



21 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

THE 'ASSESSMENT CONUNDRUM'

Yesterday, Education Minister Kirsty Williams announced that learners in Wales studying for GCSE, AS and A levels this year will receive grades determined by their school. This policy decision was confirmed following further disruption to face-to-face learning caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Minister said:

"The worsening situation with the pandemic has meant we have no choice but to revisit our approach to ensure wellbeing and public confidence in our qualifications system.

The proposals we are announcing today puts trust in teachers' knowledge of their learners' work, as well as their commitment to prioritise teaching and learning in the time available to support learners' progression.

Teaching the core content and aspects of each course remains my absolute priority for learners in exam years, so they are supported to progress with certainty into their next steps, with confidence in their grades."

You can read the Minister's written statement in full here: <https://gov.wales/written-statement-update-general-qualifications-2021-0>

We are now required to work with the examination board at pace to establish a new assessment plan - unique to this school - which will allow us to determine grades fairly given the level of disruption experienced by pupils. This will be our priority for the remainder of the spring and summer terms.

Who is affected by this announcement?

All learners in Years 11, 12 and 13 who are undertaking GCSE, AS and A level qualifications will now have grades determined by the school.

Learners in Year 10 will have a grade for GCSE English Literature determined by the school. Plans for next year have not yet been released.

Learners in Years 7, 8 and 9 will not be directly affected.

What evidence will be used?

A range of evidence will be used to determine grades. This may include Non-Examination Assessment (NEA) elements, mock-exams, classwork and other such assessments. Some past paper questions set by the examination board may also be considered.

How will this affect UCAS applications?

Learners in Year 12 will be awarded an AS grade that is centre-determined. This will recognise the hard work and learning that they have undertaken this year, provide for progression into the A-level course of study, and support UCAS applications, but will not contribute to the final A level award in 2022.

Will sixth form admissions continue?

Learners in Year 11 wishing to progress to sixth form education will continue as planned. Online applications begin later this term and centre-determined grades will be accepted as entry criteria for post-16 programmes of study.

Will we receive progress reports?

Our intention to publish termly progress reports will continue for Years 7, 8 and 9 only. The school would not wish to issue assessment data now which may cause unnecessary worry to learners in Years 10 to 13 or prejudice centre-determined grades at a later time. Our new assessment arrangements must be carefully designed to protect wellbeing and ensure fairness.

What about engagement reports for distance learning?

These reports will continue as planned for Years 7 to 11. The first report, due this week, has been delayed by one week as a consequence of technical difficulties experienced by large numbers of children, now resolved.

I'm worried!

Please, don't be. The centre-determined grade approach will allow us to maximise teaching and learning whilst minimising time wasted on unnecessary examination preparation. As always, the wellbeing of learners will be at the heart of our decision making and every child will be afforded frequent opportunities to demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding. We will do all we can to give every learner the best possible chance.

In the meantime, our current blended learning arrangements will continue. Live lessons, which lend themselves to the 'connection' and 'activation' phases of learning, remain our focus in the coming weeks. When learners return to the classroom, we shall begin to apply

and assess their learning with the 'demonstration' and 'consolidation' phases, best achieved face-to-face. This means that parents and carers will need to exercise further patience before we are able to describe your child's progress and understanding meaningfully. You can remind yourself of the opportunities available here: <http://www.stteilos.com/blended-learning/>

American author Harold Stephens said, "There is a great difference between worry and concern. A worried person sees a problem, and a concerned person solves a problem." We may be concerned about the 'assessment conundrum' but we are not worried. Place your trust and confidence in us and we will ensure that we solve this problem in such a way that all are treated fairly - and with dignity - and with every possible chance to shine.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ian Loynd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'I'.

Mr I Loynd
Headteacher