



## MIDDLEWICH HIGH SCHOOL

HEIDI THURLAND BA (HONS 1<sup>ST</sup> CLASS) NPQH HEADTEACHER

26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Yr11 students and families,

I am writing to update you on the announcement on the 25<sup>th</sup> February regarding 2021 examinations. Like you I am frustrated that this information has taken so long to arrive and that we will still have to wait until the end of this term for the exam boards to provide us with the finer details. This means that at this stage I can only give you headlines about the way we see this working and what this means for students. The detailed information regarding the quality assurance processes and finalised evidence base will be communicated later in the term when we have established how we will manage this process. Please be assured that our staff are already working hard on reviewing the best way to achieve an accurate evidence base that takes into account all the variances in student experience over the last 12 months.

To summarise the main points:

- No formal exams
- **The best way to secure GCSE success is now to attend school every day and demonstrate your ability and ambition each lesson.**
- Teachers will assess student performance; no algorithm will be applied and schools are not expected to follow a specific distribution of grades. However, schools will be challenged if the award of grades is 'unusual'. This simply means that schools cannot award every student a 6 or a 9
- Grades will be awarded from a wide evidence base to include: mock exams, coursework, internal assessments etc
- Assessment will be based on work that has been taught – we will not be 'cramming' and overwhelming you with extra material in the remaining weeks. We will however ensure that you are ready to transition to post 16 courses with the appropriate knowledge/skills
- I am meeting with Heads of Dept next week to review our evidence base for each subject. We will consider the optional questions/potential second mock as well as the wider evidence base. We will communicate this with you on your return
- Schools may also choose to use optional questions from the exam boards to assess knowledge. These are not exams and not sat in exam conditions. Again the detail around this will be clarified by exam boards in due course
- Schools will follow a robust process of quality assurance an internal moderation of grades before they are submitted
- Students can appeal the grades, there is no cost to this and this will be managed by the exam boards. Details to come on this in due course
- Submission of grades to the exam board is the 18<sup>th</sup> June. The school will have to complete a rigorous process of moderation prior to this. The date of the submission in June is a surprise as we expected students to be in school for longer. We will review the date teaching will be completed for Yr11 in due course

- We are not allowed to share results before exam results day as there is a further QA process run by the exam boards
- Exam results day has moved to the 12<sup>th</sup> August

There are some incredibly unhelpful headlines out there suggesting that staff bias because they 'like' or 'dislike' a student will affect the award of grades. Please be assured that we will award grades based on evidence, not personality. Knowing our students is an important part of the process but any award of a grade must have a clear evidence base behind it. As the Headteacher it is my responsibility to sign off each and every grade, I will not do that unless I am confident in the evidence base behind it.

So what is the most important message for each of you, my brilliant Yr11 students? Simply that as I have said throughout this pandemic – 'knowledge is power'. Every Yr11 student should take the opportunity to make the most of every day at school between now and the end of their GCSE courses. We have arranged testing so that Yr11 will have had 2 tests prior to returning and will be tested first in the week of return. This protects your cohort and gives all of you the maximum opportunity to benefit from face to face teaching. Our teachers simply cannot wait to teach you, to support you, to take every step with you towards your futures. We care deeply about each and every one of you and it is my promise to you that we will do everything we can to ensure you are ready for the next stage of your lives.

There is a real opportunity now for each and every one of you to continue to complete assessments and work that will ensure your ability is accurately reflected in the grade awarded. We must work together and yes it will require hard work and focus – but you have worked like this all the way through this pandemic. I have no doubt that on return I will see energised, focused young people enjoying their learning and demonstrating their full potential.

We have every confidence in you – it is time for you to believe in yourselves and seize this opportunity. We have worked closely with you throughout your time at MHS, we know you well, we have faith in you and in ourselves to help you achieve the success you are all capable of.

Finally, I have mentioned this quote to you before but I think it is valid to do so now, remember:

'It is only impossible until it is done'

Together we've got this

Looking forward to working with you,

Heidi Thurland



Headteacher Middlewich High School  
Excellence in Learning – Achievement for All