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Dear Parent / Carer,

I hope you and your family are well and healthy, and managed to enjoy the week as much as possible given the circumstances in which we are all living at the moment.

I wanted to write to you today to provide you with further information following the Government's decision not to hold GCSE and A level exams this summer, as well as the wide range of vocational and technical qualifications available, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Before I do so, I would like to empathise with your child – students prepare for these important exams by working very hard and I believe look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt. For many students then, the decision to cancel the exams will have been upsetting and they have my utmost sympathy. However, it is important to recognise that their hard work will not have gone to waste and indeed the Government's publication last Friday afternoon of how grades will be decided this year underlines that. Above all, the Government has promised that its overall priority in this matter is to ensure that young people get the grades they deserve and can progress to the next stage of their lives, whether that is progressing into a sixth form or college, taking up an apprenticeship, going to university or moving into the workplace.

For GCSEs, there will be a three-stage process. First, teachers, who of course know their students so well, will make their own judgements on what grades students should receive for each subject. They have been asked to consider how students did in their mock exams and in their non-exam assessment. Exam boards will then take those assessments and couple them with other information, such as students' prior attainment. Finally, Ofqual, the independent regulator of exams in England, will look at each grade to ensure consistency between grades awarded this year and in previous years.

The Government says it is aiming to provide these grades to students before the end of July and has been clear that they will be as valuable and deserved as grades awarded in any other year. As in previous years, students should be proud of what they achieve and they will have earned their grades.

If any student believes that any grade they have been awarded is lower than they would have achieved had they taken the exam, they can appeal. They also have the option of taking exams in subjects once schools have re-opened, in the next academic year or of taking them in summer 2021.

Vocational and technical qualifications have various assessment approaches and in many cases students will already have completed modules or non-exam assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. The Government says it will shortly publish further details on how grades will be awarded in these qualifications and I will be sure to update you when that information is available.

I would again like to sympathise with you and your child that this year's exams have been cancelled. However, I do have every confidence that the grades they are awarded will reflect their hard work and talent, and will be fair. The appeals process, and the opportunity to sit exams should students want to do that, will further ensure fair and accurate grades are awarded.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Robson'.

Mrs C Robson  
Principal

