

Dear Parent/Carer

At the end of another week in which education has been very much in the news, please let me try to provide some clarity.

Exams for Year 11 and Year 13 students

Whilst national decisions still need to be made about final assessment, we have tried to provide some clarity about assessments in coming weeks.

As you know, the Ofqual consultation is still taking place, and while we don't yet know the outcomes of that, we do know that teachers will have to base their Centre Assessed Grades on 'robust evidence'. There is also the *possibility* that students will have to sit some 'mini-tests' in the summer, as outlined in the consultation.

As a result, the three secondary schools in the town still think it is important for students to sit mock exams, for 3 key reasons:

1. to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability in at this stage of the course;
2. to provide students with some realistic examination practice ahead of any final mini tests, should they take place;
3. To provide teachers with some up to date 'robust' evidence, which they may need to use as *part* of their decisions in awarding grades.

Students, we are told, are due to return to school on 22 February, *but this may change*. We do not think it would be fair or practical for Year 13 students to sit mock exams that week, and so the current plan is that mock exams will take place for Year 13 in their third week back at school, i.e. the week beginning 8 March. This gives them two clear weeks back in school to get back into a school routine, have lessons and work with their teachers to prepare for those exams. If the return to school is delayed due to an extension of the current lockdown, then we would look to delay the exams further so that - as long as we can fit them in before Easter - Year 13 students would still have two clear weeks in school before any mock exams started. The second phase of Year 11 mocks (part 1 was completed in November) will take place in the two weeks beginning 22 March.

Please be assured that we want students to be able to achieve their very best. We want them to feel supported to demonstrate what they do understand rather than what they don't, and so we will look to make the exam papers that they sit accessible and relevant, testing them on work they have already covered, while maintaining the 'robust' standard expected of a Level 2 (CNAT/GCSE) or 3 (A Level/BTEC/CTEC) qualification. Teachers will be working across the Sleaford Joint Sixth Form to ensure parity across all three schools at Level 3.

Students in Year 13 would be well advised to begin revising and consolidating prior learning in readiness for these trial exams. All students should also continue to engage with their remote learning and complete any NEA tasks, as teachers will be looking holistically at students' performance when deciding on grades this summer.

Examinations consultation

The government and Ofqual have published a consultation for teachers, school leaders, parents and students on the way grades will be awarded to Year 11 and 13 students this summer. You can find the consultation on GCSEs and A levels [here](#).

An accompanying consultation on Vocational qualifications (BTECs and CTECs) can be found at [here](#) We encourage all stakeholders to respond and earlier this week gave students a summary of the document and encouraged them to respond also.

Planning Day

Thank you to those who have taken time to reply our recent surveys, and in particular to the one that the governors have sent out this week. A common theme for staff and students has been the different demands of working online each lesson. Students are finding it takes longer to submit and organise work and files whilst staff have reflected on the additional time it takes to plan a high quality online lesson compared to a face to face one. Based on the feedback that we have received from students, staff and parents, we feel it would be prudent to have a day during which staff and students are away from their screens. This will be **Friday 29 January** and will be happening in all three of the town's secondary schools. This will allow staff time to meet in departments, look ahead to the next few weeks of online learning, plan delivery and assessment and share best online teaching practice. Students will not be taught live lessons on this day but will have the opportunity to independently consolidate their work, finish and submit any outstanding tasks, do further reading or organise revision materials, read, exercise or take part in some of the optional extra-curricular challenge activities set by staff. The school will remain open to key workers' children and vulnerable students on this day.

Year 9 Options Programme

Over the next few days all Year 9 students will receive a paper copy of the Year 10 Options Booklet. This is something all students should read and discuss with their parents over the next few weeks ahead of the following key dates:

- Thurs 28 Jan Y9 Careers Assembly
- Mon 1 February Period 2 9B Options Introduction *(via Teams during normal Core PE lesson)*
- Wed 3 February Period 3 9W Options Introduction *(via Teams during normal Core PE lesson)*
- Fri 5 February Period 4 9L Options Introduction *(via Teams during normal Core PE lesson)*
- Tues 9 February Period 1 9C Options Introduction *(via Teams during normal Core PE lesson)*
- Wed 24 February (4pm) **Final** deadline for completing the options form via Microsoft Forms

Due to COVID 19 restrictions we are unable to host our annual Options Evening this year. Students will be given the opportunity to discuss potential subject choices, if required, with their form tutor and subject teachers in the weeks commencing Monday 1 February and Monday 8 February.

Update on the testing programme and daily contact testing

Recent media coverage has suggested that the programme of mass testing of staff and students in secondary schools and colleges has paused, this is incorrect. The main schools and colleges testing programme, using rapid lateral flow tests to find asymptomatic staff and students and those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) but do not have symptoms, is continuing. However, following [new advice from NHS Test and Trace and Public Health England \(PHE\)](#), we are temporarily pausing the daily contact testing element of the testing programme, which was in place as an alternative to self-isolation for those who came into contact with positive cases in schools. This will enable further evaluation to take place

Critical Worker Supervision

If you haven't already done so and need a place for your child in the critical worker provision from Monday - Friday next week please complete [this form](#).

And finally.. Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher said, "Change is the only constant in life." It certainly feels like that for all of us in the Carre's community at the moment, but as we continue to pull together and support one another we believe that our students will feel the benefit of our efforts and come out of it at the other end as better people.

I wish you all a relaxing weekend and hope you are able to treasure the moments, however, small with your loved ones.

N M Law
Headteacher