



Dear Year 11 Varndean families

Coronavirus update 5th January 2021

Yesterday, as well as closing schools until February half term, the prime minister announced that “not all exams will go ahead this summer” and that the Department for Education would work with OfQUAL on alternative arrangements.

This announcement has led to a range of responses here at school and I am sure it has in your homes too. It is possible that confusion, frustration and uncertainty might be among the feelings our year 11 students are experiencing today and such feelings are entirely understandable and we share them. It is testament to their resilience that they have responded so positively and there has been a huge amount of work completed and good attendance at today’s webinars.

This suggests that our students have understood the importance of making the most of the off-site learning opportunities and maximising their learning despite the frustration caused by school closure and the lack of clarity or certainty about how they will be assessed in the summer.

We would like to emphasise this message and add some reasons why a “business as usual” approach is the best thing they can do at the moment.

1. Their hard work will be rewarded. GCSE grades will be awarded at the end of the academic year based on some form of assessment even if it isn’t all of the exams that were expected. These grades will be the gateway to their next steps at college or on an apprenticeship..
2. At Varndean we are expecting to conduct more assessments later this year and to give students every opportunity to build on the progress reflected on the LC1 grades they achieved last term. Their hard work now will prepare them well for this.
3. OfQUAL will be focused on making sure grades are awarded fairly this year after last year’s concerns. There is more time this time around for exam boards to learn the lessons from last year and get this right. There is lots of time for students to make sure that their final grades reflect their hard work and ability.
4. We already know that BTECs and Cambridge Nationals will still go ahead. Exams scheduled in Music Tech, Creative iMedia and Health and Social Care scheduled in the next month will still happen. So far no-one has said all exams are cancelled and it is too early to assume that they will be.
5. Students and staff are now well practised at off-site learning and so time need not be lost at the start of this third lockdown. If students follow the timetables shared and apply themselves to the work in the google classrooms then learning should be continuous.



6. The teachers of year 11 have skilfully supported students during the recovery period and stand ready to ensure they receive high quality input during this period of off-site learning, which will be developed over the next few weeks.
7. Form tutors and school based staff are similarly supportive of students and are ready to help where they can

Unlike last time, where Year 11 students didn't need to continue with their learning, there is much still "to play for" and we urge students to make the most of the opportunities they have and carry on with their school work as normal, following a routine, communicating with their teachers and making their best efforts every day. We are confident that this time will not be wasted and we are pleased to see so much work being submitted today to demonstrate the commitment and determination our students have.

We will host a special assembly for year 11 students this Friday and hold a webinar for families next Tuesday 12th January at 5pm [Click here to join](#) or the recording will be available where we will touch upon the themes of motivation and application and share what we learned from the first lockdown.

We will continue to stay in close contact with you when we hear more information and we have emailed all Year 11 students today with a message of '*Keep up the great work and remember we are with you all the way as we have been so far in your Varndean journey.*'

Kind regards
Shelley Baker
Deputy Headteacher

Sandra Knights
Year 11 Lead