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Rosebery School

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16 October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing to confirm our approach to the upcoming GCSE mock examinations, which begin on 9 November 2020.

We are very mindful that the cancellation of exams last year, and the decision by the Scottish government to cancel their GCSE equivalent examinations, has increased already high levels of anxiety among our students and has meant that the mock exams have taken on an even greater significance for our students than usual. The government has announced this week that exams will be delayed by a few weeks - starting with English Language on 26 May 2021 - but their reluctance to determine a clear plan, were exams to be cancelled once again, is also a source of significant concern to teachers, students and parents/carers.

Mrs Browne has met with the Year 11 students today to explain that this series of mock exams would not, and could not, be a defining final grade for any student, should teacher assessment replace exams as happened last year, and that this definitively is not the purpose of the students sitting the mock exams before half term. At this stage of their GCSE studies, we would have usually have already completed a series of mock exams. However, because students were not able to sit their Year 10 summer exams, it is important that they begin to experience a series of standard examinations in controlled conditions. Therefore, this mock exam series will carry no greater weight or emphasis than that placed on any other internal assessment carried out in school and will be used primarily to assess the knowledge and understanding of work covered prior to, during and since lockdown, so that we can plan appropriate teaching, intervention and support for all students going forward. In the new year, the students will sit a more extensive set of papers which will give a more accurate idea of the most likely outcomes in the summer, but again, these will be an indicative exercise designed to support students to understand precisely the steps they have to take to improve between then and their June examinations.

We are also aware that many students and parents/carers will be anxious about arrangements for the mock exams if a student is forced to self-isolate or becomes unwell during this period. Each year we have students who are too unwell to sit their mock exams and we always make individual arrangements with that student and their parents to allow them to catch up on these assessments at a later date. How many mocks are eventually sat is entirely dependent on the severity and length of the illness, but in most cases, students have been able to sit the suite of exams. Should your child become unwell during this period with either COVID-19, or non COVID-19 symptoms, which preclude them from taking their exams, we will make individual arrangements for catch up based on each student's circumstances.

Head of School: Mr D Lach BA (Hons) NPQH Executive Headteacher: Ms R Allen MA NPQH

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However, the highly unusual context in which we are currently working, means that a student might have to miss one or more mock exams in school, even if they are perfectly well, because they have been forced to self-isolate. In this scenario we would like to offer the opportunity for the student to sit the mock exam at home, but be supervised remotely via Google Meet. This offer will, clearly, depend on the working environment for the student at home, access to technology and the length of time that the student is due to be away from school because of self-isolation. Once again, an individual decision will be made with each family about the best way forward, and as with students who are unwell, it might be that some exams are sat back at school on their return. We have included a summary of our approach to the mock exams which we hope clarifies the way in which these will operate for students who are unable to be in school.

Finally, please find attached the mock timetable for Year 11 students, exams for which begin on 9 November.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Browne in the first instance if you have any queries or concerns.

Yours sincerely

Richard Styles
Head of Upper School

L Browne
Head of Year 11

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