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Dear Parents / Carers,

Sixth Form Update: Summer Exams Cancellation, Pre- Public Examinations (PPE) & Remote Learning provision

I hope you are well. Given that Ofqual, the Examinations Regulator, have indicated they are due to launch a consultation process, it is an appropriate time to write to you following the Government's announcement on Monday 4th January that A' Level, AS Level and vocational, examinations are cancelled this summer. We try not to react immediately to sudden announcements to policies by the DfE, preferring to respond appropriately when more information is available, so apologies for not having been in touch sooner. This announcement is of huge significance to our students, parents/carers and school staff. We had assumed, and hoped, that a plan for awarding grades would have been published at the same time as the announcement to give everyone clarity. Unfortunately, we are not in a position, almost two weeks after the announcement, to give you any specific information as to how final student grades will be determined.

Simon Lebus, Ofqual's Interim Chief Regulator, responded to the Prime Minister's original announcement by saying: *'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 DfE and Ofqual are due to launch a two-week consultation imminently but I wanted to write to you today. As soon as any information is published regarding this consultation, I will let you know how to participate should this be possible; I will also update you with any decisions that are made as soon as they become clear.

Last year when the exams were cancelled all students received the grades they needed to progress to the next stage of their lives. We are confident that whatever process Ofqual puts in place, we will ensure that decisions regarding student grades will be robust, fair and objective. Last year, students and parents/carers were not permitted to contact staff about the awarding of grades, in fact doing so was considered to be malpractice; at this stage we have no more information than you do regarding the awarding of grades.

Year 13 Pre-Public Examinations (PPEs)

We were grateful to have completed the Year 13 PPEs before Christmas as part of the likely evidence base for use when determining final student grades. The majority of students completed the exams to the best of their ability and staff are aware of those students for whom this was not the case due to personal circumstances or who were self-isolating prior to or during the PPEs. For this reason, the PPEs are a very useful guide when considering final grades but will not be the sole evidence in any process decided by Ofqual. In many subjects the grade is made up from specific aspects of the syllabus, not the whole course, and therefore cannot be the only way grades are determined.

The message for the students is the same as that currently from Ofqual; there are still a number of very valuable months of learning and assessment to come and all students should give their best during this period. There are two final subjects to complete their PPE and they will take place as follows:

Fine Art – 26th and 28th January 2021

Students will create a piece of work that can conclude some aspects of their current development, in the form of a 10-hour piece of work. They will be off timetable for two days on 26th January and 28th January to work on their piece(s). Photographic updates of the work in progress will be required over the course of the two days. We will assess and grade the final piece submitted at the end of the 28th and we will be asking students to photograph corresponding preparatory work as well.

Photography – 25th and 27th January 2021

Students will create a piece of work that can conclude some aspects of their Personal Investigation, in the form of a 10-hour piece of work. They will be off timetable for two days on 25th January and 27th January to work on their piece(s). Photographic updates of the work in progress will be required over the course of the two days, and staff will be online to offer technical support where possible. We will assess and grade the final piece submitted at the end of the 27th and we will be asking students to upload corresponding digital sketchbook(s) preparatory work as well. (Please note although there may be some printing / presentation of work required at a later date, the submission for final pieces for the purpose of the PPE will be of a digital format).

Both Art and Photography colleagues are aware of the restrictions and limitations that working from home causes but are asking that students show some initiative and adaptability in realising their ideas; there may be some technical compromises that need to be made. Students should contact staff for a one-to-one tutorial ahead of the examination in order to help iron out any potential difficulties.

Year 12 Pre-Public Examinations (PPEs)

The Year 12 PPEs were due to take place in school w/c Monday 18th January 2021 but they cannot obviously go ahead as originally planned. Instead, the PPEs will now take place during online lessons over the course of this half term organised individually by subject colleagues. There is no overall examination timetable, with colleagues facilitating this in the most convenient way for the students and themselves, and there is no Study Leave as the examinations are spread across the half term. The examinations will be completed by the students electronically and colleagues may be able to monitor students as they complete the exam depending upon the platform used to facilitate the examination. Colleagues will liaise with students with specific SEND requirements to ensure the most appropriate way forward in the circumstances.

Remote Learning provision

Thank you to the high number of Sixth Form students that are engaging with their on-line lessons. As per my recent communication to all parents/carers, a reminder of our expectations of Sixth Form students during this current lockdown:

- Students should be ready to register at **8.50 a.m.** with their Tutor Via teams, **every morning**, even if they do not have a lesson or a Timetable study Period 1
- Students should follow their timetable and access **all** on-line lessons, as arranged by their subject teachers
- Students should use their non-contact periods appropriately, fully review subject notes and continue to revise. Subjects will be setting assessments and these marks will provide evidence for final grades in Year 13 and predicted grades in Year 12
- It was brought to our attention during the last lockdown that some students chose to not engage fully with the Teams lessons, by logging in so that they could be registered and then leaving the lesson. To ensure that this does not happen students are expected to answer questions throughout the lesson and if they are not able to access their

microphone for some reason, they must respond in the chat/message immediately, they should also, wherever possible keep their cameras turned on

One change to note from Monday is that lessons will have a 50-minute duration rather than one hour. We have taken on board feedback from students and staff requesting the opportunity for a small break and movement time during a sequence of lessons. Continuous online learning can be very challenging for students and their teachers and this change will provide an improvement to everyone's working practices.

Finally, it is important that students maintain a structure to their day; this will help promote good mental health and keep them motivated and engaged in their subjects. Please remember teachers are working hard to ensure that their education remains as undisrupted as possible, it is vital that they are doing the same.

I would like to congratulate all Sixth Form students on how they have adapted to lockdown and thank you once again for your support in guiding your son/daughter through their current situation. Your support in encouraging students to stay at home, as per the national guidelines, is particularly appreciated in helping to keep our community safe.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PH', written in a cursive style.

Phil Hanson
Headteacher