



**BIDDULPH
HIGH
SCHOOL**

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Chief Executive Officer: **Mark Kent**

1st April 2021

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE PERSON WITH PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Can I please start by thanking you for your patience in waiting for confirmation around grading for students in years 11 and 13 for this academic year? I know how difficult it has been for you and your child to have to wait for this and I hope that I am able to use this opportunity to reassure you about the processes that we are putting into place after Easter. I know that a few of you have been in touch to discuss your concerns and worries and I am grateful for that communication as it has helped to inform our processes moving forward.

Firstly, **I would like to confirm that the official leaving date for Year 13 is Thursday 27th May and for Year 11 Friday 28th May.** Some students may be asked to attend after this date in order to cover essential content or to sit any missed assessments following our exam board assessment window.

Unfortunately, Keele has cancelled the Year 11 Prom for this year so we will be providing an in-school celebration event that will take place on the afternoon of the leaving day. Further information will be provided on this after Easter.

We have now received, as of Friday 26th March, the formal guidance for the assessment of GCSE, A-Level and Vocational Qualifications for 2021 from Ofqual (the official examination quality assurance body). We are still awaiting confirmation from some examination boards as to requirements for individual subjects, but I feel that I am now in a position to provide an overview for the grading of students this year. We are no longer weighting assessments and exams but, instead, are looking at the range of evidence and using the JCQ grade descriptors to determine a final grade. **Attached to this letter is an overview of the grading process and FAQ's.** I will also be producing a PowerPoint presentation to clarify this, which will be available after Easter.

We will still be running our exam board assessment window from Tuesday 4th to Friday 14th May and your child will receive a timetable for this after Easter. All subjects will be working to produce the evidence we have been asked to provide after Easter and this differs slightly from subject to subject. Broadly speaking all subjects will be creating a portfolio of evidence using mock exams, classwork based on exam style questions or tests and either exam board assessment or coursework.

If your child misses any assessed work after Easter (for a valid reason) they can be given an opportunity to complete this work at another time. This will be arranged by the subject leader and may be in the two weeks following the May half-term break.

Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to share this process with you, to reduce stress on our students, and to provide a fair and robust process.

Please do not hesitate to contact the school office if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours faithfully,

E Robinson
Headteacher



Teacher Assessed Grades: Outline, key dates and FAQs

Teacher Assessed Grades Rationale:

- The grades submitted to exam boards must reflect a fair, reasonable, and carefully considered judgement of the student's performance across a range of evidence, on the curriculum content that they have been taught.
- Students and parents should be 'connected' to the grades that they receive on results day, understand how those grades have been reached and be able to clearly plan their next steps and confidently transition into post-16 or post-18 provision.
- The use of exam board assessments and mock examinations can contribute to the final grading but will not be the sole determinant of the final grade. All subjects have been asked to consider what evidence will be produced and this should be as consistent as possible across the group of students to ensure fairness.
- Although these are called 'Teacher Assessed Grades' it will not be the sole responsibility of a single teacher to determine the grades. There will be a clear and transparent process through which a grade will be determined. Moderation inside and outside of Biddulph High School will take place to ensure fairness and consistency.

Assessment Evidence:

Evidence should be based on content covered, should reflect the assessment objectives from the exam board, and subjects will provide a clear overview of how assessment will be/has been marked and moderated. We will ensure that we are as unbiased as possible, but the range and amount of evidence could vary between subjects. We will be flexible where some students have missed particular assessments, through no fault of their own, and may substitute other evidence if available.

Centres should be confident that work produced is the student's own and that the student has not been given inappropriate levels of support to complete it, either in the centre, at home or with an external tutor. Exam boards will investigate instances where it appears that evidence is not authentic. (Ofqual Guidance, 26.03.21).

Please be aware that the examination boards have made it clear that students and parents should not attempt to influence the grades that are awarded by pressuring school staff. If I feel this is happening, then we are obliged to report it to the examination board as a case of malpractice. Please trust us and our ability to run a fair and robust process. No single teacher is responsible for awarding grades. All grading will go through a system of collection, moderation, and quality assurance.

