

## St. Thomas More High School

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5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents/Carers and Year 11/13 students,

We hope that you and your families are keeping well and coping with the restrictions in place in the best way that you can.

As you are no doubt aware, during the most recent lockdown it was announced that students will be awarded their GCSE / A level grades by teacher assessment. Whilst we are still waiting for further guidance from exams boards on how this is going to be verified and moderated, we have been working hard to formulate a plan that is both robust and ultimately the best for our students at St Thomas More.

Year 11 and 13 students are due back to school on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March. This is great news as at this time last year the Year 11 and 13 students were beginning the first Lockdown which left them without an opportunity to return to school. We were then asked by the Government to produce grades for our students without being able to get them back in the classroom. We find ourselves, a year on, in a similar position. However, we as a school have learnt much from the process last year and this year we have the added bonus of not only using the evidence of work produced so far, but we also have time to give students the opportunity to show us what they can do now and over the next couple of months.

Feedback from parents and students has been that you would like the opportunity to show what you can do and build upon the work done so far. With this in mind we have broken the remaining time down into assessment opportunities for students to show their progress. Students have been preparing for mock exams on their return to school, and although delayed from January for reasons out of our control we are now in a position to hold what we are calling “**Assessment Opportunity 1**”. From **March 15<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>** (timetable to follow shortly but will be similar to the one published before Christmas) students will take this first opportunity to complete assessments in exam conditions. These will take place in a well ventilated, socially distanced exam hall in adherence with the current guidance, allowing students to complete these in the best and safest environment possible. Obviously, there will be students who have struggled during lockdown, and this may appear a daunting task. Please be reassured that this is one opportunity to show us where you are at and obviously will just act as piece of the puzzle in helping you to achieve the best grade possible.

From **April 12<sup>th</sup> – May 7<sup>th</sup>**, students will be completing “**Assessment Opportunity 2**”. During this time teachers will feedback from Assessment Opportunity 1 and any areas for improvement will be highlighted. Teachers will also then go through any queries arising from the remote learning period. Content and coursework will be finished where applicable and in class assessments will take place, creating additional evidence. During this time students will also revise for the final Assessment Opportunity, to ensure they are fully prepared with the knowledge and skills so they can continue to reach their potential.

Finally, from **May 10<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> “Assessment Opportunity 3”** will take place. These will be internal assessments in exam conditions similar to Assessment Opportunity 1. We believe this is the fairest way for students to demonstrate their current performance. It also allows for us to build upon the good quality evidence to justify final grades to the Exam Boards. As already stated, this is only part of the evidence process that we will be using to ensure that students receive the fairest grade possible.

From 24<sup>th</sup> May students will no longer be required in school as staff will be marking and standardising work for the final submission to examination boards on **18<sup>th</sup> June**.

Please note the change to GCSE and A level results days (**A level – 10<sup>th</sup> August and GCSE – 12<sup>th</sup> August**), when students will receive their results and be offered support by our staff for university and sixth form applications.

We intend to use a range of evidence including previous assessments, class work, previous mock data and non-exam assessments (NEA) that a student has completed. Heads of Department and senior staff will ensure that judgements are holistic, based on the range of evidence that we have and come to a balanced view. Teachers are highly experienced at making assessment decisions and evidence shows they can rank order their students with a high degree of accuracy. We also regularly standardise the assessments teachers make so that information we eventually submit is objective and the best it can be in delivering the fairest outcomes. The teacher assessment grades will then be discussed and agreed within subject departments and signed off by two senior leaders. Before the data is submitted to the exam board, Mrs Ackred as the Head of Centre will also need to sign off the grades.

We are confident that teachers and Heads of Subjects in this school know our students well and are best placed to make these judgements. We know they are currently working in difficult circumstances and so we ask that students and parents do not seek to influence this important task. We are not permitted to release or discuss grades to students, parents or carers, so please don't ask this of them. Our overriding priority and that of Ofqual /Examination Boards is to ensure that students are awarded the fairest grade possible representative of their hard work throughout this challenging time.

We have been thinking a great deal about our Year 11 and 13 students and have held you all in our prayers, particularly over this time.

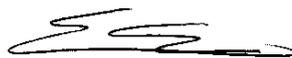
I hope this letter provides you with the reassurance that we, like you, want the very best for each student. We are determined to ensure this process is as fair as possible and like last year, students feel the grade achieved reflects their ability in each individual subject.

We look forward to seeing students soon!

Yours sincerely,



Mr M. Hardiman  
Deputy Headteacher



Ms E. Corr  
Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form