

11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

Dear Year 11 and Year 13 Parents,

You may have read the recent government announcement regarding the summer 2021 examination season. It seems clear from this that the government is committed to examinations next summer. We are pleased with this outcome as we believe that our Year 11 and Year 13 students will be very well placed to take these exams - especially if students follow the advice that they are given.

The recent [announcement](#) explained the government's plans to make exams more accessible to those whose learning had been interrupted and set out contingency plans should there be further COVID-19 related disruption to the summer examination season. Measures to make outcomes of these examinations more accessible will include:

- More generous grading than usual, in line with last summer's outcomes, so that students this year are not disadvantaged.
- Students will receive advance notice of some topic areas to help focus revision and exam aids, e.g. formula sheets - will be provided in some exams, reducing the amount of information to memorise.
- The government will also convene an expert advisory group to help calculate and mitigate the learning loss that some students have suffered.

#### **Contingency plans:**

- If students miss one or more exams due to self-isolation or sickness but have still completed a proportion of their qualification they will still receive a grade;
- If a student misses all their assessments in a subject, they will have the opportunity to sit a contingency paper held shortly after the main exams.
- In the extreme case where a student has a legitimate reason to miss all their papers, then a validated teacher informed assessment can be used, only once *all* chances to sit an exam have passed.

In addition Dame Glenys Stacey, Head of Ofqual, has published her [speech](#) to explain the measures put in place. It is clear from this that teacher grades will only be used in the very unlikely event that a student has missed all their exam opportunities in both the regular and contingency sessions. In addition, the government has previously announced changes to the content and format of some exams at a subject level and a later start date for the GCSE and A Level exam season.

#### **Practice Examinations:**

Recently our students have sat practice paper examinations. The attitude displayed by both Year 11 and Year 13 groups was excellent with almost

100% attendance - which is excellent considering the challenging circumstances that both students and families face. A report will be sent home before the holiday for Year 11 so that parents can be clear where strengths and weaknesses lie. On our return all Year 13 will sit additional practice exams, as is usual practice at SBL. The timetables for these can be found here: <https://www.sbllearning.org.uk/exams>. These exams will be a great chance for students to show us what they can do as well as being a diagnostic tool for their teachers to see what support they will need to fulfil their potential in the summer. Year 11 students will work towards further practice exams in March as preparations continue for this year group.

SBL students should find the recent announcements reassuring – they will be able to take the assessments that they have been prepared for and can now focus on working toward this without the worry of too many further surprises. Whilst most students will want to do some revision over the holiday, please also help them make time for relaxation, exercise and family as these will be equally important for their success and well-being over the months ahead.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S White', written in a cursive style.

Mr S White  
**Vice Principal**