



Dear Parents and Carers

### **A level, GCSE and vocational qualifications in 2021**

You will no doubt have heard on the news that the government has decided to cancel exams again in 2021 which affects students in year 11 and year 13. I'm writing to let you know as much about this situation as we can and what we think will be the most likely course of action.

Last year exams were also cancelled and schools and colleges were involved in a process to assess pupils' grades. As part of that process the government initially intended to apply rules which would keep grades in line with previous years. In the end the government abandoned that approach in the face of public pressure. There was a significant increase in the numbers of students gaining higher grades as a result.

This year the government has made it clear that it will not use those limiting rules in the same way. Teachers will look at the standard of the work being produced by students and base their grading decisions on the quality of that work without any constraints being applied. Alongside this the government has suggested that some external assessments could be taken by students which will assist that process. This assumes that students will be able to attend school to take them but, of course, no-one can be sure about this at the moment.

Understandably you and your children will be concerned about this situation, and whatever final decisions are made, it is already clear that the process will be challenging for everybody. However, I can tell you that I know the teaching staff here carried out this process fairly and honourably last year, with students receiving grades that reflected their performance in each subject.

The government and Ofqual, the exams regulator, have issued a joint consultation about this process and have invited anyone with an interest, including parents and students, to contribute. If you feel strongly that you should have a say you can find the consultation [here](#)

Whilst we wait for more details to emerge, there are some immediate points to make. First it is vitally important that our students keep working to the best of their abilities, because work being assessed in the next few weeks and months may well contribute to teachers' professional judgements. Please ensure your child is engaging with the remote learning we have in place, including the morning registration session each day which is a good opportunity to feed back any issues or problems about work. Secondly, I want to reassure year 11 parents that we will take a balanced view regarding admission to our Sixth Form, taking particular account of what your child's teachers have to say about their approach to the subject alongside their admission interview. We understand that the current circumstances have had a profound effect on many of our students, and we will treat this sensitively during the admissions process.

We will keep you updated when there is any more information. In the meantime, thank you all for the support you are giving your children at such a difficult time.

Yours faithfully

D Baldwin  
Head, The Castle Rock School

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