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Dear Parents and Carers

It was with great sadness that we received the news last week that schools were to close, and we appreciate that you and your child will be worrying about the implications of the Department for Education's (DfE) decision to cancel this year's GCSE exams.

Thank you for being so patient as we awaited advice from the DfE and Ofqual about the arrangements that will be in place to ensure that our Year 11 students are not disadvantaged by the decision to cancel the summer exam season. We will of course continue to update you as we receive further advice so please do regularly check the school website to ensure that you keep abreast of the latest information.

Before we update you with the details regarding the DfE's decision, we first wanted to thank you and your child. As we have watched events unfold across the world and Europe over the last few weeks and have made arrangements in school with our students, the messages of support from parents has been incredible. Thank you to those parents who may have sent messages to teachers who have supported your child in their education, to Ms Allender who has worked tirelessly to support your child in their education over the last 5 years, and to those parents who have sent messages of support to the leadership team. We won't pretend that the last few weeks have not been difficult, but your kind words of support and encouragement are sincerely appreciated.

On Friday 20 March, Cotham School said goodbye to our Year 11 students. We had only a short amount of time in which to put together a celebration assembly for our Year 11 students, some of whom will return to us in the North Bristol Post 16 Centre, and some of whom will not. It was indeed a celebration of their time with Cotham School; a wonderful opportunity in which to thank them for sharing the last 5 years with us. Our teachers shared memories of their time with students, there was lots of laughter and lots to celebrate. We do hope that your child was able to put aside some of the worries that they will undoubtedly have at this moment, and that they were able to find some joy in the occasion. We know that our teaching and non teaching staff certainly did.

September Awards Ceremony

We will ensure that we organise a further opportunity for our students to come together in the new academic year to celebrate their achievements. Ms Allender will keep you updated once we confirm a date.

Year 11 Prom Rescheduled

The Prom committee have confirmed that they have managed to re-schedule the school Prom for Friday 11 September. If your child has not managed to purchase a ticket yet and still wishes to attend, they can do so via Wisepay. The deadline has been extended for payment until the end of June and the number of places has also been increased to 180. Consent forms must also be completed and returned, in order for your child to attend, and this is now likely to be managed electronically - there will be more information to follow regarding this.

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Uniform donations

We always welcome good quality uniform donations from our departing Year 11 students. It's very likely that your child will want to keep their Cotham sweatshirt as they were the last year group to have this item in their uniform and as a result it's something of a collector's piece. However, if you have good quality trousers that you would be happy to donate to the school, we would welcome them. Our student reception will remain open every day should you want to drop them off.

Year 11 GCSE Exams

The Department for Education has released the [attached](#) information regarding the summer exam season.

The following is however a useful summary:

- The DfE, Ofqual, and exam boards will work with teachers to provide grades to students whose exams have been cancelled this summer.
- The Government's priority is to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including going into employment, starting college or sixth form courses, or an apprenticeship in the autumn.
- This means ensuring GCSE students are awarded a grade which fairly reflects the work that they have put in.
- Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.
- To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.
- Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible.
- The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July. In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. We will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances.
- In the event that a student is not happy with the outcome of this process, there will also be an option to sit an exam early in the next academic year for students who wish to. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.

What this means for us now

It is vital that students who have Non Examined Assessment continue with this (as far as is practically possible) and stay in touch with their teachers. Where this applies, teachers will request that students continue with their work. It may be necessary to ask students to hand this work in in the next few weeks and we will give further advice regarding this as advice is released to us and we agree timescales.

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Over the coming days and weeks we are expecting more specific details from Ofqual and the exam boards and as soon as we have this information we will share it with you.

Please be assured that as more detailed instructions are released to schools in the coming weeks we will be working very hard to ensure that all entries are treated fairly. In the meantime, may we ask that you do not contact individual teachers to ask any individual questions as we do not, as yet, have any further information

Staying informed

Please ensure that you refer to the school website to keep up to date. We will of course text you to let you know if we have posted an important announcement on the website.

Please also encourage your child to log into google classroom regularly in case we have posted an announcement to them.

Continuation of Learning via Google Classroom

We know from the many messages of support that have been sent to us recently that you recognise that Cotham School is not solely concerned with GCSEs, and that we have at our core a determination to ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop academically, socially and personally, with a focus on kindness and respect for everyone in our school community.

We firmly believe that Learning is something to be enjoyed. As a result, your child will continue to be set work remotely by their teachers until mid May. We are realistic in our expectations of students' completion of this, and will not be chasing students to complete the work. However, it is vital that your child does complete this work where:

- The work set relates to Non Examined Assessment (coursework) which may be required in order to allow us and the exam boards to arrive at a predicted grade for your child
- You or your child may worry that the grade awarded in the summer does not reflect your child's potential, and that your child may therefore choose to complete a further assessment early next academic year.
- Your child plans to continue studying a subject next year either as an A Level or other Level 2 or 3 qualification. It is important that your child does not forget their learning from GCSEs and is ready to commence their new courses in September.

Remote Learning Plans for all of our students have already been added to the school website. Our intention is to be able to continue to produce these in 2 week cycles, the first of which is Remote Learning Plan Cycle 1 covering the period from Monday 23 March until Friday 3 April. We hope to produce further cycles as we approach their start dates but this may be subject to change.

In summary:

- Each subject will create work that students should complete for each of the lessons that students will miss as a result of the school closure;
- Students should follow their usual school timetable and complete the work for each lesson that they miss using the instructions provided;

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- Further Remote Learning Plans will be produced each covering a 2 week period, cycle 2 will cover learning from Monday 20 April to Friday 1 May;
- Instructions for each lesson and the supporting resources will also be posted on Google Classroom for students to access there.

Any questions that students may have about the work set should be sent via Google Classroom or email to enable staff to respond appropriately. Staff will feedback to students individually or collectively where appropriate.

Supporting Your Child's Mental Health

We are aware that this is a difficult time for families. We would like to sign post you to some support available online.

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Support can be found using the following links, [Mind](#) and [BBC](#). Advice for talking to your child about the Virus can be found on [Child mind](#)

If You Are Concerned About The Safety or Welfare of a Child During Closure

If you feel that a child is at urgent risk of harm please contact the First Response Team on 0117 903 6444 during office hours, the Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615165 at all other times, or the police on 999 if the child is at immediate risk.

You can report any information to us during closure using the email address safeguarding@cotham.bristol.sch.uk. Our dedicated safeguarding team will continue to monitor this during closure.

Yours faithfully

Mr Christopher Reed
Deputy Headteacher