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2 July 2020

Dear Parents

I hope that you and your families are well. The last few months have been particularly challenging for Year 11 students due to the initial uncertainty around their exams, the grading and ranking process of students within subjects in school, the unknown effect of national statistical standardisation on those submitted grades, what any resit opportunities may be available, as well as course navigating to the next stage and progression for everyone, beyond compulsory education. I am writing to update you on specific topics that are pertinent to Year 11 students and the coming months and weeks. There are events and dates to update you on, practical arrangements for results day and also some information on the Autumn exam series, amongst other things.

Sixth Form Bridging Lessons

We have been running bridging lesson for the students intending to join the Sixth Form next year for the last couple of months, these will end on Friday, 3 July. The engagement in these has been very high and the students are in many ways better placed than any other cohort, prior to them starting A Levels in September. There will be a gap that we will be conscious of in terms of the students not having had the slog and focus of intense revision for external exams, but content and learning wise, they are in a beneficial position. We have also written to the vast majority of students confirming their acceptance in the Sixth Form next academic year; if you haven't received a letter and your child is intending to come to Sixth Form, please do contact Mrs Swan at the school via email tswan@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk.

Looking to the Future Event

We have been asked by the Local Enterprise Partnership, Cumbria LEP, to make all students aware of an upcoming online event they have organised on behalf of local employers and the flyer for this accompanies this Newsletter. There is a local virtual careers event taking place on Tuesday, 7 July to support young people called "Looking Forward to Our Future", which is an online event hosted by some of our key local partners (Cumbria Careers Hub, Inspira, Hello Future and Cumbria Centre for Leadership Performance).

There have been lots of concerns raised by young people, many of whom are anxious about their future, worried about what opportunities there are going to be and asking for advice on how they can get ready for the future. This event has been designed to help manage some of those worries and concerns and to help students feel more confident about the future. There's support from a wide range of local employers, careers advisors and many more people who will be sharing insights, hints and tips that will inspire and support students! The event will run from 10.00am until 3.00pm and will cover a wide range of topics including:

- How to sell your best self in applications, CVs and interviews.
- What local employers really look for when they're looking to employ people.
- Coping with changes and keeping yourself positive.

Young people can register to attend or ask a question here: <https://learnliveuk.com/looking-forward-to-our-future/>. It's a great opportunity to be inspired, be prepared and get all those

questions answered! All videos are pre-recorded and the chats are moderated to ensure compliance with safeguarding requirements.

Continued Pastoral and IAG Support

I would take this opportunity to remind all parents that staff at the school are available to help with Information, Advice and Guidance, as well as wider pastoral support for all students. Mrs Meakin has met several students in the last week to help them find a pathway forward and I know that Mrs Lawson from Inspira is also in regular contact with some students. Mrs Mingotti continues to support every student she can remotely and if there is anything you need, help or assistance with, please do get in contact with her via cmingotti@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk

Year 11 GCSE Results

OFQUAL have been updating guidance and have now finished the main consultations around the awarding of the Summer exam grades. We thought it useful to provide an update and a reminder of some other details:

Centre Assessed Ranking and Grading

The staff of the school were asked to moderate internally and award centre assessed grades based on students work, with emphasis given to quantitative assessment available on students, alongside general work standards. Then within each grade students were ranked from most secure to least secure. This was completed before May half term, each subject spent long hours weighing up evidence and then deciding on final grades and ranking orders. Once these were processed they were signed off as accurate by the Head of Centre (myself).

National Standardisation of Grades

The centre assessed grades are now going through a National Standardisation process. This means that they will, in many cases, be moved upwards or downwards based on the principle that the national result set must stay the same compared to previous years, so that there is no grade inflation. This will be done by looking collectively at all the results submitted across the country in each subject, looking at the entry data of each schools' year group along with the individual schools' previous results. What is certain is that the centre assessed grades are not guaranteed to be the ones awarded to students in the Summer, as these will need to match the statistical model being used. The process being applied is not something we will be get to see or indeed be open to any challenge and is the reason we wrote to those applying for the Sixth Form guaranteeing their place (based on the grades we have internally awarded), no matter what the model throws out, which we simply cannot predict.

Results Day

Thursday, 20 August does seem a long way off, but I am sure it will arrive quicker than we all think. It is then that students will find out what grade they have been awarded after the national standardisation of the centre assessed grades has been completed. The rules and exact arrangements over how the day will run in school with regards to collecting results on site, will be determined by the prevailing governmental guidance at the time. It is our intention to try and run the day as normally as possible, with students picking up envelopes and having the chance to talk to staff and their friends outside. All will of course, if current guidance continues to apply, be done in a socially distanced manner and we may need a queuing system etc. We will advise of any particulars nearer the time, as we know what we can and cannot do – telling you detailed plans now when things seem to change weekly, would be pointless.

Results by Email

The school system is now able to email students with their results. For security purposes these would be emailed to the students' school email account, they cannot be emailed to a personal email address. This would be done by 9.30am on Thursday, 20 August for any student choosing to receive their results in this manner. If you wish to receive your results by email, rather than collecting them

from school, then please let us know by emailing, from your school email address, the request to the Exams Officer, Mrs Mclean at examinations@williamhoward.cumbria.sch.uk

Appeals

OFQUAL have now confirmed what students and schools will be able to appeal. These basically are all centred on potential administration errors, either at the board or at school level. It has been clarified that students will not be able to appeal against the centre assessed grade or indeed the ranking assigned to them.

The method of appeal is effectively to prove the statistical model and centre assessed ranking and grading wrong by taking the opportunity to sit the exam in the Autumn exam series.

Resits in the Autumn

OFQUAL confirmed this week that a full suite of GCSEs will be available for students to sit in November, with results then published in February, if they are unhappy with the standardised grade they are awarded on results day. It has also been confirmed that the better of the two grades will stand, so if you do worse in the Autumn this would not discount a higher grade given in the Summer. No coursework will be taken into account, with the exception of Art (which we assume also means Photography) and grades will be based purely on exam performance.

The exact system, dates of exams, who will be paying for any resits or indeed any further detail are not yet known. When we get the information, we will of course provide it to you and update the relevant parts of the website and VLE. I would anticipate (but not guarantee) that we will have some greater clarity before results day to share with you.

Year 11 Prom

Just a note that we are ever hopeful that the Year 11 Prom can take place, on its new scheduled date, on Friday, 16 October. It would be great to see the whole year group back together again.

I hope this update has been useful for you and would always continue to encourage you to not hesitate in contacting the year group team if you have any concerns or questions.

Yours sincerely



Mr Chris McAree
Headteacher