

1st May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: Weekly Update – 1st May 2020

We are delighted to have seen so many students engage with remote learning this week. Despite speculation in the media over the last week, the Government is yet to confirm any arrangements for when schools will reopen. We are continuing to plan ahead to ensure that the current remote learning arrangements remain beneficial and engaging for our students. Please be assured that if we hear anything, we will let you know as soon as practicably possible.

Please be reminded that Friday 8th May 2020 has been designated as a public bank holiday in recognition of the 75th Anniversary of VE Day, marking the end of World War II. There will be no work set for students on this day and staff will not be contactable. All enquiries will be dealt with on Monday 11th May.

This week, we have again seen staff running lessons that students can dial into using Google Hangouts. For anyone who hasn't yet been able to join one of these sessions, they are accessed through Google Classroom where teaching staff will post a link that will allow students to join the session. For safeguarding purposes, these live sessions will be recorded. We will be sending an email out following this letter which will clearly outline the protocols and behaviour expected of students who join these interactive sessions; parents are requested to read this with their son/daughter.

Additionally, to provide more information and guidance regarding the situation following the cancellation of exams for Year 11 and Year 13, we have provided a link to, and a summary of, the guidance from Ofqual at the end of this letter. Our expectations remain that Year 11 and Year 13 should continue with aspects of their studies over the coming weeks.

Health and Wellbeing

Being a parent or carer can be challenging in everyday situations and now, more than ever, taking care of your own mental health is important. Staying at home more or having to work in a difficult situation can put different pressures on everyone. Changes to adults' mental health can sometimes affect children, as they may pick up on anxiety or low mood. That doesn't mean you should hide your feelings, but it is important to explain them, give young people reassurance and seek help and support if you need it.

There has been a raft of advice and guidance published by the government and other sources over recent weeks, and particularly since schools closed, which all aim to support parents and students to focus on their learning, to keep them safe and to diminish their fears and anxieties around coronavirus itself. We have included a range of advice and sources of support below.

Coping Strategies for Positive Mental Health

Here are eight things you can do to look after your own mental health:

- Be physically active by regularly walking, jogging or taking part in online exercise classes;
- Try to maintain a regular sleeping pattern;
- Keep in touch with friends and family on the phone or via video call;
- Join an online support group, for example Netmums have forums for mums and dads;

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- Try to have some time for yourself, if possible;
- Limit time spent on social media and looking at the news to reduce anxiety;
- Make a plan for each day to create structure and routine;
- Be kind to yourself; there will be good days and bad days and that's okay!

How to Support Your Child's Mental Health

Here are six things you can do to support the mental health and well-being of your child:

- Talk to them about what's going on. Find out how they're feeling and what they're thinking about. Let them know it's okay to feel scared or unsure, and try to answer their questions and reassure them. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking things through can help them feel calmer.
- Help your child to reflect on how they're feeling and encourage them to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
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- Reassure them that this will pass, you're there for them, and you will get through this together.
- Spend time doing positive activities with your child to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns without having a 'big chat'. You could try reading with them, playing, painting or cooking.
- Keep as many regular routines as possible so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.

Young Minds - Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Young Minds has a range of advice that you may find useful and is available by clicking [here](#).

The Young Minds Parents Helpline continues to operate during the pandemic; the helpline is free of charge and available on **0808 802 5544**, Monday to Friday for anyone concerned about the mental health of a child or young person.

NSPCC – Advice for Children, Parents and Families

Whether you are working from home with a family for the first time or supporting your children with anxiety, the NSPCC has tips and advice for parents and carers, available on line by clicking [here](#).

The section entitled '*talking to children worried about coronavirus*' provides useful guidance on discussing feelings and worries, keeping in touch with family and friends, balancing screen-time, creating structure and routine and helping to give young people a sense of control.

The NSPCC have a helpline for parents and carers where counsellors are available to talk through any worries, concerns or anxieties. Please reach out if you need help by calling **0808 800 5000** or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Department for Education and Public Health England – Advice and Helplines

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Public Health England has published some guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and looking after their own during the coronavirus pandemic. This is available by clicking [here](#).

The Department for Education have launched a new helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and pupils can contact them by calling **0800 046 8687** or emailing DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Online Safety

It has always been important to make sure children remain safe online. This is even more important now, as we have had to adapt to the current situation; school closures mean that young people are likely to be spending more time online, both accessing work and for pleasure.

As an Academy, we are continuing to provide safe online learning environments, by ensuring resources and tools are safe to use and compliant with data protection requirements. It is important that parents and carers are aware of what their children are accessing online and are able to protect them from risk.

Opportunities for children to talk to and play with friends are currently limited to online interaction. Whilst rare, there are negative influencers who use the internet, social media and online gaming to groom children and young people and spread extreme ideas.

