



6th January 2021

Further Update

Dear parents

I am going to condense a lot of information into one letter to you, as I feel that all of our community need to be informed of our current thinking with regards to the changing picture for education and our future plans based on recent Government announcements. Therefore, once again, I apologise for the length of the letter and I will also produce a voiced over powerpoint at the end of the week should you wish to use that method of communication.

I am truly devastated about what many of our students, and parents for that matter, are going through and I want to reassure you that I am with you, and them, every step of the way. The decision to move schools to remote learning is not what anyone wants, but from a health perspective necessary, especially with Government estimations of the infection rate being in the region of 1 in 50 people. However, the impact of the lockdown and not being in school is not a good situation for any young person to be in and those in examination years have today found out that their grades will be determined by Centre Assessed Grades, with the detail not yet determined and being consulted on next week.

In this letter I will provide you with information about a host of topics and I hope you find this useful.

GCSE, A Level and BTEC Grades this Summer

Gavin Williamson today confirmed that GCSE and A Level examinations would not go ahead this Summer and would be replaced by Centre Assessed Grades (CAG). There was very little information about Vocational Qualifications but I am working hard with the contacts that I have to find out more. There was also little in the way of information from the Secretary of State's speech and in the daily bulletin I receive from the Department for Education regarding the awarding of CAG grades, other than a consultation that will begin next week. I can only apologise to the students and parents affected by the lack of detail we currently have.

I want to reassure you that every single staff member will be here to support our students to get through the next few months and whilst I cannot provide you, and them, with all of the answers to the questions I know you will have, I will be doing assemblies this week with Year 11 and 13 to speak with them and provide them with some clarity using the information I have at my disposal. I will also speak with Year 10 about their RP exam in the next week or so to ensure their questions are answered too. Once we know more, I will organise a meeting for parents of the year groups affected, which will include a presentation followed by a Q&A session. I do not want to do this until we know more because I believe that by not having all the answers it will do nothing but create further anxiety.

The students in these year groups must compose themselves and focus on their studies, as the work that they complete between now and the awarding of grades may have an impact on the results they receive. As soon as we have detailed information we will analyse, plan and communicate clearly. I fully appreciate that this lack of detail will be disappointing, we know how hard they have all worked towards these exams and they have our continued support.

Upcoming assessments (external and internal)

BTECs

Over the coming weeks many of our students are due to sit external BTEC examinations. On Monday it was announced that these will go ahead, on Tuesday it was then passed to the school to decide whether these should go ahead based on Health and Safety. I am aware that there are examinations due to be taken next week and, after a long discussion with my senior team today, I will be making a decision tomorrow and will write to you to inform you of my decision and what this means for your child. I will not make a rash decision when it comes to our students futures and health and I ask for your patience on this.

Internal assessments

As a result of the lockdown and announcements about examinations we have had to make some changes to the internal assessments being carried out at the school. These are summarised below:

- Year 8 assessment week – this will take place remotely in WB 18th January.
- Year 13 Prelims – postponed until further information is received about grade awarding – significant notice of their date will be given.
- Year 11 1B PPE - postponed until further information is received about grade awarding – significant notice of their date will be given.
- Year 10 PPE including RP – postponed until further notice - we will ensure that a 4 week gap between announcement and sitting of these will be provided.

COVID19 Testing

Our testing centre is now up and running and we have carried out rapid flow tests on over 50 staff today (all of which I am pleased to report were negative). We will begin student testing tomorrow for our Pop Up provision and we intend to test all students before they return to the school site (after lockdown is eased). It felt like a significant step for the school today in the battle against COVID19 and I would like to thank Mrs Scott, Business Manager, for her work in co-ordinating the set up of this and helping me over the festive break. I also want to thank the staff who have offered their help and the community volunteers who have come forward.

