

Our Ref: PRC/JYD

24 March 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

It's hard to believe that this week marked the two-year anniversary of when our Prime Minister announced that schools were closing and the country was going into lockdown. I feel very proud of the way all in our school community: staff, students and parents, have shown solidarity through the immense challenges we have all faced during this time.

I have three things to update you on today:

1. Attendance
2. Summer GCSE and A-level exams
3. Covid Update

Attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age and it is a priority to ensure that as many children as possible regularly attend school. Of course, we are fully aware and sympathetic that in the current climate attendance can look a little different to the norm but as a school we continue to follow any DfE guidance. As part of our ongoing commitment to attendance at Gosforth Academy we would like to draw to your attention to the Attendance policy below. This outlines our policies and procedures in relation to tracking and supporting pupils whose attendance is lower than we would hope.

<https://www.gosforthacademy.org.uk/filecache/114/3e7/4573-ga-attendance-report-and-action-plan-2021-2022.pdf>

In the front of the main school student planner you will see the Attendance Pyramid, which shows if students fall below 90% they are in the red zone and classed as a persistent absentee. At this point attendance can be legally monitored by the Local Authority and grades will be affected. The stark reality is that, with below 90% attendance, students have less than 50% chance of achieving Grades 9-4 compared to their peers of similar ability.

Preit Chahal Principal

Hugh Robinson CEO

Knightsbridge, Great North Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2JH

T +44 (0)191 285 1000

E admin@ga.newcastle.sch.uk W www.gosforthacademy.org.uk

We are extremely proud of all that our students achieve, therefore, by encouraging high levels of attendance we are determined to work together to ensure every child reaches their full potential by being present in school for as much time as possible. Strong attendance is particularly vital for the next few months as Year 11 & Year 13 enter into the final stages of their exam preparation. Year 10 and 12 will also be gearing up for mock exams or, in the case of Year 9, starting new courses. We are making attendance a big focus at present, so you may receive more information regarding this.

Summer GCSE and A level Exams

A-level Results Day = 18th August 2022

GCSE Results Day = 25th August 2022

The Government have made it clear that these are going ahead and with five teaching weeks to go students should now be working hard. The changes that have been made to facilitate an exam season taking place this summer include:

- **Advanced information** being released which can be seen using the links below. This has been shared with students by subject teachers.
- Some subjects have no Advanced Information e.g. GCSE English Literature, History and Geography as papers contain **optionality** instead.
- Some subjects e.g. Maths have **formulae sheets**.
- Some subjects have **changes to NEA**
- Changes to **exam scheduling** has taken place so that papers are more **spread out** in the event that a student misses one due to covid.
- Appeals and the structure and format of papers will be the same as 2019

I'd like to dispel a myth that if a student does not attend an exam then they will automatically receive a Teacher Assessed Grade. This is absolutely not the case. Exam boards have spread out their scheduling in each subject more than a normal year. The only time we are likely to use TAG evidence is if the Government decide to completely cancel exams nationally, which at present seems unlikely. You should also be aware that there is no opportunity to sit exams in November 2022 unless it is GCSE English or Maths resit.

AQA

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/2022-exam-changes>

Eduqas (WJEC)

<https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceSingle.aspx?rId=1764>

Pearson

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/campaigns/summer-2022-support.html?utm_source=ealrtairelease&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GBE_DGS0821SUM22

OCR

<https://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/2022-advance-information/>

The main messages from the school with regards to exam preparation are:

1. Most students have started revising out of school hours (despite what some may say) - **if you haven't started, you're in the minority.**

2. Take every opportunity. **Attend all after school and holiday sessions** you are invited to.
3. If you are off due to Covid or general sickness be **proactive** in finding out what you missed.
4. Revise **little and often each day**. Intense cramming won't work and leads to unnecessary stress.
5. Build in some relaxation time by reading, doing some exercise, seeing friends or getting some fresh air. It's normal to feel stressed in the lead up to exams so make sure you look after your own mental health or seek support if you need to.

Covid Update

School is certainly feeling more normal, thankfully. We have good reason to feel positive about the final term and beyond. However, you will be well aware that Covid is still having a huge impact on student and staff attendance. There is also a recruitment crisis in the secondary sector and it is nigh on impossible to get supply staff. Thank you for bearing with us on all of this.

I'd like to end by wishing you all a restful Easter holiday when it arrives. We finish on Friday 8 April at 12:25pm.

Thank you for your continued support.

Preit Chahal
Principal