



Southend High School for Girls

An Academy Grammar School

Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4UZ

Headteacher: Mr J Carey MEd (Cantab), BA (Hons), LLE, NPQEL

23rd March 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

This week we begin a period in education never experienced before; aspects of our daily lives have been changed in ways that we could never have imagined.

There are several things I will address in this letter:

1. Communication.
2. Learning from home.
3. Wellbeing.
4. Key worker students at school.
5. Examinations.

The most important thing to remember is that we need to stay safe. Your wellbeing and the wellbeing of SHSG staff is the top of my list.

Communication

Thank you for your emails and even cards; I am pleased that you are happy with the frequency and information provided to date. The SHSG staff and I will keep communication channels open and give you regular updates. We can still operate as a working school, even if there are only a few students in the building! Over the course of the next few months we won't get everything right; this way of working is clearly new – there is no template. Just let us know how to improve. However, I am confident that, working as a team with you, we will get the very best deal for our young people and help them prepare, 'match-fit', physically and intellectually for September.

We will aim to publish a monthly Gazette and invite you to email your own stories and high-quality work that can go in the Gazette. This will be an excellent opportunity to bring our SHSG family community together, sharing some good news stories and celebrating achievements. Email jholbrook@shsg.org to share items for the Gazette.

Learning from home

My three children (Year 10, Year 8 and Year 6) are now home/remote-learning and are not going into school, just like yours! I appreciate, therefore, how difficult this can be, especially when they cannot visit family and friends or have visitors. There is a wealth of advice available on this subject. I have attached to the email a parent and a student guide that you may find helpful.

Furthermore, I have designed an Infogram of challenges for your child to complete, to keep them busy! I will update this each month. This is in addition to the more personalised work set by subject teachers. Our aim is to keep students intellectually challenged and to stimulate their love of learning and passion for their subjects. It would be wonderful to receive, through the email above, photos, essays and even links to podcasts and YouTube. I will continue to award Headteacher Awards and share via Instagram (please follow shsgheadteacher) and the Gazette. We are also quality assuring work through a monitoring process with directors of faculty checking students' work with subject teachers.

Wellbeing

We will be sending PSHE activities for students to engage with throughout the coming weeks. In addition, your child's Learning manager and Form Tutor will send out a weekly wellbeing check-in email to their tutees.

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Key worker students at school

Thank you for following Government guidance on key worker children attending school. We are here for you; however, I need to reiterate a clear message that this provision is for emergencies and is underlined by the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson and by the Head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman:

'You should only send your child to school on Monday because you have to, because your work is critical to our COVID-19 response. If you are able to keep your child at home, you should.' Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education.
'Parents need to hear the message: keep children at home if at all possible. Support the decisions your child's school are making. They are working to keep everyone safe and slow the spread of COVID-19.' Amanda Spielman, HMCI.

I would need to question why very bright teenagers, especially those in Years 9–12, need to be supervised from 9:00am–3:30pm at school rather than being at home. The more students that attend school, the more staff we need in school. This increases the rates of spreading COVID-19 from journeys to and from school and then inside the school building. Staff and students could then unknowingly be taking the virus back to their own homes, to their own families.

Examinations

It seems clear that Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education, wants students to have the grades they need and deserve – and get these quickly. The DfE report states that: ***'The Government's priority is now to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives.'***

You may find it helpful to have the information in as concise and straightforward approach as possible:

- Regulators will develop and set out a process that will **provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance** as fairly as possible, and will work with the other exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students.
- Exam boards will be asking **teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade** that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead.
- To produce this, **teachers will be asked to take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment**. Clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges soon.
- Exam boards will then **combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment**, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in.
- The aim is to provide these calculated **grades to students before the end of July**.
- These grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years.
- We'll also aim to ensure that the **distribution of grades** follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students aren't disadvantaged.
- Students will **be able to appeal their grades** if they don't believe the right process has been followed.
- There will also be an **option to sit exams early in the next academic year** for any students who wish to – and students can also choose to sit exams next summer.

In short, we look at your work across the year, your assessments and mocks, and report an estimated / most likely grade to the DfE. They check this against your SATs or GCSE marks to ensure we are not overestimating the grades. A final, national check is put in place regarding the distribution of A Level and GCSE grades compared to previous years.

Please find below a link to the DfE report on cancelling the 2020 GCSE and A Level examinations:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-details-on-exams-and-grades-announced>

We feel that we have set up an efficient operation in order to lead, manage and run the school in this virtual way until September if necessary. I am in regular contact with governors, the Local Authority, my Ofsted Inspectors' network, the DfE and local headteachers across Southend and Essex. We are sharing best practice as different approaches and models emerge.

As stated above, we will continue to communicate with you and provide regular updates.

Yours sincerely,



Jason Carey
Headteacher

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