



5th March 2021

Dear Year 11 Pupils, Parents and Carers,

Firstly, can we say how much we are looking forward to having you all back in school. We know it will be wonderful for you all to see your friends and teachers again. We are also aware that there are still many unanswered questions regarding the awarding of GCSE grades this Summer and that this will be causing you some anxiety. We wanted to take the opportunity to write to you to update you and to give you as much detail as we are able to at this stage.

We also want to make it clear that we plan to use the time we have left as far as possible to continue to teach you and to help you recall all that you have learned and to use assessment to capture this in a way which is carefully planned but also fair, taking into account the considerable disruption you have all faced over the past year. We will set out our initial plans in the bullet points below. These may be subject to some change as the government announce more guidance over the weeks ahead, but we will try to keep to these principles as closely as possible.

Last Thursday, 25th February, the Department for Education issued an outline of how the awarding of GCSE exams will be conducted for Summer 2021.

They have confirmed that teacher assessments will be used to award GCSE grades this year. These can be based on a range of evidence and while we have been told what types of evidence can be used, eg classwork, homework, exam questions, we are still awaiting more detailed guidance on what we need to collect in each subject. This will be shared with us this month.

The guidance also set out plans for schools and exam boards to conduct quality assurance processes to ensure grades awarded are fair. Ensuring that pupils who qualify for access arrangements are catered for was also covered and we will be planning assessment to ensure that pupils who need extra time and support can still receive it for these assessments. There will also be the opportunity to appeal to the school and to the exam boards if you do not feel the grade awarded is fair, however schools will be making clear to pupils what assessments contribute to the judgement on the grade so that the process is as transparent as possible.

Below is a summary of the key principles which will underpin our approach to awarding examination grades this Summer:

1. All assessments will be done in class – we will not conduct any full Mocks in the hall as these will take you out of the classroom and will take valuable time away from learning. Instead we will base all assessments during lesson time. Some of these may be past papers or exam style questions but we will not take you ‘off timetable’ in order to do this.
2. Any assessments we give you will be based on topics you have covered during your course.
3. We will not conduct any assessment between your return to school and Easter which will contribute to your final grade in order to give you time to get back into a working school pattern.
4. Teachers will inform you if an assessment you are being asked to complete will be eligible to contribute to your final grade.



5. You will all be given a portfolio to work on for each of your subjects. Your portfolio for each subject can be either paper based or electronic. You and your teachers will gather the assessments you complete in your portfolio and these will be used by teachers as the source of information to award final grades.
6. Portfolios will include evidence of the highest grade that you are working at.
7. Work which has already been completed can be included in your portfolio. Teachers of each subject will inform you of what can be included from assessments you have already completed in the past.
8. The depth and breadth of evidence will be guided by the recommendations from the exam boards, due at the end of March and we will give more information on this when it becomes available. For example, the proportion of a GCSE which assessment evidence needs to cover as well as the types of evidence they would expect to see for each subject.
9. We will design assessments to be able to provide those with access arrangements eg extra time, to those who qualify for this.
10. Once the portfolio is completed, it will be shared with you so that you have the opportunity to raise any extenuating circumstances, for example an assessment may have been completed after you had returned from a period of isolation.
11. Once grades have been decided, the portfolios will be stored centrally so that senior leaders in school and exam boards can conduct quality assurance to ensure the awarding process has been followed consistently for all students in all subjects.

We will issue more guidance on the appeals process when this becomes clearer. Results days this year have been brought forward to enable appeals to be resolved in time for any final applications to Sixth Form, College, or Apprenticeships. Year 11 will receive their results on 12th August.

We hope that this goes some way to reassuring you that there will be a robust process in place for awarding grades and that we will try to ensure as far as possible that we allow you time to prepare for assessments and to ensure the assessments you include in your portfolio are a fair reflection of what you have learned.

We would like to take the opportunity to wish you all the best over the weeks ahead and to reassure you that you will be given every opportunity to ensure that the grades you receive are a true reflection of your hard work.

Kind regards

The Senior Leadership Team

St Thomas More CVA