



5 January 2021

Dear Students, Parents and Carers

I am writing to you further to our Prime Minister's broadcast last night. Please feel free to navigate the aspects of this letter that apply to you according to the sub-headings and do not feel obliged to spend time reading the parts that do not.

Along with colleagues and communities around the country, we have spent a considerable amount of time preparing for the safe return of all students to school, including the introduction of lateral flow testing at the Government's behest. To say we feel disappointed due to the last-minute overall decisions and in particular the rather glib statement that GCSE exams will not take place as expected would be an understatement.

Having consistently told students, parents and teachers that exams would happen this year (and insisted all planning was made on that basis), even if the circumstances have now changed, it is, in my professional opinion, unacceptable to make such an announcement to potentially anxious and vulnerable teenagers without offering any detail as to what will take their place, other than the enigmatic "alternative arrangements".

However, whilst it is understandable that young people will have emotions that they need acknowledged and for which we are equipped to provide support and care, I also believe there is little benefit in exerting too much negative energy about what could have been but rather a strong collective focus on how we support them going forward.

Examination Year Groups

There will be grades awarded in the summer. Assessment has not been cancelled and there will be GCSE and A Level grades determined and awarded. These will be important. I would like to offer a few points to students to consider whilst we await more details:

1. **Hard work will be recognised.** Any new system is likely to be able to reflect effort put in now on any assessed work and assessment that is provided. Ultimately you must reach an agreed standard in each of your subjects to be able to show the knowledge, skills and understanding you have. How that is assessed may have changed but the fact you need to know and do these things has not. It is essential to



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School

keep working at knowing more, remembering more and applying it as you are directed by teachers.

2. **Your eventual results will be indistinguishable from exams** in how they facilitate your onward steps. You will still be able to progress to Sixth Form and University. The value of your qualifications is not altered, simply the way they are being assessed. Your ambitions for your future should not be altered and we will continue to support you every step of the way.
3. **A new system has time to be planned to be fair and balanced.** Grades will have to be awarded based on objective evidence. As was the case last year, we will consult with Ofqual and other professional organisations, as appropriate, to ensure that our voices are heard in the development of this system. We will keep students and parents updated as the situation becomes clearer.

Information about vocational (BTEC/NCFE) courses is due to follow later this week. Over the next week or so we will decide whether we feel it is beneficial to run mock exams as planned for Year 11 and 13 to review their current progress or whether we move to another method of evidence collection. Students should continue to review and revise their previous content as they normally would using the research-informed methods we have previously advised and as available on our website https://www.heathfieldcc.co.uk/?page_id=997924 and on Firefly.

Remote Learning

Online learning is not optional for any students - it is often said that '*life is not a rehearsal*' each day is your one and only opportunity at it. The effort you put into your studies now, the knowledge and the learning you gain is with you for life and will be important in the future.

All guidance on the systems and structures for online learning is available on our website under "Contingency Planning" on the Covid Information page. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if there is any concern or problem. We have been clear that completion will be monitored and if anyone is struggling to get work done we are here, on site, to help.

We will also look to reinstate our tutor time materials over the next term via email and Twitter to make sure our whole community can share in the cultural learning and find ways to keep our community ethos strong.

Key Stage 3 Assessments and Parents' Evenings

We are aware that some Year 7 assessments will have been disrupted towards the end of last term and are looking at mitigation or planning as appropriate. Progress Reports will be released to parents as normal. We are aiming to run parents' evenings as online events, as expected. Details on booking appointments will follow this term for Year 8 Parents Evening on 21 January and Year 7 Parents Evening on 4 February.

Year 8 Wider Curriculum Day (originally calendared for 14/1/21)

The Year 8 Wider Curriculum Day on Arts in Careers has been postponed. The company running the event will work with us to find another date later this year. The deadline for payment has also been extended and we will notify you as soon as a date has been agreed.

Key Worker/Vulnerable Students Provision

We continue to support our key worker and vulnerable provision with a suite of Covid-secure procedures in place on the school site to keep returning staff and students safe. We will review the arrangements for this based on numbers each fortnight or as appropriate. This is staffed by a combination of SLT, LSAs and other staff on a rota basis. They will be following exactly the same learning as those working from home.

- **Uniform:** we will move with immediate effect to non-uniform for key worker students as this will allow them to be warm on site and feel equivalent to other students working remotely.
- **Canteen:** for this week there will be a limited provision of food at break and lunch including hot food although due to stocks this will not follow the published menu. We will review this in line with any updated government guidance.
- **Transport:** we are reviewing daily the demand for transportation and are working with ESCC to ensure there will be provision for all those with a bus pass who want it.

If you feel you are eligible for a place in on-site provision but missed completing the form please contact us at office@heathfieldcc.co.uk.

Well-Being

We recognise the frustration that many young people and families will feel at this time. We share that emotion. It will be important for us to support each other at this time as we navigate the next few weeks or more. It will be only normal and natural for emotions to vary over the next few weeks. Please remind students that there is a wealth of information, support and useful strategies available on Firefly, please also remember the parent well-being information from last term:

<https://heathfieldcc.fireflycloud.net/parents-1>

If you are at all concerned about the well-being of your son/daughter please get in touch with your Pastoral Manager or Head of Year.

I will close for now by repeating my thoughts from my last letter. Whilst we may not have all the answers immediately at this stage, we will do what we always do and work towards the best solutions for our community. Much of what we are being asked to do is unusual, because we are living in very unusual times. However, it is achievable due to the combination of the talent of our staff, the commitment of students and parents and the continued hard work of our leadership team and support staff to make and implement decisions that work for us. Together we remain a formidable team. Please continue to be patient with us as we work through the details of what comes next.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher