

January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: 2021 GCSE exams

I wanted to write to you to ensure clarity around the decision to cancel the GCSE exams this summer. The government has announced that the 2021 cohort will not sit traditional style exams this summer and their grades will be awarded by their class teachers. This has now brought England in line with Scotland and Wales who decided earlier in the academic year that exams would be cancelled. The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, has stated that teachers will be trained how to do this. A short consultation period has now been set up between Ofqual, exam boards and senior leaders across the country to discuss the criteria that will be used to assess, award and moderate grades that students are awarded in the summer.

There may be a chance the Scottish or Welsh assessment model will be adopted which I will briefly outline. Scotland has moved to teacher moderated assessments for 2021 which would award qualifications on the basis of centre estimated grades based upon validated assessments. The model at present in Scotland is that each subject would need to provide the background work and assessments for between 2-4 assessed pieces that could be externally moderated to inform the final awarding mark. In Wales, exam boards will send focussed assessed pieces to schools late in the academic year with a specific time frame to have these completed. These will need to be completed under exam conditions within a classroom. All assessed pieces will be sent out to external moderators who will award Welsh students their GCSE grades.

To award grades last year, staff at The Orme Academy worked tirelessly and objectively to award the students in each subject area a grade that fully reflected their hard work. To do this, staff initially gave grade predictions for students in their individual classes and then held several meetings with Heads of Department to justify why they were awarding the grade for each student. Teachers used a range of information including mock exams, classroom assessment tasks, general records of work and performance throughout each course over the 2-year period of study. Departments then had to rank order the students based on how well we expected them to perform if they had sat the GCSE exams in the summer. Once this process was complete, the senior leadership team and the Trust held meetings with Heads of Department to ensure that each member of staff was objective in their grading and that each child was treated fairly. This meant that as an academy we did externally moderate using staff from other schools within the Shaw Education Trust. Therefore, grades given out were based on the evidence we already had on the students. **Students were not awarded a Grade 4 just because their target was a Grade 4, for example,** they were awarded a grade that fully reflected their ability. Therefore, we cannot stress enough the importance that your child engages in the remote learning provided and attends the Microsoft Teams lessons where possible. If students do not engage with remote learning effectively, then we will struggle to provide a grade that could set the foundations for their next steps in education. Please note that, at this point, we are not yet clear on the exact methodology for the awarding of grades as we await further information from the DfE, but we do know that students have to engage with their work until the end of the year.

If you are struggling with using a laptop, then students can access Microsoft Teams using an Xbox or PlayStation. Also, any students who want to send written work into their teachers can use the iPhone notes app which has a built-in scanner. Instructions for all are below:

Xbox	PlayStation	iPhone scanner
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sign into your Xbox profile* 2. Press Xbox button, go to My Games & Apps 3. Open Microsoft Edge (the browser) 4. In the address bar, type teams.microsoft.com 5. Log in using your school account as you would on a PC. 6. Use the full functionality of Teams and other Microsoft apps <p>*You can plug in a keyboard to help use the Microsoft Apps. If you need a keyboard, please contact school.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sign into your PlayStation account* 2. Go to the Library 3. Move to 'Search' and type 'Internet' in the search box 4. Open the Internet Browser application 5. Move to the address bar and type in teams.microsoft.com. 6. Log in using your school account as you would on a PC. 7. Use the full functionality of Teams and other Microsoft apps <p>*May not work on a PS5</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Click on the notes app 2. Start a new note 3. Click on the camera button above the keypad 4. Select scan document. 5. Scan your document, crop the scan, and then click keep scan. 6. Repeat steps until all documents have been scanned. 7. Click save and give the document a title. 8. Upload/attach to an email and send to class teacher. <p>*May not work on older models</p>

I aim to keep the students updated as quickly as I can when a national announcement is made around education that impacts on them. I will do this via email and then communicate with yourselves. I ask that you support the Academy and your child by monitoring their online learning and encouraging them to access online lessons and submitting work to staff. More than ever, it is important that these young people are working hard at home as this may be the evidence, we need to submit grades for them in the summer.

If there is anything that we can do to support you, then please do not hesitate to contact the Academy.

Yours sincerely,



Mr N Charlesworth
KS4 Strategic Lead