

Our Ref: PRC/JYD

7 December 2021

Dear Parents/Carers,

I feel a sense of déjà vu as I write this. We're back to wearing face coverings around school, overseas trips this year seem less likely and close contact isolation with the new Omicron variant seems more likely. The hope of face-to-face Christmas assemblies has quickly subsided. Following consultation with Public Health our Sixth Form Open Evening and Year 9 Options Evening in January will both be virtual events. This is all immensely frustrating and not what we had planned. To say things are fast moving in schools is an understatement but as always, we will continue to navigate through all of this in the best way we can.

Summer Exams 2022

As mentioned in previous updates the current plans are **that exams will still take place next summer**. The full contingency guidance to schools regarding Teacher Assessed Grades should exams not go as planned can be read following the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-contingency-arrangements-for-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-summer-2022/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-other-exam-centres-on-contingency-arrangements-for-students-entering-gcses-as-and-a-levels-the-advanced-extension>.

The main points from this guidance are below:

- Subjects which have NEA should complete this fully as they will be marked and moderated in the usual way if exams do go ahead, which is the current plan.
- With the exception of Art and Design qualifications, students taking internal assessments should not know questions beforehand, should work independently without assistance and should not have access to books or revision notes.
- Assessments should be timed and supervised but can be done in classrooms.
- Students in Maths and Science will have access to formulae sheets.
- Wherever possible, all students will be assessed using the same material at the same time. This may not always be possible, therefore assessments will be covered at broadly the same time and cover the same content.
- Ofqual suggests using three assessments ensuring that there is an early one if the pandemic disrupts later in the academic year (Autumn/early Spring term) and later ones (Summer term) when more recent evidence is available.
- The total assessment time should not exceed the exam total assessment time.

Preit Chahal Principal

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- Assessments will cover broadly the same range of content as the exam.
- Assessment materials will follow exam papers, where possible, and marked using exam board criteria.
- Wherever possible, students should be told in advance when the assessments are happening so that they can revise and prepare thoroughly.
- No resits.
- Special consideration should be raised before the assessment or immediately afterwards.

Subject areas are tweaking their assessment plans in light of this guidance and with the students' best interests (personally and academically) in mind. **The Year 11 and Year 13 mock exams scheduled for next half term will count should exams be cancelled.**

Start of next term and testing

The Department for Education asks that secondary pupils should take one test on-site as they return to school in January after the Christmas holidays. This should then be followed by another at home three to four days later. Schools were given two days to stock take and order everything we needed to prepare for this. The Government are allowing schools to have a staggered start in the first week back to enable this to happen therefore below are the testing dates and start times:

	Testing day	Return to school date
Year 11	Tuesday 4 th January	Wednesday 5 th January
Year 12 & 13	Wednesday 5 th January	Thursday 6 th January
Year 10	Thursday 6 th January	Friday 7 th January
Year 9	Friday 7 th January	Monday 10 th January

Parents who have completed the consent form for testing are not required to do anything.

Those who have not previously consented but now wish to can complete a form following this link:

<https://vlevm.ga.newcastle.sch.uk/app/os#!transitionportal/importantinformation/consent-form>

Two testing slots will be available each day and students are free to arrive at any time during these slots. Arrival will be through the Dance Studio fire exit next to Student Entrance and out of the Gym. Students will be guided to these areas on arrival. All Main School students should wear full school uniform and Sixth Formers should have their lanyard.

- 9am - 12 noon
- 12:30 - 14:30

Year 11 Mocks

Due to the above and to give students slightly longer to revise we have made the decision to delay the Year 11 mock exams by four days. These will now **start on Monday 10th January.**

Home testing over Christmas

We encourage all students to home test over Christmas twice weekly. Should you need more kits please go to Visitors Reception and see Mrs Philbrick before the end of term.

School Gateway App

This term we have introduced School Gateway, our new parent engagement app that will allow you to communicate with us and view your child's achievement and reports at any time. School related communications such as Principal updates, exam timetables and reports will all be sent via School Gateway and we therefore ask that parents **download the app** to help us keep you up to date with what is going on at school. **If you have not received an email** with your

invitation to download the school Gateway app please contact us at dataupdate@ga.newcastle.sch.uk

Young person vaccination clinic to open in city centre

Children between the ages of 12-15 will be able to attend a walk-in vaccination clinic at the Grainger Market. Each Saturday, between 10am – 5pm, young people will be able to attend the market for a vaccine without an appointment. Previously, this age group could only be vaccinated in school or through appointments from the national booking system.

It is advised that children are with a parent or carer, but the on-site clinical will vaccinate young people who consent themselves, subject to a consultation.

The clinic will offer vaccines to everybody over the age of 12, not just children and young people.

Here's hoping you and your families have some nice things to look forward to over the next few weeks despite the continued turbulence and uncertainty.

Thank you for your continued support.

Preit Chahal
Principal