Boredom and increased time spent online unsupervised could cause children to engage with new people, potentially making them more vulnerable. Groomers and radicalisers can target young people by sending friend requests on popular sites and platforms to see who responds. They may strike up a conversation to build a relationship with them and ask them to chat privately. These chats can sometimes happen on forums which allow anonymous posting. The content is often unsuitable for under 18s and is not a safe place.

Some groomers may seek to commit sexual offences against children, including sharing explicit images, whilst radicalisers want as many people as possible to believe in their extreme views. They may encourage young people to take action which might break the law; this is how people are drawn into terrorism.

To keep children safe, ensure where possible that they are using technology in an area of the house where adults can see and hear the nature of any interactions taking place. Children should also be dressed appropriately if using a webcam.

Internet Matters

Internet matters is the main online safety advice site for parents in the UK. Internet Matters has a wealth of information for parents, including simple tutorials on how to set up an internet filter on your broadband, settings for all devices, advice and guidance and much more. It is available online by clicking [here](#).

Reporting Concerns

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If you're worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating online, you can make a report to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) online by clicking [here](#).

If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's wellbeing or safety, please contact our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Caroline Hickman, to report your concerns.

We are here to help. The Academy can be contacted by email to info@wmgacademy.org.uk or by telephone, where messages are routinely monitored; please let us know if we can help in any way.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs K Tague
Executive Principal



Mr M Brady
Associate Principal

Grading for Summer 2020 Examinations - an overview for Year 11 and Year 13 Students

As you will be aware, we outlined the government's position on summer examinations and grading in our last letter dated Friday 17th March and offer here an update regarding examination grading for 2020 summer examinations for Year 11 and Year 13.

You will be aware that Ofqual have launched a consultation on the details of proposals for GCSE and A-Level exam grading this summer.

Whilst nothing will be set in stone and finalised for another few weeks, it seems sensible to assume that this now forms the basis of what will happen. You can read this document by clicking [here](#), but we have summarised the key points as follows:

For all GCSE and A levels :

- Schools must provide exam boards with the grades they think students were most likely to receive in each subject, alongside a rank order of all students doing each subject.
- When submitting this information, schools need to make all their judgements using **everything** they know about students. This includes, for example, classwork, homework, performance in tests, mock exams and any coursework completed (or partially completed as the case may be). It is important to understand that schools will use **all** this information to make a judgement about what grades students were most likely to get if schools had not been closed and exams went ahead as usual. This **will** take into account the likely progress students would have made during their remaining time at the Academy as they 'ramped up' their preparation for exams and engaged in intervention and support from their teachers.
- The guidance states that, "where additional work has been completed after schools and colleges were closed on 20 March, Heads of Centre should exercise caution where that evidence suggests a change in performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done." With this in mind, in our letter of the 17th April, we did not request that students submit any additional work completed after the Academy was closed on 20th March 2020 for use in grading but did encourage students to undertake tasks that we felt would complete content that was outstanding and give a better grounding for courses they may choose in the future, as well as helping keep them in a routine. Moving forwards, we will continue to post content and tasks to assist with this but these will be optional for students to complete and staff will hence not be following up non engagement or completion of set work for Year 11 students.
- It is very important for students and parents to be aware that Ofqual are being very clear that schools are not allowed to share the information they submit to the exam boards. This is to prevent a situation where schools are put under undue pressure by families to influence the process. Ofqual state that any attempts to influence school judgements "may be investigated by an exam board and if found to constitute malpractice, may result in sanctions". Therefore, we respectfully ask that parents and students avoid contacting teachers to discuss individual cases and to understand that teachers have been advised not to engage in any discussions.
- The guidance states that "once centre assessment grades have been submitted, exams boards will carry out a process being developed with Ofqual to statistically standardise the grades between different centres". The model will combine a range of evidence including:

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- Expected grade distributions at a national level
- Results in previous years at individual centre level i.e. WMG Academy's previous results
- The prior attainment profile of students at centre level ie the Year 11 an Year 13 previous WMG cohorts -this means that the grades WMG Academy and indeed, all other schools submit and the final grade that students then go onto receive, could be different.
- Exam results days have been confirmed as 13th August for A Levels and 20th August for GCSEs. The intention is that there will be an opportunity for students to take exams in the Autumn term if they are not happy with the grades they are awarded. Perhaps understandably, there are no details available on this yet. It is possible, for example, that exams will only be available in some subjects. However, it is presumed at this point that students will be able to take some or all exams in the summer of 2021 but we will await more details further down the line.

What does this specifically mean for Year 11 Students for GCSE?

- Results for all courses will be awarded on the 20th August – we will release further details on what this day will look like as social distancing guidelines continue to be reviewed.

What does this specifically mean for Year 11 Students for OCR Nationals in Engineering and i-Media?

