



20 October 2015

Dear Parents

Target Grades for GCSE courses

At Bishop Wordsworth's School we want to help your son to achieve the best possible exam results that he can. One of the ways we can do this is to set Target Grades that are achievable but offer some degree of challenge. These will help your son to have a clearer idea of the grades that he should be aiming for. They provide an effective way for him and his teachers to monitor and evaluate his performance throughout the course so that advice and guidance can be tailored to his needs.

Mrs Jenner will have mentioned the importance of these Target Grades and she will be speaking to the whole of Year 10 in an Assembly, but as Target Grades will appear on reports it is important that you are aware of what they mean and how they are produced:

- At the beginning of Yr 10 I generate the initial grades based on your son's performance in the Yr 9 Exams.
By comparing the Yr 9 Exam performance of students in previous years against their GCSE results I can identify general trends, and from these project forward from a student's Yr 9 Exam %. I assume that no student will achieve less than a C grade in any subject. In reality, only a small proportion of GCSE grades are below B (7.8% of GCSE grades at BWS were C to E in 2015 and there were no grades below this). Where subjects do not have an exam % (e.g. Art, BS and DT) I have used the student's average Exam %.

As you may be aware, English and Maths GCSEs have changed and from this September will have Grades 9-1, rather than A-G. As these new grades do not exactly match the old ones and there are no GCSE results based on this new system to use for comparison purposes, initial Target Grade for these subjects are based on more circumspect assumptions. To further complicate things, if your son is in the top set for Maths then he will have a grade A*-G as he will be taking his exam in Summer 2016 when these grades are still being used.*

It is important to note that this is merely a starting point for the next stage.

- Your son and his teachers will be discussing these raw grades over the next few weeks with a view to producing achievable but aspirational Target Grades.

One of the arguments against relying too much on such a mechanistic approach as the one outlined above, is that it doesn't take into account the individual student. That is why we feel that it is important for staff to be able to use their professional judgement and experience to set targets for each of their students that are both achievable but offer a degree of challenge. Also, it is important that your son is involved in the process so that he understands what these Target Grades mean.

- At the end of Year 10, following the end-of-year exams, your son and his teachers will have a further opportunity to adjust the Target Grades in the light of his progress over the year.

In most cases it is assumed that they will either stay the same or go up, though they may be lowered if the teacher feels that this is a more realistic Target Grade for your son.

It is important to remember that these are not predicted grades. They are grades that we feel your son should be aiming for and be able to achieve with hard work in Years 10 and 11.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

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