The announcement that A level, AS level and GCSE level examinations will not be taking place this summer has left many pupils and their parents confused and anxious as to how their grades will be determined. For those sitting GCSEs there will be concerns about sixth form access - be that here at the school or at the colleges and other institutions to which they have applied - while for A level candidates there are naturally going to be worries about where they will be left in terms of university admission.

There is bound to be a level of unease and disappointment for many pupils. Undoubtedly some pupils will benefit from this system, but many will believe that they have been deprived of the chance to really prove themselves. As a School, we are committed to supporting you through this challenging period, providing advice and support as needed. In addition, Mr Young, the Careers Officer is available for any pupils who would like to speak with him regarding next steps.

The School is following closely the information coming from Government, Examination Boards and other Advisory Bodies to build a picture of what will replace the formal examinations.

What we know from the authorities so far:

• Regulators will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each pupil which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with us and the other exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all candidates.

• Exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their pupils well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the pupil 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 on trial exams and non-exam assessment. Clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges soon.

• 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 pupil, 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’s as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

• The aim is to provide these calculated grades to pupils before the end of July.

• These grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years.
• The examination boards aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year’s candidates aren’t disadvantaged.

• Pupils will be able to appeal their grades if they don’t believe the right process has been followed.

• There will also be an option to sit exams early in the next academic year for any candidates who wish to – and candidates can also choose to sit exams next summer.

Many pupils will be concerned that the final grade might simply replicate the trial examination grade. While some aspects of the process are still to be determined and explained, we can be confident that the trial examination grade alone will not be the determining factor. A range of evidence and data will inform the grade to be awarded.

The School certainly anticipates using non-examined assessment within the process as far as possible. Where deadlines have already passed, the work submitted will be marked in line with the existing published criteria. For written coursework with a deadline coming up this deadline must still be met and this work will be assessed. In the case of practical subjects (PE, art, music, sciences, DT, computer science) where completion of projects might not be possible, any work undertaken to date will be considered against a measure of what has been accomplished in the time that was available.

The awarding of grades will be a complex and unprecedented procedure. There is wealth of data – individual and contextual – that may be drawn upon in the coming weeks and months. We will continue to update you as we gain further information.

While we await further clarification on the exact process we encourage you not to spend undue time second guessing how the examination boards or the school will act or looking back at things which are now beyond your control. Rather we advise:

• Do continue to produce high quality work as set through Show My Homework, submitting work on time and responding to feedback. We anticipate work completed in this period can provide evidence of continued progress after the trial examinations.

• Do remain confident in the school’s strong historical proven track record of consistently outstanding examination results.

• Don’t lobby individual teachers or Heads of Department - at the moment they will not know any more than what is set out here and for the present will prioritise their time for setting and assessing work and providing feedback.

• Don’t provide additional unsolicited work; rather make what you are producing reflect your best endeavours. It is important that teachers are able to assess work accurately and across standardised tasks so use all the opportunities within the set tasks, and exploiting any suggested extension material, to show your current achievement and potential. It is also important to note that simply submitting multiple amounts of unsolicited work can lead
to the same mistakes being replicated across multiple pieces of work: prefer instead to submit a scheduled piece of work, await advice and guidance on how to improve, and then demonstrably act on the advice to improve in the next piece of submitted work.