

Dear Parents / Carers

I emailed out on Monday but I understand that not all parents received my communication. I'm sending this one via email and through SIMS Engagement to try to combat this issue. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you have offered and to address a few common issues which have emerged.

Work for Y11 and Y13 students

A number of parents have been asking about national arrangements regarding awarding examination grades. Please see the links below for the guidance that I have been sent so far, although it is fair to say that we have yet to receive great clarity.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced?_cldee=ZXhhbXNAd2FsdG9uLnNOYWZmcy5zY2gudWs%3d&recipientid=account-3ac475d11309e3118b6278e3b519b0a5-f4a8e3e6e31b4ee69fa498b155e88bd0&esid=ab932919-be6a-ea11-a811-000d3a49074b

It would appear that students will receive a grade derived mainly from their teachers' predictions. They will have the opportunity to appeal against this grade and they will have the chance to sit an examination once things are back to normal if they are still not happy. At this stage, we simply don't have answers to questions about Art or Technology coursework but we will let you know as soon as we hear.

Some parents have informed me that Year 11 students in particular have decided that they don't need to do any work at this time because their GCSEs have effectively finished. This is a difficult situation to control because, in all probability, work that they might complete at this time will not count towards their GCSE grade (although obviously that is subject to further government guidance). The school's position is that we will continue to deliver the KS4 programme of study to the best of our ability and that students should continue to work on this. That is relatively straightforward for us to organise but far, far more difficult for us to police and for you to enforce.

So, speaking practically, I intend, after Easter, to ask staff to provide specific work aimed at preparing students for A Level / BTEC Level 3 study. I will ask staff to load this work onto our shared one drive which will be accessible via the front page of our website. I suspect that this will include reading lists / articles that will set the students up well for starting in the sixth form in September. Please bear with us whilst we start to populate this area.

This should provide help for those students who are coming back to Walton for their Post-16 study but it will be trickier to cater for students who are leaving us. I can only suggest that they select the

work that is most appropriate to them for their chosen future study and that they concentrate specifically on English and Maths work as these two areas are vital components of Post-16 college work.

Similarly, it will be difficult for us to set specific work for Y13 students who will be going to University in the autumn. I would strongly suggest contacting individual university departments and asking them for reading lists (much of this information may well be freely available online). When I look back at my own university experience, it was always the reading that was the toughest aspect to stay up to date with. I would consider this as a real opportunity for our Y13 students to “get ahead of the curve”.

Just finally on predicted grades: we don't yet know the specific details of the process that will be followed but we clearly cannot enter into individual discussions / negotiations. We want all of our students to do well and to be properly recognised for the work that they have done; we are sympathetic to their plight! However, I will instruct individual staff not to respond to requests about predicted grades and I would appreciate it if you could reinforce this message at home.

Student anxiety about the amount of work being set

A few parents have emailed me to say that younger students in particular are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of work being set. We are going to issue a quick survey via Survey Monkey to see if this is the case generally. In any case, I have communicated my view that children in KS3 should be aiming for 3 hours a day; children in KS4 should be aiming for 4 hours and sixth formers should be aiming for 5 hours a day. I have asked Dr Stec this morning to amend timetables so that a more realistic amount of work will appear via SIMS for your children. This is likely to be sorted out by the time summer term starts. In the meantime, a personal message to any anxious students from their Headteacher: “Do what you can and please don't worry that you will get into trouble if you don't have time to complete work – you won't!”

At the same time, there will be some parents and students who want more work! We intend to address this issue by creating a series of extension tasks which will be accessible via the website. Again, please be patient whilst we populate this.

Going forward

I have asked Mrs Pearce to look into ways of delivering new content to students in the summer term. She is investigating this and we will write out again when we have finalised our plans. Currently, we are minded NOT to go for “live” lessons – we simply think that too many things can go wrong with this approach. I have also asked her to look into the most efficient and effective way of providing feedback to students.

Clearly, any solutions we come up with will not be as good as having our students here in school with us but, as we keep saying, these are truly extraordinary times. I promise you that we will continue to do our very best but there are bound to be unforeseen issues and I simply ask for your continued understanding and forbearance, Please continue to use our

support@walton.staffs.sch.uk

email to alert us to any issues. We are monitoring this regularly.

Stay safe!

Neil Finlay

Headteacher