

9th April 2020

Dear Parent / Carer,

Re: Cancellation of GCSEs and A Levels

I am writing to inform you of the current guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) with regards the final assessment of your son/daughter's GCSE or A Level qualifications and how grades the final grades will be awarded.

As you will be aware the DfE have decided to cancel all examinations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At Thomas Becket Catholic School we are passionate in our belief that our children deserve the grades that they would have received in the summer were they to have had the opportunity to sit their examinations. We are also passionate in our commitment to provide our students with the experiences that they should be having as part of the transition from KS4 to KS5, and from KS5 to work, apprenticeships or university.

Both in the Sixth Form and in Year 11 our student's performance has been exceptional this year – the hard work and commitment from the students, based on their practice examinations performance, would have meant that we would have been celebrating the school's best results in its history.

This letter sets out how we will support your children in securing the grades that they deserve and in providing them the experiences that they equally deserve. To support you in understanding the contents of this letter, we have collated the key documents that relate to the process of awarding grades:

- DfE Key overview document - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-gcses-as-a-levels-will-be-awarded-in-summer-2020>
- DfE Question and Answer Format Guidance - <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>
- OFQUAL Letter - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877830/Letter_to_students_-_Summer_2020_grading.pdf

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respect
truth
compassion
justice
faith

- OFQUAL Full Guidance -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877842/Summer_2020_grades_for_GCSE_AS_A_level_EPQ_AEA_in_maths_-_guidance_for_teachers_students_parents.pdf

As a school we will follow this guidance to the letter and we will ensure that a fair and balanced grade is awarded. Having just conducted Pre-Public Examinations (PPE) these results will be used as a piece of evidence in awarding grades, however, the grade awarded will be formulated using these key factors in our assessment:

- classwork
- homework
- any participation in performances in subjects such as music, drama or PE
- any non-exam assessment – whether or not complete
- the results of any assignments or PPE exams
- previous examination results – for example, for any re-sitting students or those with relevant AS qualifications
- any other records of student performance over the course of study

We are aware that whilst students have done very well, they will not have performed to their full potential in the PPE examinations. These are sat three months prior to the ‘real’ examinations and at this point students are still refining their approach. In the past two years students have improved their results by half a grade per qualification between these PPE examinations and final summer examinations. Therefore, the teacher prediction based on the evidence listed above is critical in this decision as opposed to simply using the PPE results.

As per the government guidelines we will not be able to share the teacher predictions with parents or students prior to their publication.

As part of our process we will be ensuring that we have firm bases of evidence for these judgements and individual departments may request work or exercise books to ensure we are secure in the grades we award and to support in the event of a need to appeal a grade awarded. Alongside this the DfE has previously announced that students will have the opportunity to sit an examination in September should they be unhappy with any grade that they achieve. Of course, as a school we would be more than happy to support any student that needs support with these processes. It is my hope, based on the guidance provided and the evidence at my disposal, that we will not need these processes and fair grades will be awarded.

Finally, as I have stated on numerous occasions, Leaver’s Days, Prom’s and other leaver’s activities will still be happening. At present the dates for these events cannot be firmly set as this is out of our hands, but we will ensure that they still occur at the most appropriate time. As part of the results process we will ensure as we always do that students are able to progress to their destination of choice. Over the past two years we have managed to get every Sixth Form student to their destination of choice and we will work to ensure that we can continue this. For Year 11 we are currently ensuring that every student receives a call from our Sixth Form team to support them in their next steps and where possible Thomas Becket Sixth Form will be more than happy to support students to their next steps in education. In addition to this, departments will be sharing preparatory resources for post-year 11 study. For those students who are continuing their studies at Thomas Becket, the resources will provide an opportunity for wider context before the A Level and BTEC courses commence.

If you have any questions or queries regarding this I would be more than happy to discuss this with you through email at mclaughlinm@thomasbecket.org.uk or through leaving a message with our front reception.

I send you our very best wishes and our love over the Easter break, I do hope all families are able to find time for each other. As ever, you are all very much in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely

M. McLaughlin

Mr M McLaughlin
Headteacher