



January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you regarding the upcoming January external examinations for some BTEC subjects and the recently announced cancellation of this year's summer public examinations. I know many of our young people and their families have been anxious about the uncertainty around the Year 10 January exams. Unfortunately, we have been unable to provide information as we have been waiting for clarity from the exam boards due to the announcement last night of the National lockdown.

Currently we have no information to explain how GCSE qualifications will be awarded in the summer and as a result we, as a school, have considered whether it is beneficial to ask Year 10 students to sit their January exam when there is so much uncertainty. At this moment we do not know what will potentially happen to the grade in the summer and we are now reviewing our curriculum plans for September for Year 10 students moving into Year 11.

After careful consideration, the Academy has made the decision NOT to allow students in Year 10 to sit their January exams that they have been entered for. I will explain our rationale for this below.

The government have asked schools to close to all but a minority of pupils for the health and safety of children, young people, their families, and the wider community due to the virulence of the new strain of coronavirus. If the exams were to go ahead, we would be asking young people to come into school to sit in a confined space for a sustained period of time whilst they complete their examination. This is something we feel can be avoided in line with our assessment of the current risks. In addition to this, we cannot guarantee what plans will be in place to ensure that pupils in Year 10 are awarded a GCSE grade in summer and this could therefore be detrimental and result in pupils not achieving the best grades possible.

We believe it would be more beneficial to finish the two qualifications that pupils were due to complete this year, during the next academic year (their Year 11 year). This will allow pupils to secure higher grades than they would in a year of continued disruption and with no surety from the government on how summer grades will yet be awarded. Your children have worked extremely hard on their GCSE courses and deserve to receive the grades their hard work suggests they would. I know that Year 11 pupils last year were disappointed that they were not able to 'show what they were made of' in their exams.

Equally as important, this will give pupils extra time (if appropriate and required) to make up lost learning in the core subjects of English, maths and science as well as their other GCSE subjects.

If pupils were entered this year, they would be compared with a much smaller cohort nationally as fewer Year 10 pupils in schools across the country complete their GCSEs. The method of calculating grades is likely to be subject to much more variation and possible change, something that the Academy has no control over.



As I'm sure you will appreciate, this is a very complex situation and the Academy has spent a considerable amount of time reviewing the best way forward for pupils in Year 10 to give them the best chance of success in Year 11. With that said, we can and will support pupils in completing work in their two GCSE option subjects in this period of closure and on their return to school so that they can feel confident in securing good grades.

I know this is a time of great worry for you and your children and we are all in completely uncharted territory. None of us know how this situation will develop, however, I will do my best to keep you updated as and when there is more information to share with you.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact me by emailing: info@appletonacademy.co.uk.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Garlick".

Mrs Garlick
Head of Secondary