



February 2021

INFORMATION FOR YEAR 11

Dear Parents/Carers,

As we approach the end of what has been a testing few weeks for us all, I would like to pay tribute to the excellent effort and application that pupils in Year 11 have shown to their studies. We recognise that the current period is full of uncertainty with regards to the future, yet collectively, our most senior pupils have responded magnificently.

Exam Grades

I was hoping that by now, I would have been able to update you with clear details on how exam grades are going to be awarded in the summer. Sadly, the results of the Ofqual consultation, which opened in January, will not be made public until at least Monday 22 February. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that grades will be awarded through a combination of different factors including; previous pieces of work, answers to past exam questions, mock exam grades (where applicable), coursework and assignment marks to name but a few.

There has been some suggestion that pupils may be given the opportunity to sit 'mini' exams, with staff able to choose which topics are tested, based on which elements of a course have been covered. However, we all await to hear the final arrangements, and when we know more, we will communicate this to you. It is vitally important, however, that whatever system is used to determine your child's final grades, that the system is fair to all, and a true reflection of their ability and hard work they have put into their studies. This is exactly the point I made when I recently met local MP Catherine Fletcher.

Now, more than ever, the effort and application of every child in Year 11 is crucial in determining future success. The level of engagement from Year 11 has been exceptional, and teachers are full of praise for the way in which classes have adapted to the circumstances and shown the grit, determination and perseverance needed to succeed. Well done to each and every pupil – we know it's hard going, but keep it up!

Progress Report

This week we have issued to every Year 11 pupil their latest progress report. This includes a predicted end of Key Stage 4 grade. This is a guide to parents and children as to the likely grade they will receive if the current work rate is maintained. These are not yet the final grades which we will submit. It is important to stress that every pupil still has the ability to affect their final grade because we are not expecting to have to submit final grades until at least May, and possibly June. Pupils who are completing the work which is being set and following the instructions of their teachers, are giving themselves every opportunity to meet or exceed their target grades. Equally, by continuing to build a portfolio of work, pupils are giving their teachers greater opportunity to justify whichever grade they decide to award in the summer.

These reports were emailed to all pupils via their school email address. If any parent has struggled to access their child's report, please contact school.

After Half-Term

There will be no lessons at all during half-term. When online lessons do return on Monday 22 February, I would ask that all Year 11 pupils continue to attend form time in the morning. This is a way of maintaining a routine, hearing important messages, and also keeping in touch with their form family. It is also extremely important that pupils upload their work once it is completed, so that teachers can check on the progress being made and offer appropriate feedback.

Can I also ask that if your child is ill, that you continue to inform school so that the pastoral team can let staff know not to expect them in their lesson that day.

At the moment, we will continue to remain open for only Key Worker / Vulnerable pupils after half-term. The possibility of a return to school on Monday 8 March has been suggested by the Prime Minister. However, this date is by no means set in stone and we await further details. It would make sense that whenever schools do re-open, that Year 11 are the first pupils to return to enable them to complete their studies face-to-face.

Unfortunately, it is probably the case that the traditional end-of-year events which mark the end of a pupil's time at secondary school, will be markedly different this year. The current situation would suggest it is highly unlikely large gatherings, such as a prom, will be able to go ahead. We hope that this isn't the case, but we are looking at a variety of alternatives on how to mark this milestone.

Choices for Post-16

Unfortunately, we have been unable to run our traditional Career's Fair, or college interview process this year. However, we have been asked to remind you that all pupils have guaranteed places at their post-16 training provider of choice. This includes all the main colleges, including Newman College, Runshaw College, Preston's College, Blackburn College and Myerscough College. As ever, each course will come with its own entry requirements, and each individual college will be able to advise further as to what these may be for each particular course of study. From April, we will welcome Sarah Womersley onto our staff. Sarah is an experienced Career's Advisor and hopefully will be able to work with some of our Year 11 pupils before the summer. In the meantime, if you have any Post-16 queries, do please get in touch with school and we will do our best to signpost you to the appropriate provider.

These remain extraordinary times. May I take the opportunity to thank those parents who have been in touch praising the efforts of the St Mary's team. Your messages are very much appreciated, and it is heartening to know that you understand the difficultly of the situation. All the staff here are working incredibly hard for your child and I could not ask any more of them.

As we approach the half-term it is important that we all have a chance to rest and recharge our batteries. With the days lengthening and the weather slowly improving, it is a good opportunity for your child to get away from their studies, hopefully their screens as well, and enjoy some exercise and fresh air!

Let us remain positive that we will not remain in this situation for ever, and that sooner rather than later, with God's Blessing we will return to a sense of normality for us all.

Yours sincerely,



Mr P Thompson

Headteacher