Key Dates:

Date	What is happening?
Monday 19 th April	Return to school following the Easter break
By Friday 23 rd April	Receive the exam board assessment timetable
Tuesday 4 th – Friday 14 th May	Exam Board Assessment Window
Thursday 27 th May	Year 13 official Leaving Day
Friday 28 th May	Year 11 official Leaving Day
Friday 18 th June	Final submission of Teacher Assessed Grades
Tuesday 6 th -Thursday 8 th July	Year 11 Induction to Biddulph High Sixth Form
Friday 9 th July	Year 11 Sixth Form enrolment
Tuesday 10 th August	A-Level and L3 BTEC/Vocational Results Day - school open from 8.30am
Thursday 12 th August	GCSE and L2 BTEC/Vocational Results Day - School opens at 9.00am
	Sixth Form second Enrolment Day (for those not enrolled on Friday 9 th July)

FAQs:

Question	Response
When will my child receive their timetable for the exam board assessments?	By the end of the first week back after Easter. Unfortunately, exam boards are not all fully releasing materials until 12 th April and this has prevented us from confirming arrangements before then.
I have heard that exam boards are releasing all of their materials. Is this true?	Yes, all materials will be made public on Monday 19 th April. Due to the sheer volume of materials being released we would advise against trying to use these to help your child to revise. This could easily add far more stress, but we want you to have the opportunity to look at these if you wish.
What if my child performed badly in the mock or performs badly in the exam board assessment?	There is no one determinant of a grade and teachers have identified a broad range of evidence that will be used to determine a grade. We are no longer weighting any assessment or exam but instead looking at the range of evidence and using JCQ's (Joint Council for Qualifications) grade descriptors to determine a grade.
Different subjects are assessing differently. Is this fair?	Subjects cannot assess in the same way due to the different nature of our courses. We can, however, assure you that all subjects are being quality assured and all students within a subject area are being asked to produce the same evidence.
What is tiered entry and how does this affect my child?	<p>In a few subjects, Science, Maths and MFL, we still have foundation and higher tier entry. For some subjects the content covered is different between the tiers and the questions on the higher tier are more challenging to discern between the top grades. Decisions on what tier to enter a child for are made by the subject leader and subject teacher. If a child does not achieve a grade on the higher tier, they automatically get a U grade, and this means that we have to be very careful that any student entered for the higher tier will at least achieve a grade 5. Students on the foundation tier can achieve up to a grade 5.</p> <p>Entries for this have already been made as exam boards request tier of entry when we enter students. However, it can be changed. Having received feedback from some parents, this is an area that needs to be communicated more clearly.</p> <p>We have still had to enter our students as normal this year and this has included identifying their tier of entry. We will ensure that these are seriously considered before finalising and all students who are able to achieve above a grade 5 are given the opportunity to do so.</p>
The mock grade is really good so can we just use that?	Unfortunately, we can't. We have to have a portfolio of evidence. Students only sat one paper in the mock exam series and most GCSE's have a number of papers to determine an overall grade. We have to consider a broad range of evidence before determining a final grade. This means that the final grade maybe higher or lower than the mock grade.
What is NEA and how is it used?	NEA is 'Non-examined Assessment', or coursework, and this exists in a number of subjects. We have been asked to complete this as fully as possible. Some subjects will be using this to determine a final grade.
My child has additional SEND needs. Have these been met?	Any student who has been assessed and identified as requiring reasonable adjustments has received, and will continue to receive, the support identified in their plan. The school has worked to ensure that these needs are fully met and evidenced to the exam boards.
My child cannot attend school for a valid reason. What will happen to the work that they miss?	We will provide every opportunity to enable students to complete work that they miss after Easter as long as they have a valid reason for absence. The subject leader will make alternative arrangements for work to be completed at a different time. This can take place up to and including Thursday 17 th June. If the work missed is an exam board assessment, students can expect it to be different to that sat by the remainder of their peer group in order to ensure fairness. If a child is self-isolating, there may be an opportunity to complete the assessment online at the same time as everyone else.