Remote Learning

I am incredibly proud of how the staff and students have adapted to remote learning over the past few days and it feels as though we are in a very different place to where we were in the previous lockdown. Students are engaged, focussed and determined to succeed and I have seen the provision being offered when visiting the 'Pop Up' School classrooms. Please can I also ask you to remind your child that the expectation of behaviour in a virtual lesson is the same as a physical classroom and misbehaviour will be dealt with in the same way. As

always, your feedback is important and I have created a survey to gather your views on what we are doing currently. I will review this and make changes where I feel necessary so please do take the time to fill it in at the link below:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKJM6rukjGAucGpckvLoleDD-yrGdzcmssLW2RZs7CplyEAw/viewform?usp=sf_link

Pop Up Provision

A reminder that we are offering a provision in school for children of key workers or are classed as vulnerable. The students are supervised whilst following remote learning provision on Google Classroom. If your child falls into a category defined below and you wish to take up the offer, please email Mrs Bendall s.bendall@maidenerleghtrust.org

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Devices and Internet Access

The Government has today announced that it is possible for data allowances to be increased where students do not have access to the internet or require extra data for learning. This must be done by the school and we ask that this is only requested if genuinely needed, due to the administrative time it will take to organise. Of course, we are happy to support those who need it and if this is the case please provide us with the information required in the link below:

<https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/about-increasing-mobile-data>

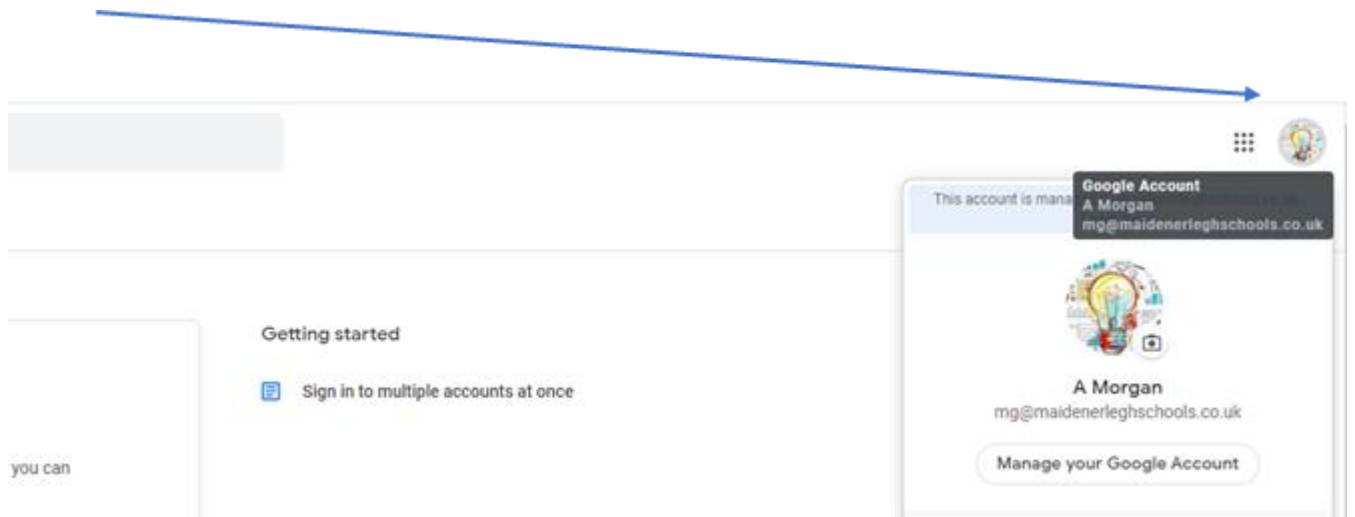
We also still have a limited number of laptop devices available, please refer to Mr Garner's letter sent earlier this week.

Google Meets

We are moving more towards the use of Google Meets for teaching and therefore students need to be logged into their school gmail account to gain access. Some devices automatically log into another gmail account and students will need to change the account to access the lesson. Mrs Morgan sent the following earlier this week to help:

'A small number of students this morning have reported being denied access to google meets. The most common reason for this is a conflict with a personal google account. If more than one google account is used on a device, then the device will default to the account most frequently used, which is usually a personal account over the school google classroom account.'

To check which account your child is using click onto the account icon in the top right hand corner of the page:



This then allows you to switch to the correct google classroom account and login. Attempts to join a google meet from a personal gmail/google account will automatically be declined as they are external to the Maiden Erlegh School google classroom framework. Further information on switching between google accounts can be found below:

<https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/1721977?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en&authuser=1>

Finally – thank you!

Thank you for your ongoing support, we are doing all we can you keep you up to date in rapidly changing circumstances. We value your feedback and I have also shared with the team some of the lovely messages of support we have received from you, during these difficult times. Our pastoral and inclusion teams are available, if your child is struggling at home and you need information on further support services, please don't hesitate to contact us. We WILL get through this together as #TeamMaidenErlegh.

Kind Regards

Paul Gibson

Headteacher

