Dear parents

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well. Following on from the government’s announcement yesterday afternoon, detailing how GCSE grades will be awarded, I am writing to try and give further clarification and what it means for the boys.

As we thought, teachers will be expected to give a ‘centre assessment grade’ for each subject. This is to be their best professional judgement of what they think each student would have actually got had they sat the exam as normal. This will take into account their ability level (largely based on Key Stage Two scores – which are used as the national benchmark), how they have worked throughout the course, any graded work they have submitted such as mocks, homework tasks, class tests etc and the assumption that they would have continued to work hard, attend our revision sessions and benefit from the intensive programme they would have had after Easter.

Specifically, we have been asked to give a grade for each boy and then rank all of the boys to whom we have given the same grade, from one downwards. So, all boys who have been awarded a 5 for a subject will then be ranked from 1 (the boy we are most confident would get that grade) downwards, to the boy we are least confident about. This will be repeated for all grades. This will allow the exam boards to then carry out a statistical analysis to ensure these grades are fair and have not been over inflated by schools. The exam boards will take into account the starting point of each student (using Key Stage Two data), how well the subject has typically performed in the past with similar students and how well the school has typically performed in the past. As stated above, this is to ensure the process is as fair as possible and to prevent schools from over-inflating grades.

What this actually means for the boys at Brymore is that they are in as strong position. Brymore has consistently been a high achieving school (boys doing better than expected compared to other schools) for the past eight years and we were in the top 15% of schools in the country last year. In reality, we may well have been as high as the top 5%, but this level of detail was not released, as rankings only place schools in bands – and we were in the highest possible band. This effectively means that when we submit grades that appear to show boys making better than expected progress, Ofqual will see that this is what typically happens. When a historically lower performing school submits similar grades, they are more likely to have their grades downgraded. In addition, we have a very experienced team of teachers who not only know the boys well, but the exam requirements in real detail. Over a third of staff have been or are examiners in their subject including all three core subjects. The vast majority of staff have been delivering these results at Brymore for some time and have a wealth of experience. I have a very established leadership team. Mrs Davis has been leading teaching and learning since my arrival at the school and we have been a high achieving school ever since then. I therefore have every confidence in the internal processes that will be employed, to ensure all boys are awarded a fair grade. All grades will be ratified by my leadership team before they are submitted.

The government have now stated that no work can be submitted from now on by students to provide ‘evidence’ to help improve their grades. Similarly, we should not consider work completed since Year 11 were sent home. They have also said that we are not allowed to discuss individual grades or rankings with parents so please do not ask staff for them and they will be suject to possible change by the exam boards anyway.

Please be assured, we know our boys well. We know the exam requirements well and we have a proven and long track record of boys overachieving at Brymore. Therefore, I will be expecting (as will Ofqual) the grades to reflect those of previous years – boys doing better than they would have been expected to do at other schools. If your son was only just beginning to realise the need to work hard, do not worry. That is typical and we will assume all boys will have come to this realisation after Easter.

I realise this is unsettling for you and your son but I truly believe this is the best solution to a very difficult problem.

The link below takes you to a letter from Ofqual to students.

[Letter to students - Summer 2020 grading](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877830/Letter_to_students_-_Summer_2020_grading.pdf)

The link below is advice to schools and parents/carers from Ofqual

[Guidance for teachers, students, parents and carers: Summer 2020 grades for GCSE, AS and A level, Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in maths](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877842/Summer_2020_grades_for_GCSE_AS_A_level_EPQ_AEA_in_maths_-_guidance_for_teachers_students_parents.pdf)

Ofqual have said that exam results will be released on schedule and that students will have a chance to ‘re-take’ exams in October should they wish to improve their grade. Once I know how this will actually work, I will write to you again with more detail.

I wish your son every success and I hope this letter provides some reassurance for you, in as much as I am able to do at this stage.

Best wishes and stay safe.

Mark Thomas