



24th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers of year 11 students,

We all understand that there will be anxieties for your daughter and all students nationally at this current time. I can assure you that we will work hard, with the examination boards, to ensure CGS students are not disadvantaged and that their hard work and ability is reflected by the grades awarded. The wellbeing and educational success of all our year 11 students is extremely important to everyone at CGS.

I wanted to summarise the main points from the government's announcement:

- The regulators, who oversee external exams, Ofqual, will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students.
- Exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.
- To produce this, teachers will be asked to take into account a range of evidence and data including performance in mock exams and non-exam assessment. We have been informed that clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools soon.
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- Exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.
- Regulators and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising the approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible. We have been told that more information on this will follow in due course.
- The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July.
- For the purposes of future studies and employment etc, these grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. The awarded grade will have equal validity with universities in their admissions process.
- The aim of the exam boards is to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students are not disadvantaged.
- Students will be able to appeal their grades if they do not believe that the right process has been followed.
- For any students who wish to there will also be an option to sit exams as soon as is reasonably possible after schools open again– and students can also choose to sit exams next summer.

Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>

Next steps

The announcement, so far, only outlines the broad intention of how grades will be awarded. Please understand that we, including **subject teachers**, are not yet in a position to respond to individual queries about student grades. Speculating will only cause more concerns and it may be some time before there is more clarity. There are many more details to work through for Ofqual, examination boards and schools. Ofqual is working urgently with the exam boards to set out proposals for how this process will work and will be talking to teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that the approach taken is as fair as possible. We will communicate relevant developments to you when they arrive.

Remote learning

We suggest that every year 11 prioritise their wellbeing at this difficult time and direct everyone to our website for a wealth of wellbeing resources and to their tutors for an initial point of contact if more support is required. When year 11 are ready we have asked our subject teachers, who had not completed their courses at the time of the school closure, to provide remote learning tasks to enable every student to access all the powerful knowledge and disciplinary skills that every GCSE subject offers. We also encourage students to seek to commit as much of the content of their GCSE course to memory, especially in those subjects that students want to take at A level or are relevant to their College and Apprenticeship courses. The more knowledge students have in their long-term memories the stronger their capacity to think and learn new information in the future: even without examinations that knowledge will continue to be fundamental to future opportunities. After Easter, when all GCSE courses would have been completed we will start to provide remote learning that will help students prepare for the A level and BTEC course available at V6 and will encourage students to use their time at home to begin preparing for their next steps.

V6 Sixth Form places

Students will be asking how this may affect their progression to Sixth Form, Colleges, and Apprenticeships. I can assure you that all CGS students will receive a place in the sixth form if it is in their best interests to follow our V6 curriculum; we know our students' potential and abilities, regardless of a new awarding system for grades. We will be sending out offer letters to our original deadline of the end of April and provide a mechanism for discussion with students and their families about these offer letters remotely if required. We will work with other providers to ensure every student has an appropriate destination in place. Ms Mclean our careers lead and Ms Donovan our careers administrator will be providing further information of how we can support year 11s after Easter.

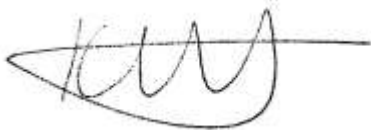
Leavers Celebrations

This year 11 are a fantastic year group and everyone at CGS is bitterly disappointed at the abruptness of their final days with us. I would like to explain why I took the difficult decision to close the school at short notice to years 11 and 13 on Friday 20th March. Firstly due to additional staff absences it became impossible on Thursday to keep the school open to the five year groups still attending. Secondly at the end of the day on Thursday we began to receive messages from students that they were intending to ignore their social isolation and attend school to join in with their 'Leavers' Celebrations'. Thirdly we had just received the information that there would be no examinations at all for years 11 and 13. These three factors, together with advice I took from my Trust leadership team, local secondary heads and the COVID-19 education help

line led me to the conclusion that allowing years 11 and 13 into school on Friday 20th would have been against government advice to avoid unnecessary social gatherings. We did not have the staffing or the clarity around the examinations to provide a valuable learning experience. Allowing students to come into school for an unofficial Leavers Day would have been unfair to the students and staff not able to attend and would have led to close contact and the chance of further spreading of the Coronavirus. I chose to use the teaching staff I had to set up years 10 and 12 who will have examinations at the end of their GCSE and will have to cope with many weeks if not months of disrupted learning time. I know from the many emails and phones I have received that this has caused sadness to many year 11 students, I ask parents and carers to explain to them that this not a reflection of how CGS feels about them but a difficult decision that was made to keep them and everyone else in our school and national community safe.

I would like to thank year 11 for the countless emails of thanks that they have sent to their teachers, reassure them that as soon as it is safe to we will be arranging a Leavers Celebration for them. Ms Bettles has already been in touch to start some planning around this. We will update parents/carers as more information becomes available to us and we will work tirelessly to get the best outcomes for our students. On behalf of all my colleagues, thank you for your patience and support.

Kind regards and best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry McCullagh', written over a horizontal line.

Kerry McCullagh