



School & Sixth Form

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To all parents/carers of Lower Sixth students

Dear Parent/Carer

As we reach the half-term holiday, I should like to take this opportunity to update you on some of the current matters affecting your son/daughter and to provide you with some important dates.

**Target grades**

During the Autumn term, all Lower Sixth students were issued with target grades for each of their A Level courses and they were recorded on their Interim Reports, issued in November, and also on the Progress report which you received a couple of weeks ago. When determining a target grade, teachers use a student's mean GCSE point score as a starting point and, using national A Level performance data in individual subjects and their own knowledge of the student, produce a target grade on the A – E scale. The guiding principle is that target grades should be aspirational but realistic. Target grades are reviewed at the beginning of the Upper Sixth year and may be raised (to include the A\* grade, where appropriate) if the student has exceeded their target grade in their Lower Sixth examinations.

Lower Sixth full reports, which will be sent home before the Easter break, indicate whether students are in line to achieve their target grades. They also record mock examination grades.

**Independent Learning**

Effective learning requires that students develop confidence in their ability to work independently; we regard this as a key ingredient for success at advanced level. For their work to be fully effective, students need to study with greater independence, that is to be able to organise their time, to plan their work and to undertake tasks requiring a certain amount of initiative. We believe that a broad educational experience that offers opportunities for independent study has a long-term and enduring benefit, which extends beyond the sixth form years, into higher education, employment and adult life.

In order to encourage students to develop the ability to study independently, and to take greater responsibility for their own learning, we encourage the use of *Bay House Learning* and *Google Classroom*, virtual learning environments which can be accessed from home and encourages students to develop the independent study skills that characterise an A/A\* grade student. It is hoped that all students will make profitable use of these valuable facilities as they progress through their Lower Sixth year such that they are never again heard to claim that they 'don't have any homework'!

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## Higher Education

All Lower Sixth students will be off timetable on **Tuesday 28 April** in order to allow them to visit the UCAS Exhibition held at the University of Winchester; students have already received details on how to register for the event online. Representatives from most of the universities and colleges will be present. The event offers a valuable early opportunity for students to explore post-18 higher education options and start thinking about what and where they might like to study. We anticipate that a number of students will make their own way there, but coach transport will be available – students will receive further information in due course.

In order to support students with Oxbridge aspirations, the Schools Liaison Officers from the University of Oxford visited Bay House last term to provide a seminar on applying to Oxbridge. We hope to arrange a trip to our link college at Oxford - St Edmund's - in the summer term; further information will follow in due course. All students will be advised to research and visit a number of universities as they make decisions about their future and begin to prepare their UCAS applications later this year.

A Parents' Information Evening, which will aim to provide parents with up-to-date information on the university admissions process, is scheduled to take place on **Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm**. We will also explain the extensive help that is available to students, from tutors, teachers, and the Sixth Form team, for those beginning to draft their university applications in the Summer Term. We are also hoping to have someone in to talk about apprenticeships. More information, including a letter of invitation, will follow at a later date.

## Lower Sixth examinations and their significance

Lower Sixth examinations will take place over a two-week period from *Monday 8 June* until *Friday 19 June*. There will be no lessons during this period and students are only expected to come in for their exams.

These examinations need to be taken seriously as they form an important part of the university application procedure; admissions tutors are bound to regard them as a good indicator of likely attainment at A Level. When completing subject references teaching staff will predict students to achieve one grade higher in their A Level examinations than they achieved in the Lower Sixth examinations. Students who achieve a strong set of examination results will therefore be in an advantageous position when making a higher education application.

Students are also required to obtain a pass grade of at least a 'D' before progressing to the Upper Sixth in any given subject.

## Important dates

Students have recently been issued with a calendar containing important dates, providing an overview of the remainder of the academic year; this will be discussed in further detail with them at a forthcoming assembly. A copy of the calendar is enclosed with this letter for your information.

Following their Lower Sixth examinations, students will be expected to return to their normal timetables on **Tuesday 23 June**, when a full teaching programme will be resumed. **During these important remaining 4 weeks of term, staff will resume teaching A Level course content in preparation for the year ahead.**

## Results/re-enrolment

It follows from the arrangements outlined above that students are **not permitted to take holidays during term time**. Examination results will be issued to students on *Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July*; students who have not achieved the grades required to progress to the Upper Sixth will be required to attend a consultancy day on *Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July* and must be accompanied by a parent. For those with less urgent concerns, there will be an opportunity to discuss the results and any related matters before the end of the academic year. Start of term arrangements are still to be finalised but will be circulated to students in due course.

## **Paid employment**

An issue which often arises at this time of year is that of paid employment. It is perhaps worth reiterating our view that whilst we acknowledge that many students will want, and usually benefit from, Saturday employment, evening jobs requiring a mid-week commitment are not encouraged. In our experience, such jobs place an unfair strain on students who then struggle to meet their academic commitments. We regard 10 hours of paid employment per week as the absolute maximum commitment that a student should undertake. Students will clearly want to think very carefully about their work commitments as they prepare for their examinations.

## **Attendance and punctuality**

As you will be aware, we monitor students' attendance and punctuality very closely in the Sixth Form, believing it to be a crucial factor in determining success at advanced level; the current Lower Sixth have an excellent record of attendance. We always appreciate telephone calls from home notifying us of a student's absence and can, where appropriate, request teachers to send work home.

## **Dress Code**

As you and your son/daughter will be aware, the principle governing students' dress is that it should be 'casual but smart'. The Sixth Form prospectus makes clear that there are no particular requirements or prohibitions and sixth formers are permitted to wear makeup and jewellery so long as they do so in moderation. However, extremes of fashion (including hair style and colour), clothes that have been deliberately torn or damaged, or immodest styles are not acceptable; nor are slogans on clothing which are likely to cause offence. Hair should be of a 'natural' colour. We expect students to be role models for the Main School in terms of both conduct and appearance, and appreciate your support in helping us to maintain this expectation.

I should like to close by saying how delighted we have been with the way that the current Lower Sixth have approached their studies so far this year. They have impressed with their diligence and commitment and we have high hopes of them this summer. You may be interested to know that Bay House Sixth Form has once again performed outstandingly well in the various league tables recently published; the value-added DfE progress data places us within the top 1% of schools and colleges nationally. The statistics indicate that, when compared with state providers with more than 100 students, Bay House Sixth Form is now ranked joint second in the country. We look forward to the current Lower Sixth continuing this impressive tradition.

We hope you have found this information helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your son's/daughter's tutor, or any member of the Sixth Form team.

Yours faithfully



*Mr R Dadd*  
*Head of Sixth Form*