

Dear Parents & Carers,

I trust you have had a welcome Easter break. I am writing with further details of how your child's grades will be decided this year and when and how their grades will be received. All of the staff at the academy as well as the exam boards have taken into account the difficulties of work towards qualifications during the pandemic both this academic year and last year. The approach for this academic year has been carefully designed to make grading as fair as possible in these unique circumstances.

Grades for GCSE and A-level qualifications this year are called 'Teacher Assessed Grades' but this does not simply mean teachers will be able to decide your child's grades. Detailed guidance has been given to us by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) which we must follow (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/JCQ-Guidance-on-the-Determination-of-Grades-for-A-AS-Levels-and-GCSEs-Summer-2021.pdf>). The JCQ have also published a guide for Students and Parents (<https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/JCQ-Guidance-for-Students-and-Parents-on-Summer-2021.pdf>) which may help you understand the approach further.

To help you understand what will happen next, below are outlined four key areas of the process. To meet the guidelines, we must publish our specific academy approach to grading on our website by 30<sup>th</sup> April in a document called our Centre Assessment Policy. Whilst this is written for the awarding organisation or exam boards to check that our approach is correct, you may find this document useful in providing you with additional information about our approach.

### The evidence we will use

Unlike last year, this year a collection or basket of evidence of your child's actual work must be submitted in order for them to achieve a grade. This evidence can be made up of their work through the course both in class as well as in any assessments or mock exams that they have sat. In addition to work completed so far, there will be **two further opportunities** to sit assessments this half term to bolster and decide your child's grade. The timetable for these assessment weeks is attached to this letter so that you know when your child will be assessed. Whilst these assessments will be classroom-based rather than in the hall, they must be completed in exam-type conditions, i.e. in silence and working on their own. This is because teachers must sign to say that all of their evidence is their own work. For this reason, work that has been completed at home is unlikely to be used as part of their evidence unless a teacher can be sure it is their **own work**.

If your child would have had any special arrangements during their exams, such as a reader, scribe or extra time, they should have these in place during their final assessments. If these haven't been in place for all of the evidence being submitted

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for their qualification, their teacher will note this and grade their work with this in mind.

All of the evidence submitted for their qualification should only use assessments based on topics that they have been taught. For example, any topics which were not taught because a student or their teacher were absent due to the pandemic will not be assessed. Teachers and leaders at the academy have considered carefully what has and hasn't been taught and planned the assessments accordingly. We appreciate that these circumstances are different from student to student and we will include all information that we have been made aware of in our assessment.

## **How your overall grade will be decided**

Your child's overall grade should then be decided as a 'best fit' for the evidence they have provided. There is no specific formula or grade boundaries for deciding this overall grade but it should be the grade that best reflects the work they have done overall. Our teachers are skilled professionals but given the challenge of grading this year which is very different to a normal year, special training will be given by the academy, Oasis Community Learning and the exam boards themselves to make sure that work is graded accurately and fairly. Exam boards will also supply them with additional marking guides and grade descriptors to make sure all work is graded as fairly and accurately as possible.

In a normal year there is a process to follow if your child has been affected by severe personal circumstances during exams called 'Special Consideration'. As there are no exams this year, there is no such process but if your child's performance while completing any of their evidence has been affected by difficulties such as a death of a close relative or illness etc. please do make sure the academy is aware. Ideally, they will be able to use alternative evidence from a different time in their course or potentially make a small adjustment to a grade.

## **How our grades will be checked or 'moderated'**

Once teachers have graded your child's work, checking or 'moderation' will take place across teachers in each department to ensure that grades for every student are fair. Where there is only one subject teacher in our academy, we will use another expert teacher from Oasis Community Learning or beyond to check grades where possible. Our senior leadership team will then be responsible for moderating grades for all subjects including those with single classes or teachers. Oasis Community Learning will also help us check that our grades seem fair and accurate.

The JCQ guidance requires us to 'moderate' our grades against the usual pattern of results in previous years. This does not mean that our grades are definitely expected to match previous years' but that if they are significantly higher or lower, we have to offer a written explanation of why this is for the exam boards. We know that the achievement of students and the numbers that choose particular courses can change over time, so this should not be seen as a limit on your child's grade.

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Once our grades are submitted to the exam boards, they will then be able to 'moderate' our grades by visiting the academy and asking to see the actual graded work that has been produced. They expect to visit every school to look at least one qualification, so the quality of the work must reflect the grades we have assigned you. In the event that the exam board are not happy with our grading of the work, there could be a delay to grades being released to your child or their grade could be changed.

Grades are finally submitted to the exam boards on 18<sup>th</sup> June but as you'll understand from the above, there is a long and detailed process for teachers to follow once your child has completed their assessments, hence the date that they will last be able to submit work is significantly before this deadline. There may be some small administrative tasks such as signing forms that need to be completed right up until 18<sup>th</sup> June, so I ask that you and your child are contactable until this date and available to come into the academy if necessary.

### **Receiving your grades & appeals**

Whilst teachers are allowed to share any results achieved in individual assessments, they are specifically not allowed to share with you or your child the grades that are being submitted to exam boards. I do appreciate that this may be stressful but ask that you do not request this from teachers as they are not able to share it under any circumstances. Results' days are earlier than normal this year so the period of waiting for results is slightly shorter.

Results days are on 10<sup>th</sup> August for Year 13 and 12<sup>th</sup> August for Year 11. We will write to you closer to the time with the specific arrangements for collecting results but key academy staff will be on hand to support your child with their results and next steps.

There is an appeals process to follow should you feel that your child's grade does not accurately reflect their work. Initially, you appeal directly to us as an academy and we review the evidence for a grade. Should you still feel that a grade is not a fair reflection of your child's work for any reason, we can then submit an appeal on your behalf to the exam board who will review the evidence. There is a quick turnaround for these appeals processes should a grade stop your child from progressing to sixth form or colleges, university or work. Full details of what to do next will be given to you with your child's results.

There will again be a planned Autumn exam series later in 2021 should your child wish to sit external exams in order to improve their grades. They will be able to sit these at our or a neighbouring academy, should they wish to.

Finally, thank you for your support during your child's time with us. We wish them the best possible grades despite all of the challenging circumstances that they have faced during the pandemic.

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## Exceptional Education at the Heart of the Community

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We look forward to working with you in these remaining weeks to help you to achieve your best.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Siân Dover".

Mrs Siân Dover  
Principal

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