

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I would like to take the opportunity to summarise key points about Year 11 preparations for their Mock Exams and the Sixth Form options process.

Preparations for Mock Exams

Year 11 Students will sit their GCSE Mock Exams in the week commencing 20th January. These will be the second round of formal GCSE exams for the current cohort, following on from the End of Year 10 Exams. The Mock Exams will be sat over a five-day period. Most exams will be 90min in duration, which will allow students a minimum of a 20min break between papers, even if they have "extra-time". Subjects requiring longer papers will take place in the afternoon. Results of the Mock Exams will be released ahead of the Year 11 Parents' Day (1st March) and February Half Term. Mock Exams will be conducted under the same conditions as the public exams in summer.

A key focus of this term has been to prepare our Year 11 students for these Mock Exams and ultimately for the public exams. We have built upon the work done in Year 10 with effective revision strategies being modelled to students during lesson time and two assessments being sat by students already this term. After each assessment, tutors discuss the results with their tutees and where necessary recommend strategies to improve attainment.

On 15th November: Year 11 students completed a short handwriting exercise assessed by our Learning Support Team, led by Mrs Davison. The rationale behind these exercises was to proactively identify any students for whom the legibility (as opposed to "neatness") of their handwriting may affect their performance in the GCSEs and to provide these students with support.

On 2nd and 3rd December students sat an extended assessment (1hr paper) in both Maths and English. The purpose of these assessments was to trial the exam access arrangements we have in place for our students and to give our students the benefit of an additional experience of sitting a longer exam, to better prepare them for the Mock Exams and GCSEs.

Students are aware that they will need to spend a substantial period of the Christmas break preparing for their Mock Exams. Each subject has provided a guide on what they may expect in their Mock Exams. Guidance has been given to students by their subject teachers. These guides are more broad strokes than fine detail, to encourage students to review the full breadth of the course. The guidance we are giving students is to spend two weeks of the Christmas period preparing for their Mock Exams. Students and their tutors have discussed revision plans. Students have access to specifications and printed notes or books as well as electronic resources. In my last assembly with Year 11 I highlighted the importance of ensuring that students take physical copies of their notes and past papers with them.

Finally, students will have one and a half weeks of lessons after Christmas before their Mock Exams. Clearly this too is an important time for revision. The most effective students will use this time to request support and guidance on those topics they reviewed over the Christmas period but still do not fully understand.

After the Mock Exam results have been published, all students will attend a meeting to discuss their grades with a senior member of staff. This is in addition to a 1-to-1 tutorial with their tutor.

Year 11 Sixth Form options process

Please see attached a letter from the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Hudson, which details the Sixth Form Options blocks and provides some guidance on making choices. The option process for Year 11 started with the Sixth Form Fair and Social on 16th November where students had the opportunity to talk to Heads of Department about their subject. The Fair was followed-up by tutors as part of the students' regular 1-to-1 meetings. Students are also aware that they can self-refer to the Careers Department to get further guidance. Students will have Sixth Form Taster lessons on 15th March, with final options being made the following week, 22nd March.

Finally, it is worth noting that whilst we are asking our students to make Sixth Form option choices and submit them next term, these choices are not "written in stone". It is quite common for students to reevaluate their options, particularly during the summer once they receive their GCSE results.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you and your family a very merry Christmas.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Beveridge

Head of Year 11