Dear Yr11 Parents,

I am writing to update you of the situation regarding how your son will be awarded his GCSE grades this year. The government announced yesterday that it will be asking schools to provide GCSE predictions based on our knowledge of your son’s performance in each subject. They also announced that these predictions would be regulated. However, at this stage I am not sure how this will actually work.

At Brymore, we have a tried and tested system which has resulted in boys achieving grades which usually place the school within the top 15% of the country. We know our system works and we will be basing our predictions on that. Boys sit mocks in December and traditionally do poorly. This serves as a wake-up call that revision is actually needed. Boys then sit mocks again in March where we normally experience an upturn of results by a grade or more. However, from Easter onwards boys would have returned to an intensive revision programme, where lessons would have been suspended and we would have been providing targeted focus sessions, on each exam area directly prior to taking this exam. Year on year boys report how much they value this approach. With weekly walking-talking mocks, weekly English practice essays, focussed revision and the insistence that no boy leaves Brymore without all coursework completed, boys often outperform other boys nationally because of this approach.

When we submit our predictions, I will be instructing staff to take account of the expected improvement we know happens every year. The predictions will not be simply whatever your son got in his mocks either in December or March. They will be honest and fair and not just based on what he has produced so far, but also on what we know boys consistently do between now and when the exams were due. We will not over-inflate grades and I suspect we may have to produce some evidence to support them, but we will also not disadvantage your son.

I want to repeat what I said in a letter to the whole school earlier this week. The whole staff team were really saddened about the way five years of Brymore ended for this year’s year 11. It was heartbreaking for us all to see boys we have cared for and worked with for five years confused, lost and uncertain about everything that has happened over the past few days - and of course, their future. I give you my promise we will have a Leaver’s Service when this is all over. Everyone will be invited back and we will celebrate your son’s Brymore experience properly. I can assure you staff want this as much as the boys.

Finally, I am convinced we have done everything we could to help prepare the boys for life after Brymore. When it comes to an interview, going to college or actually starting work they will stand out. I understand that it is natural for many boys to feel deflated, to perhaps even consider their efforts wasted, since they now will not be able to show what they have learned in an exam environment. But I want to reassure you that what they have learned is important, regardless of exams. Boys have learned to how to learn, how to manage their time, how to cope under pressure, how to listen to and use feedback. For those going onto A-level and Level 3 courses at college, the knowledge they have gained at GCSE will be the foundation for their next stage of learning. Without it, they would not be able to progress to the next level. With regard to college applications, if needed, I am happy to contact colleges directly for individuals who are concerned, to advise them of your son’s suitability for his chosen course, though I suspect colleges will be accommodating, given that everyone is in the same boat. Therefore, boys should not worry about their college places being affected.

If you have any concerns please contact me on either:

MThomas4@educ.somerset.gov.uk OR

07730 218898

With your support, I believe that together we have produced a group of Brymore boys I am extremely proud of and I Iook forward to seeing the boys and their families at some point in the future.

Once a Brymore Boy always a Brymore boy!

Best wishes and stay safe

Mark Thomas