



# St John Fisher Catholic High School

## EDUCATING FOR LIFE

Hookstone Drive, Harrogate, HG2 8PT

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11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents/Carers of Year 11 students

I hope this letter finds you and your family well.

I am mindful that there has been a plethora of government announcements with regards to schools, in recent days, and that this continues to be a very demanding time for all our families, but especially for those of you whose children were due to take public examinations this year.

I know that you will have many questions about what is happening, and at this stage there is a good chance that we do not have clear answers as the picture is changing so quickly. However, I wanted to share with you what we do know about the awarding of GCSE qualifications this year and to provide some guidance.

The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, has announced the following in parliament:

“I can confirm that GCSEs, A-Levels and AS level exams will not go ahead this summer. This year we are going to put our trust in teachers rather than algorithms... I can confirm now that I wish to use a form of teacher assessed grades, with training and support provided to ensure these are awarded fairly and consistently across the country”.

Ofqual (the exams regulator) has also published the following message:

“We know that this is a difficult time for students, their parents and carers, teachers and trainers. Our message to students is this: **please continue to engage as fully as you can in your education.** That will be online for the majority of students, or face-to-face for those students still going into their school, college or training provider. This will put you in the best position, whatever arrangements are made for your qualifications. It’s important that teachers and students can focus on the knowledge and skills needed to equip students to progress to the next stage, whatever form that might take – whether to college, an apprenticeship, university or employment. The way ahead is not straightforward: exams and standardised assessments are the fairest way of determining what a student knows and can do.

We need to consider a wide range of qualifications – from A levels and GCSEs to many different vocational and technical qualifications – and the solution won’t be the same for all. Following the government’s announcement on Monday evening, we also need to consider how alternative arrangements will work for different students, including those who are independent learners. We are discussing alternative arrangements with the Department for Education. We know that many are seeking clarity as soon as possible. We will provide further updates as soon as we can.”





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We are awaiting further information from the Department for Education regarding how teacher assessed grades will be formulated. However, we are aware that all teacher-assessed grades will need to be informed by a strong evidence base, and teachers will need to justify every grade. Therefore, **it is extremely important that your child follows the advice in the Ofqual statement and continues to engage fully with their remote learning. This will enable us to continue to gather evidence of their knowledge and understanding to inform the grading process accurately and fairly.**

We understand that the process of learning remotely is very challenging in the current national situation – but until there is real clarity around how the teacher assessments will be formulated from Ofqual and the examination boards, **every piece of work that students complete will help us give the best judgement of their most likely outcome.** Please speak to your child about the importance of this and encourage them to complete all their lessons to the best of their ability.

We would also be grateful if you could reinforce the importance of students focussing on their destination of choice as a motivational tool as this should help reinforce the importance of them remaining engaged with learning even where this is being done remotely. We will continue to provide Careers Advice, Support and Guidance remotely to all year 11 students.

We respectfully ask that students and/or parents/carers refrain from approaching members of staff about grades for the GCSE qualifications. I am sure you will appreciate why members of staff will not be able to respond to questions of this nature. Aside from the ethical reasons, the details of how these grades will be formulated have yet to be released by the Department for Education and Ofqual.

I hope this information helps to provide a little clarity, as more information is published from the government, we will communicate the key messages quickly to our parents, carers, and students.

Yours sincerely

Mr S Mort  
Headteacher

