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Date: Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January

Dear parents/carers

I wanted to get in touch at the end of what I know to have been an unsettling week for year 11 students, their parents and carers, following the announcement of the cancellation of summer exams.

As you may know, earlier in the week the Secretary of State for Education announced that some form of teacher assessment would be used to award GCSEs this year, although further details have yet to be confirmed. Ofqual, the exams regulator, will launch a consultation next week, after which final plans will be decided.

I understand many of you will be anxious about how GCSEs will be graded – please be assured that whatever process is put in place, we will do everything possible to support Arena Academy students, and to help them move on successfully to the next stage of their lives.

Whatever is put in place, it is critical we have a wide range of evidence of your child's ability to back up any grade we submit. We will be continuing to assess their progress in a variety of ways – mock exams and written assessment, non-exam assessment and coursework, homework, classwork and attendance to online learning lessons. Therefore, it is essential your child continues to engage fully in their education – completing assignments and participating in remote lessons as much as they can. This will provide us with the right information to determine accurate grades, and ensure they develop the knowledge and skills they will need in the next stage of their education, training or work. Together with Mr Stephens I will be meeting with year 11 students during online form time on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January to reiterate these points; and I would be extremely grateful if you could reinforce this message at home and support us in getting students online and present for this meeting. Should your child need access to a device to aid their remote learning, please email [onlinesupport@arena-birmingham.academy](mailto:onlinesupport@arena-birmingham.academy)

I appreciate you will have many questions and, when we know more about how the grading process will work, I would like to invite you to join me and members of my team in a virtual Q&A. We will provide details of this shortly.

We are also working with local colleges to arrange a webinar at which they can explain how they will be considering applications this year. Again, we will provide further details of this session soon. In addition, all year 11 students will be given an opportunity to work with Digital Innovators, to develop a careers profile they can use in future applications.

I am acutely aware of the pressure year 11s are under. Tutors will continue to keep a close eye on students' resilience and wellbeing. We have excellent pastoral care in place for any student who requires it. Should you have any concerns about your child's welfare, please do not hesitate to contact their tutor to discuss any additional support we can provide.

Kind regards

Headteacher

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