, with teacher assessments due to be used to give pupils their grades. However, the full response to last month's consultation is not expected to be published until later today. Education secretary Gavin Williamson is also due to brief MPs this afternoon. Here's what we know so far...

#### **1. Teacher assessment grades, with optional 'questions' from exam boards**

The government has confirmed it is to press ahead with its plan to use teacher assessment to issue grades this year, and has stressed that unlike last year, there will be "no algorithm". Ministers have also promised that pupils will only be assessed on "what they have been taught", in recognition of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on learning.

Exam boards will provide detailed guidance on how to make grade judgments by the end of the spring term, and will also publish "optional" assessment materials by Easter. The government said teachers could use a "range of evidence", including mock exam results, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, "such as essays or in-class" tests to arrive at their judgments.

Teachers will then have up until June 18 to submit their students' grades, to allow "as much teaching time as possible" before assessments are made.



# SIR THOMAS BOTELER

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

THROUGH GOD, WE CARE

GRAMMAR SCHOOL ROAD  
LATCHFORD, WARRINGTON  
WA4 1JL

01925 636414

01925 417468

INFO@BOTELER.ORG.UK

WWW.BOTELER.ORG.UK

/THOMASBOTELER



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Chester

## 2. 'Flexible' assessment approach

Teachers will have flexibility on whether and how they use optional questions set by exam boards, some of which will be based on past papers and others that will be previously unseen.

Questions will be released for all subjects, likely by topic area, and they do not have to be sat in exam conditions.

The government will also recommend that if assessments are used, whole classes sit the same ones so teachers can compare between individuals.

In the results to the consultation, only 26 per cent of students agreed that exam board papers should be provided. That is compared to 51 per cent of parents and carers, 69 per cent of teachers and 72 per cent of senior leaders.

## 3. Results in August, not July

The government's [consultation](#), held last month, suggested results would "most likely" be issued in early July after the quality assurance process.

However, this has been pushed back by a month, with A-levels results due on August 10 and GCSEs on August 12. Quality assurance will still take place before the end of term. The DfE said this approach offers "additional time for appeals to be completed".

## 4. Another autumn exam series

For those students who want a further chance to improve on their teacher assessment grades, the government is expected to announce that a full autumn exam series will be held for the second year in a row.

Last year, almost [60 per cent of students](#) who took an autumn exam in GCSE subjects other than English and maths improved on their grades issued in the summer. The top results at A-level dropped compared to the summer's centre assessed grades.

## 5. Quality assurance could trigger exam board 'visits'

The grading process will be subject to three stages of external quality assurance. First, schools will have to send exam boards their internal quality assurance processes, which will be checked.



PART OF THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST | SERVE | CHALLENGE | EMPOWER

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL, BROOMFIELDS ROAD, WARRINGTON, WA4 3AE • COMPANY#: 10689247 • VAT#: 296154966



The boards will then conduct sample, random checks of evidence over June and July across a range of different schools.

Risk-based checks, based on criteria such as changes to entry patterns or new schools, will also then take place.

For example, if results are lower or higher than expected, it could trigger a visit from the exam board, though this could take place virtually.

## **6. Appeals will go to schools first**

Despite concerns from unions, the government has confirmed its plan set out in the [consultation](#) which will allow students who believe their teacher had made an error in their grades to appeal to their school in the first instance.

However, there has been a change to the grounds for escalating an appeal to exam boards and to what schools must consider when dealing with initial appeals.

The consultation proposed that appeals could be submitted to exam boards on the basis that a school had not acted "in line with the exam board's procedural requirements" But the government said this "did not sufficiently take into account the workload it would place on teachers, as well as the importance for students of having their appeal heard by a third party".

Under the revised plan, schools will only have to check for errors and whether their own processes were followed in the first instance.

Then, if pupils want to take it further, exam boards will review both the school's processes and the evidence used to determine a students' grade to confirm whether the grade was a "reasonable exercise of academic judgement".

Where the student disagrees with the final result issued by the exam board after the appeal, and believes the process has not been followed correctly, an application can be made to Ofqual's Exams Procedures Review Service.

There's no threshold for students to apply, but the grade can go up or down as in normal appeals.

DfE also expects that appeals from students with a university place will be prioritised by exam boards, which they said is similar to arrangements in previous years.

## **7. DfE looking at appeals funding**

The DfE has students will not have to pay for appeals, and at this stage they do not believe schools will have to pay either.

But the department is working through the exact details on how the process will be funded. The consultation said exam boards would decide whether to charge a separate fee for appeals made to them.

## **8. Students won't know grades before submission**

As set out in the consultation, teachers will not be able to tell students' their final grade before results days.



# SIR THOMAS BOTELER

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

THROUGH GOD, WE CARE

GRAMMAR SCHOOL ROAD  
LATCHFORD, WARRINGTON  
WA4 1JL

01925 636414

01925 417468

INFO@BOTELER.ORG.UK

WWW.BOTELER.ORG.UK

/THOMASBOTELER



Diocese of Liverpool

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Chester

Exam board OCR had [suggested in its response to the consultation that rules](#) forbidding schools from telling pupils their grades should be dropped this year to prevent "sudden surprises" and reduce appeals.

But the government has said that although teachers should have a dialogue with students about the evidence that will inform their grade, they can't tell them the grade itself.

### 9. List of centres for private candidates

Private candidates, such as those not on roll at a school, will be assessed in the same way as other pupils this year, with schools due to be provided with "clear guidance" on evidence they can use to assess them.

A list of available centres will be published "shortly" and the DfE has said it will work with the sector to make sure there are "sufficient centres" available at a "similar cost" to a normal year.

### 10. Plans confirmed for BTECs

Plans for vocational and technical qualifications will depend on the type of qualification. For VTQs and other general qualifications that are most like GCSEs and A-levels, such as many BTECs and Cambridge Nationals/Technical, exams will not go ahead.

Instead, teacher assessed grades will be used, based on a similar range of evidence as academic qualifications.



PART OF THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST | SERVE | CHALLENGE | EMPOWER

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O BRIDGEWATER HIGH SCHOOL, BROOMFIELDS ROAD, WARRINGTON, WA4 3AE • COMPANY#: 10689247 • VAT#: 296154966



A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY SERVING THE DIOCESES OF CHESTER AND LIVERPOOL • HIGH EXPECTATIONS | HIGH ASPIRATIONS | HIGH STANDARDS | YOU WILL SUCCEED