

November 2020

Year 11 Parents

Dear Parents/Carers,

First of all I would like to pass on my congratulations to all Year 11 pupils on the way they have conducted themselves throughout the last 8 months, but particularly since the wider reopening of schools in September. They have coped incredibly well with new routines, set an example to younger pupils, taken on prefect roles exceptionally well and got back in to lesson routines swiftly and sensibly. Staff in school have been really impressed with their attitude throughout.

Unfortunately, Year 11 has been the year group hardest hit by positive tests this term and therefore more Year 11 pupils have had to self-isolate than any other. This is distressing for many of them and frustrating for all of us. As a parent of a Year 11 child myself (who has both tested positive and missed school twice now in isolation), I fully appreciate the pressures they are feeling. The lack of definitive guidance from the Department of Education is only compounding this, and whilst there is much campaigning behind the scenes from teachers and school leaders across the country for some clarity on this, as yet we have nothing firm. Rest assured that as soon as any further information arrives in school we will pass it on to you all.

In the meantime, therefore, we are working on the assumption that exams will run as planned in June 2021. The start date is slightly delayed, but the schedule of exams is intended to begin in the week before May half term. We are also running mocks as usual this December and intend to add in an additional mock season in the spring term (most likely to be the end of February). This is particularly for the benefit of those Year 11s who will miss some of the Autumn term exams due to isolation (although they will be able to catch up on any missed mocks when they return, we acknowledge this is not the same experience) and gives all Year 11s another chance to demonstrate what they can achieve. Clearly if guidance changes and external exams begin earlier our internal plans will be modified. I would like to reiterate that mocks would only form one part of any evidence used by school staff, if centre assessed grades are needed again this coming summer. Pupils improve grades between mocks and final exams so this is built in to estimated grades and predictions by staff. Therefore, whilst important, mocks are not the only important part of teacher assessments.

All resources for lessons and homework should now be routinely on Google Classroom, and pupils self-isolating should use this forum for keeping on top of work and communicating with their teachers. In addition any additional revision resources will also be shared this way. There will be revision skills resources shared on Google classroom by Form teachers to look out for too.

With regards to revision, a timetable of revision classes is taking place at lunchtime and after school, this is continuing to run, even in lockdown. In addition, any Year 11 pupils wishing to stay in school to complete homework can do so each day until 4:30pm in the school dining room. Finally, two weeks ago we launched Saturday morning revision, D6, and this is now open to all Year 11 pupils. Teaching staff from Maths, English and Science are on hand each week, along with one other subject (this varies week by week) to support revision. Breakfast is provided and the morning runs from 9:00 until 12:30 each week. Places need to be booked in advance through Mr Carassale, so we have sufficient

staff (and toast!). Any pupils attending revision classes will be given 'prom credits,' which will be exchanged for an invite to Prom later in the year. I have already promised Year 11 that I will do everything in my power to ensure Prom takes place, and if venues are not able to take large group bookings we will hold Prom in the sixth form building. This will hopefully give them all something to look forward to.

It is more important than ever to focus on wellbeing and mindfulness. During the recent drop-down day, strategies were shared with all Year 11 pupils, to support relaxation, signposting for support when needed, mental health awareness and resilience. The 'Wellbeing Hub' is open for pupils to get more information in school, further guidance is also on the website, and I would encourage pupils to speak to a member of staff if they are struggling, or notice a friend is. In the same way if you are concerned about your child please get in touch and we will put support in place.

I sincerely hope we see a drop in cases locally following this period of lockdown and fewer lessons disrupted for Year 11. Whatever happens, please try to reassure your children that we will do everything we can to support them at school, and will be fighting hard to ensure they get the grades they deserve this coming summer. Rest assured places at sixth form in 2021 will be offered on the basis of potential, if pupils do end up disappointed with grades due to periods of isolation or other extenuating circumstances.

As ever, please contact me in school if you have concerns or anything in this letter needs further clarification, and thank you as always for your support.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Griffiths', written in a cursive style.

Jo Griffiths
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