

## 8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021

**This weekly bulletin for parents and carers shares the practices that are shaping our successful journey as a school. Each week will see a different focus covering aspects such as teaching & learning, curriculum, assessment, pastoral care, attendance, careers, well-being, personal development and much more.**

### **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GCSE EXAMS LAST YEAR?**

After the announcement of school closures in the first lockdown, schools were asked to submit grades to exam boards for what they expected their students would have achieved under normal circumstances. This grade was called a Centre Assessed Grade (CAG). The grades submitted were then standardised by the exam board based on a student's prior score achieved in their SATs which were taken at primary school and the schools results in that subject over the last two years.

The calculation was carried out by an algorithm which became very heavily criticised by the media as many students would have been disadvantaged. The media referred to this algorithm as 'mutant' as it was so out of control. The calculation took no account of the individual efforts and hard work of a student and took no account of the rapid improvements we have made as a school wiping out the hard work that has taken place.

The government performed a last-minute U-turn and announced just days before the GCSE results were published that the computer-based algorithm would be scrapped and that students would be awarded the grades the school had submitted to the exam boards in the first place.

### **HOW WILL GCSE GRADES BE AWARDED THIS YEAR?**

The government announced in January that exams will be cancelled again this year and have now confirmed some of its plans for replacing GCSE and vocational exams with teacher assessments being used to award grades to students. Government ministers have ruled out the use of any computer-based algorithm this year. Ministers have also promised that that students will only be assessed on 'what they have been taught', in recognition of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on learning. Teachers will have until June 18<sup>th</sup> to submit students grades to allow "as much teaching time as possible" before assessments are made.

## **WHAT WILL BE USED TO INFORM THE TEACHER ASSESSED GRADE?**

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

## **WHEN WILL RESULTS BE PUBLISHED?**

The government's consultation suggested results would 'most likely' be issued in early July after the quality assurance process. However, this has been pushed back a month, with GCSE results published on **August 12<sup>th</sup>**.

## **WILL THE GRADES AWARDED BE QUALITY ASSURED?**

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 for checking. For us, we will work with subject experts who are lead practitioners within TCAT. Exam board will then conduct 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 take place.

## **WILL STUDENTS BE TOLD THEIR GRADE BEFORE SUBMISSION TO THE EXAM BOARDS?**

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

## **IMPORTANT DATES:**

**KS3 WA2 ASSESSMENTS START MONDAY 22<sup>ND</sup>**

**MARCH – THURSDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL**