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19 August 2020

Dear parents and Year 11 students,

I hope you have all had a relaxing summer and are now gearing up to the new term. Thank you so much for the support so many of you have sent for our Year 13 students following the downgrading of our results and your rallying behind us. I am delighted that Year 11 will be spared the anxiety experienced by our Year 13 on that front and I would also like to remind them that your places in the Sixth Form at Borlase are secure. We made that commitment to you at the outset and we will honour that decision tomorrow. I was delighted with the way you embraced the induction and the opportunity to start A Level work and I am excited to work with you as Sixth Formers!

### **Receiving your results.**

We are continuing with the process of emailing your results as planned. In the morning, log in to your school email account and you will receive an email soon after **8.00 a.m.** That is the earliest we are permitted to start sending out results and it could take 20 minutes to get through everyone. In the email there will be a link to a short Google Form asking you to confirm your decisions about the sixth form.

There will be an opportunity for you to tell us if you wish to change the subject which we will need as we will need to review if there are spaces if it is a different course. We would contact you by early next week if there is a problem or need to discuss this.

This is all you need to know for tomorrow, but if you want to understand the process for awarding grades, please read on.

### **A change to the way your grades have been decided.**

Many of you will have heard about the Ofqual algorithm in discussions about last week's A level results. It was proved to have been applied unfairly to many schools, and negatively particularly to those with large numbers of high attainers. **Thankfully we are now rid of that part of the process.** I would like to share with you the process that was used to allocate your Centre Assessed Grades as these are the grades you will receive on Thursday.

Before results were published we were not permitted to discuss these or the process of awarding them with students or parents as this could be construed as malpractice and result in qualifications being cancelled. As the grades have been published for A Level students, I have now shared the process with them and their parents. It is

therefore in our public domain. The grades themselves will now be the results you receive on Thursday morning. There may be a few exceptions as the government agreed on Monday, that where the model produced a **higher** grade, the student would still be awarded that grade.

### **Centre Assessed Grades**

Centre Assessed Grades were the grades schools were asked to submit for students to feed into the Final Calculated Grades to be awarded by Ofqual.

Schools were asked to submit the grades that students were “**most likely to achieve**” if they had sat the examination in the summer in every subject. This had to be the grade that reflected the most realistic view of what the student would achieve based on the evidence the school held; although clarity wasn’t given immediately, it was later made clear that the evidence had to be based on work prior to March 20th.

The Centre Assessed Grade could not be what we *hoped* our students could achieve; it had to be the most realistic grade based on the evidence we had.

Schools were told by the Department of Education to ensure their grades were not over predictions; they had to consult their school’s previous exams results to ensure that their teachers’ predictions were accurate. Teachers therefore had to look back at their predictions in recent years to review how accurate their predictions were in comparison to the actual grades awarded to be sure they were predicting accurately. Where departments had been overgenerous with predictions in the past they needed to adjust this. They were informed by Ofqual and the Department for Education that grades submitted that were **not in line** with the school’s recent data would be downgraded. Grades had to be rigorously based on evidence.

### **The evidence schools could use for Centre Assessed Grades included:**

- Mock Examination Grades
- Other topic test data
- Essays
- Classwork
- Coursework (in certain subjects)
- Practical work (in certain subjects)
- Orals (in languages)

### **The Process**

Schools were asked to award a grade to their students - e.g. 6, 7 and then put their students in a rank order within that grade. Heads challenged the directive that we could not put any child on an equal rank with any other child. However, this challenge was not accepted. Teachers across the country were faced with agonising discussions where they had to look at so many students on the same grade and determine exactly the rank. In grammar school cohorts this was incredibly difficult as we have narrow grade distribution models. However, we did this through hours of discussion and revisiting scripts in lockdown. Departments moderated all the grades

across teachers to ensure that every teacher was marking with the same level of accuracy without one teacher marking more generously than another. Grade boundaries were checked to ensure all teachers were applying these correctly. This was checked by the Head of Department and then shared with the senior leadership team. The pastoral team and SENDCo checked any special considerations and SEN adjustments with the examinations officer and finally the overall grades of each department were presented by the Director of Studies and the Examinations officer to me, the headteacher to be finally signed off.

A governor sub committee convened to review and then approved the process.

We, like you, would have preferred you to have had the opportunity to sit the exams.

With the centre assessed grades in rank order, we had to check our overall data against the school's last few years of exam results. Ofqual had not yet decided whether they would use last year's, the last two years average or a weighted average. We worked with 2019 as we felt this reflected the trajectory of improvement we were on as a school.

|       | 2018 | 2019  | CAGS submitted                               | Calculated Grades received |
|-------|------|-------|--|----------------------------|
| 9     | 19.6 | 22.01 | Withheld until tomorrow (for legal purposes) | N/A                        |
| 8/9   | 43.3 | 47.54 |  |                            |
| 7/8/9 | 67.9 | 70.21 |  |                            |
| 6-9   | 87.0 | 87.67 |  |                            |
| 5-9   | 96.5 | 96.3  |  |                            |
| 4-9   | 99.6 | 98.8  |  |                            |

The grades we awarded for 2020 were **slightly higher** than our last year's data. This was because this year's students' grades that we had reached through the process above, were genuinely higher. We thought we might have been brought down a little bit but we felt these were the grades our students "**most likely to achieve**".

## **No Algorithm - Centre Assessed Grades**

As explained, as the algorithm was proven to have been flawed and unfairly applied, it was therefore agreed on Monday that they would scrap the algorithm and there was no time to develop a new one in time for results and the start of school in September. Therefore the CAGS **are the grades you will now be awarded.**

We entered this process with integrity, following the guidance and believing that the statistical model would serve all schools fairly.

## **External Appeals Process**

The documents that have been on the website (Parents and Carers/ Exams) about appeals since last week set out the original grounds on which you can appeal and how to do this . These have been changed several times. However, as the Final Calculated Grades have now been removed only the appeals process related to the Centre Assessed Grades apply.

**The appeal to improve a Centre Assessed Grade set out by the DfE is the opportunity to sit an exam in October/ November. The timetable for these exams are on the website.**

As a school we made the decision to accept our students into the sixth form to study A Levels whatever the outcome and we would like you now to focus on preparing for A Levels which I am sure you will actually have the opportunity to sit. However, if anyone does want to sit an exam we recommend that you consider this carefully, and discuss it with your teachers.

I wish everyone all the very best on Thursday!!!

Kind regards,

Kay Mountfield  
Headteacher