



Dear Fifth Form Boys and their Parents/Guardians,

GCSE/IGCSE Trial Examinations, January 2020

As you will already be aware, the GCSE/IGCSE trial examinations take place from **Tuesday 7 January to Saturday 18 January 2020 inclusive**. The timetable for these trial examinations is now posted on the website and available to view [here](#). I also attach details of the [examination leave rules](#) and instructions; boys are on study leave for the duration of the exam period, but are expected to be in school in good time for all the exams they are due to sit. Boys are also expected to fulfil their sporting, musical and extra-curricular activities during the exam period, and they should attend scheduled Academic Support and EAL lessons as normal during exam leave. If boys have an exam which clashes with a lesson, they should contact their teacher to rearrange the lesson.

Hard copies of this information will be given to boys at a briefing in a year group assembly on Wednesday 11 December. Boys will also receive personalised copies of their exam timetables.

The importance of these examinations cannot be underestimated. In just over five months' time, boys will be sitting their actual GCSE/IGCSE exams. Their GCSE/IGCSE grades will determine their Sixth Form choices, and they will also affect their university or work options, since GCSE/IGCSE results are considered a vital part of the application process by university admission tutors and employers. As we have already mentioned at the IB/A-Level presentation in September, GCSE grades have become even more important in the university admissions process because of the national reforms to examinations. The January trials will give boys and their teachers the clearest and most comprehensive opportunity to date to ascertain their progress and subject knowledge, and will allow them and us to make informed decisions about their Sixth Form subject options next term. Past experience repeatedly shows that those boys who treat the January trials seriously go on to do well in the summer exams. Those who do not take the trials seriously do not give themselves the chance to work out exactly how much they know of their courses, and therefore make the challenge of preparing for the summer exams significantly more daunting and risky.

Taking the trials seriously means treating the trials like 'real' GCSEs, revising thoroughly and devoting suitable time to all their subjects. The Christmas holidays are therefore a crucial time for consolidation, learning and revision, and it is imperative that they find regular and structured times amongst their festivities to work and to revise. To help them, boys will be given a revision guide with tips for them and parents on how best to revise. A PDF version of the booklet will also feature on Firefly [here](#).

I am sure the boys do not need me to remind them that they are approaching the most important time of their school careers so far. I hope that all boys will rise to the challenge and prioritise their work in the coming weeks. If they do, I look forward to being able to congratulate them on a set of results, both after the trials and in August, which truly reflect their ability and which open doors to the best possible future.

Ultimately, it is up to individual boys to take responsibility for their futures and to work hard for their Trial exams. But parents also play a vital role in helping to create a work-conducive atmosphere at home. Parents can support boys in their revision by helping them to construct a revision timetable and by finding and ring-fencing significant amounts of time over the holiday during which diligent revision can take place, without distractions.

A note for those boys eligible for extra time in exams

Boys with extra time in exams may find that they have some long days of internal exams with very short break times. This can happen in the GCSEs themselves, and is beyond the school's control; the

trial exams therefore give boys a valuable opportunity to experience this and develop coping strategies as they prepare for the actual GCSE exams.

Where the total duration of written exams in one day is more than six hours including extra time, boys will be able to take one of those exams on a different day (as is the case in the actual GCSEs). Boys who are in this situation will be contacted to let them know about their revised exam timetables. Finally, detailed information about the GCSE exam regulations and policies, as well as other information, is available via Firefly [here](#).

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Baldock
Deputy Head (Academic)