

28th January 2021

Dear Parents/ Carers,

As you are undoubtedly aware, we are in an unprecedented situation regarding the assessment and examination of GCSE subjects this year. The situation is still fluid but the expectation is that students will be teacher assessed and sample papers will be produced by the exam boards which will aid this assessment.

Earlier this academic year, when exams were to be sat and externally marked for English Literature, some adjustments were introduced with an aim to relieve exam pressure on students. This resulted in exam boards allowing one of the texts studied to be dropped from the final exam. As a department we have had to make decisions on which texts to focus on in the best interests of each group, which may not be an individual student's preference. Exam boards are still requesting entries, though it is now likely that papers produced from exam boards are internally assessed. Time will undoubtedly be short to prepare for such assessments in the summer term. Poetry from the Anthology is a sensible option for one of our Literature texts, as we can just focus on a small selection of the poems and the skills cross reference to the other 'compulsory' paper which includes unseen poetry.

It seems very likely to be the case now that other work completed can also be taken into consideration, so there is nothing to stop certain individuals completing a further assessment, for example on the play 'Inspector Calls' or 'Blood Brothers' if they feel this would be of particular benefit to them.

We need students to trust in and accept our judgement regarding the Literature texts we focus on in lessons as we move forward this term and next. Their priority should be to focus on working towards developing their skills and knowledge. I am sure you realise we have every students' best interests at heart but will need to remain objective in our assessments. Part of this will be a rigorous process of standardising assessments across the whole year group, so individual English teachers will not be responsible in isolation for awarding grades.

Many students are working extremely conscientiously under difficult conditions and should be commended for their maturity and focus. However, there remains a significant minority who are currently a cause for concern regarding their submission of work. It is clearly vital that we see evidence of completed class work and tasks set during lockdown, even if these are not formal assessments as such. Being merely present at lessons is not sufficient. We need to see active engagement and prompt submission of writing tasks set in order to check progress. We will continue to set exam type questions every two or three weeks, as we would in school. Please be mindful of how important this evidence is.

We will also need to submit a grade for the speaking presentation component, so students will be invited to complete this via Teams over the next fortnight if this was not previously completed in Year 10.

If we feel it is in your child's best interests to be entered for Functional skills as well as GCSE Language and Literature you will be informed of any separate arrangements this may entail and will be contacted separately.

Please be reassured we will continue to support your child in every possible way, to facilitate them achieving their best in GCSE Language and Literature.

Mrs E Hennessy : Head of Faculty English and Expressive Arts