



Dear Year 11 and 13,

I've spent the last few days trying to imagine how you might be feeling following the government announcements earlier this week on exams. I suspect some of you may feel relieved. The examinations are daunting and can be gruelling and so many of you have experienced a very high level of disruption so you may feel that at least this will be a fairer way to allocate grades nationally. However, I know many of you will feel hugely disappointed. I know how hard all of you have been working. As a school, we are in a good place and as a group of staff and students we have been making such great strides that I am confident you would have all performed very well in examinations even with the disruption we have had this year. There is also something to be said for going through the process of exams which for many young people can feel like a right of passage, something giving you a sense that you have earned what you have achieved. Not having this chance will leave many of you feeling more than a little disappointed.

I wanted to say a few things to give you some reassurance:

- Firstly, it's not just you in this situation, it's pupils all over the UK and to a large extent throughout the world who are experiencing this. The positive now is that you will not be up against pupils in parts of the country who have not had to isolate at all – now you will be judged fairly on your progress.
- Secondly, examinations are only one way to assess your capability. Many high performing countries around the world have very different exam systems where students do not have to sit 24, two-hour papers (or in the case of ALevel three-hour papers!) in order to prove your worth. You will all still go on to do great things with your lives and the knowledge you have gained over the past 12-14 years of education will stay with you. Many of the things we have been working on over the past three years at Saint Benedict (boost, regular recall starters, knowledge organisers/books, improving the curriculum etc) as well as the general focus on teaching and learning have seen our results improve year on year – what this means is that each new group of students who leave us know even more than their predecessors and you are no different. You have the knowledge and you have the skills whether they are tested in an exam or not.
- Thirdly - this situation is likely to work to your benefit. Last year the Government ended up using teacher assessments and the pass rate both at Saint Benedict and nationally was the highest ever. Your teachers know you well and know what you are capable of. They will ensure you achieve a grade which fairly reflects your progress. If you are worried about some of your previous grades, key assessments are still to come and you still have time to improve on them but overall it is likely that, again, you and pupils nationally will achieve a better set of grades on average.
- Finally, one of my favourite quotes is by John Lennon from the Beatles who said 'everything will be alright in the end and if it's not alright it's not the end'. I remember saying it to the staff on the day we went into special measures which is still one of the hardest things I have ever been through and at the time it felt very unfair. But it actually made us stronger and better. Adversity has a way of doing this. The challenge you are all going through at the moment will only make you stronger, more resilient, more adaptable, but right now you may not be feeling that. Try to stay positive and keep going and you will emerge stronger. This is not the end – for you it is only the beginning!



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**St Ralph  
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Catholic Multi Academy Trust



I have only two requests of you:

1. Keep working – teachers will base the grades they award on assessments which you have already completed but crucially also on tests which you are yet to complete. These will be planned for some time after you return to school so it is vital that you stay on top of any work which your teachers set during lockdown to avoid falling behind.
2. Ask for help when you need it – email your teachers. Don't quietly fall behind. And if you feel we need to be doing things differently to support you please tell us and we will review our plans to ensure we are doing all we can to help you.

By the time you begin the next phase of your life and your education I pray that we will be emerging from all of this and you will have your whole lives to look forward to with a set of grades behind you that you have really earned. Stay positive, don't let up with your work and the staff and I will be praying for you all over the months ahead.

God Bless.

Mr Gritton



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