- The information on how these grades will be determined was released later than for GCSE. This has now been confirmed and will follow the same process as GCSE. However, in the interim of receiving this information some Year 11 parents have raised concerns regarding coursework, particularly in Art and Engineering. The initial guidance from Ofqual was to continue with this work while a fair and objective plan was generated for students across the country. As the school closure has gone on, the guidance from Ofqual has been that students and schools do not need to complete the coursework element of the courses and teachers will base their judgements on the detailed records they hold, up to the Academy closure on March 20th. This is to ensure fairness for all students who will be in vastly differing contexts and circumstances following the closure. We apologise if Year 11 students felt pressured or bombarded with requests for work from teachers in coursework elements of certain courses; staff were simply trying to keep all options open in terms of what they could use to base grades on. This letter reinforces and reassures Year 11 students and their parents that there is no requirement to submit any further work to the Academy for final grading purposes

What do Y11 students need to do now?

- Teachers will still continue to set some work for Year 11 on google classroom. As mentioned, this work is now optional for Year 11 students and is to encourage students to keep learning and to maintain good working habits. In addition, depending on what course Year 11 students have applied for next year, there will be a presumption that the student will have finished all of the content in relevant courses they studied in Year 11 to enable them to make the appropriate start on their new courses – this is one of the main reasons why content for some courses is still being posted online.
- Sixth form enrolment will now go ahead broadly as usual but we will be conducting Guidance Meetings via telephone or video links. Other Post 16 institutions and colleges will be doing

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likewise and students who have applied outside of the WMG Academy Sixth Form should check with the provider that they have applied to for further details.

- We realise not having the opportunity to complete coursework may be disappointing to students, particularly in Art, Product Design and Engineering where some students have spent considerable amounts of time on this work. Of course, should the current lockdown restrictions be eased and the academy be able to open for students, these students would be invited to come in (if they wished to do so) for some sessions to complete for their own satisfaction, the 'finishing off' of their project or enhancing their portfolio of work to show future employers or colleges.

What does this mean specifically for Year 13 Students following A-Level courses?

- Results for all courses will be awarded on the 13th August – we will release further details on what this day will look like as social distancing guidelines continue to be reviewed.
- Year 13 students following A Level courses are not required to submit any further work for final assessment grade purposes. Staff will now use all of the information that they have to enable them to grade and rank students.
- We realise not having the opportunity to complete coursework may be disappointing to students, particularly in Art, Product Design and Engineering where some students have spent considerable amounts of time on this work. Of course, should the current lockdown restrictions be eased and the academy be able to open for students, these students would be invited to come in (if they wished to do so) for some sessions to complete for their own satisfaction, the 'finishing off' of their project or enhancing their portfolio of work to show future employers or Higher Education Institutions.

What does this mean specifically for Year 13 students following a BTEC course?

- As we are still awaiting the similar clear guidance for BTECs that has been provided for GCSEs and A Levels, **we do still need** Year 13 BTEC students to engage in and complete all tasks that are being set. We will of course immediately review that position once the guidance comes and we do expect this guidance imminently. However, due to the different nature of BTECs, the age and maturity of the students and the different balance of internally assessed and externally assessed units, it could put a student at considerable disadvantage if a student ceases to work now on units that the awarding body then subsequently asks for a grade on. Whilst this may not happen, we will be unsure until that exact guidance comes out and therefore the risk of stopping working now is just too much of a gamble. Hence, we respectfully request students remain focussed and working despite their obvious frustrations until we are certain on exactly how we will be asked to calculate their final grades.

What do Y13 students need to do now?

- Teachers will continue to set some work for Year 13 students where it allows any final subject content to be covered and secures the foundations of knowledge and understanding for future courses. This work is optional for students to complete but we encourage them to do so as future employers or education providers will expect that they will have fully covered all of the topics in the course that they have been awarded a grade for. This is particularly important for students who have applied for a pathway where their new pathway or course is underpinned by some of the content covered in their Key Stage 4 courses.

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What does this specifically mean for future pathways, Higher Education Institutions, Colleges and Universities?

- As far as we are aware at the moment, the UCAS process for university applications continues as normal. When we receive any further information on UCAS applications, we will of course pass this on to students and parents. In the meantime, applicants to University would be wise to check information that they may have emailed out to students or posted on their websites.
- Companies and businesses are continuing to operate under extreme pressures and in a totally new environment and hence students who have applied for employment positions or Apprenticeships should continue to check for updates and information with those companies and try to not get too concerned if information appears to be limited as just because they do not have the resources to communicate effectively at the moment about future opportunities, this does not mean that they won't be offering them.

Online Parenting Support

Online parenting information including videos are available at :

www.coventry.gov.uk/parentingadviceandsupport

Information on how families can access advice from their local Family Hub is available at

www.coventry.gov.uk/familyhubs

10 emergency food hubs are operating across the city.
They can be contacted on 08085 834 333 for more information.
This line is open between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

