



7th January 2021

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome back and Happy New Year; we hope you enjoyed the winter break and that your child has had a good first week back at school.

We would like to say thank you to the parents who attended the Zoom session with us this week, which focused on the move to having 100% of students in-school each day. For those of you who could not make the session, we have attached the PowerPoint. If you have any questions about the content of the presentation, please feel free to contact either of us; our details can be found on the final slide.

This week we had 18 new students join the Secondary school and we are happy to welcome them into the WSO family. A reminder to new and existing families that the form tutor is the first port-of-call for questions/concerns and they encourage you to get in touch.

This week we saw the launch of our Year 11 mock examinations. Our students behaved exceptionally well and are a true credit to the Academy. The Year 11 mocks will span over another week, with the Year 13 two-week mock exam period beginning next week. We wish our students well in their mock examinations, where we are confident they will be rewarded for their efforts.

Many of you will have questions about the GCSE, A-Level, and IB summer examinations, and the current situation in the UK is leading to a lot of uncertainty around these. We are observing the changing situation in the UK regarding examinations this summer. Things have been changing dramatically each day, leading to three versions of this statement being written for the newsletter. What we do know, as of last night, is that GCSE and A-Level examinations will not be sat by students in the UK. Grades will be awarded based on teacher judgement. This is very consequential for us, but we are still in a position of uncertainty. We have also been contacted by examination boards who have intimated that exams may still happen in countries other than the UK where governments feel it is still safe for proper preparation and administration to take place. At the moment this applies to the UAE, and we may still go ahead as normal with our sittings.

IB examinations are more complicated still. As a global qualification, the IB is being awarded in countries that are affected by Covid-19 in dramatically different ways. The stance of the IBO at the moment is that the examinations will go ahead as normal. We expect this to be modified in time and will let you know as soon as we hear something more. It is most likely that there will be a change to normal proceedings, but predicting what that will be is not possible at the moment. What we must do is prepare our students in the best way possible so that they are ready to succeed no matter what the next six months throws at them. That includes completing a robust and fair mock process, high quality marking and moderation of assessments and an unbroken period of learning for them so they are well prepared for their next stage of education, and the world of higher education and work that they will be entering in the near future.



EDUCATION

One thing we would like to focus on here is the term "Teacher Judgement". This is not an opinion of what the student can achieve, it must be based on the evidence of the assessment grades that students have achieved and the observable progress that has occurred throughout their course. Subjects with coursework will lean heavily on this to inform the grades; the mocks that are currently happening will also be essential in arriving at teacher judgement grades, and should the worst-case scenario come to pass and the summer examinations do not happen, we will be conducting more assessments in the summer term to arrive at a reliable set of grades for our students.

As always, we hold the education of the students at WSO as a priority. This includes many aspects of their personal and academic development, and is not limited to a set of certificates that they receive at age 16 and 18. Whatever the outcome of the next few weeks and months we will continue to support, guide and educate your children, and we will keep you informed of the changing situation as and when it becomes clear to us.

We are really looking forward to welcoming all our students back to onsite-learning from Sunday, but remain aware that there will be some families who opt to keep their children at home to access lessons remotely. We are in full support of this and continue to cater for all our learners. The PowerPoint details the methods teachers are putting in place to ensure all students have a positive and effective learning experience. Despite moving to 100% students 'in school', the health and safety of our staff and students remain our highest priority. To ensure that everyone in the Academy is as safe as possible, we would like to ask that any student who has taken a PCR test for Covid-19 stays off school until they have received their negative test result. This process is also being followed by staff.

Please also find attached the Term 2 assessment schedule for Years 7 to 11. This is only for formal assessments where students will be sitting them in class and does not include coursework etc. With the possibility of disruptions in the term ahead, we will communicate any changes to this schedule immediately.

We continue to welcome feedback from our parent community. As we move to this new model of inviting all students into school every day, your thoughts are valued and we look forward to hearing from you.

Have an enjoyable weekend.

Warm regards,



Daniella Aschettino
Vice Principal



Rob Curry
Vice Principal

Key Dates

Monday 4 January	Year 11 Mock Exams (2-week period)
Sunday 10 January	'Going 100%' begins
Wednesday 20 January	Year 13 Mock Exams (2-week period)
Sunday 24th January	Great Kindness Challenge (1-week period)
Sunday 31 January	GroWell Health Week (1-week period)
Monday 22nd February	Academic Review Day (Years 7, 8 & 9) – all Secondary school students access their learning from home
Thursday 25th February	International Day
Sunday 7th March	World Book Day
Sunday 14th March	Academic Review Day (Years 10 & 12) – all Secondary school students access their learning from home
Sunday 14th March	STEAM Week (1-week period)
Tuesday 16th March	Academic Review Day (Years 11 & 13) – all Secondary school students access their learning from home
Tuesday 23rd March	PSHE Day 'Boosting Self-esteem'