



Dear Fifth Form Parents and Guardians,

I hope this finds you well and the first two days of your son's remote learning are progressing well; please do contact your son's Tutor if you have any questions about these arrangements.

Summer 2021 Qualifications

Boys and their families will be reassured to know that the Government has committed to running public examinations in Summer 2021 and have announced some further adjustments to GCSE examinations to support candidates. We anticipate more information about any adjustments in each subject will appear in January and we will circulate full details as we receive it from the awarding bodies. As Bedford boys take a mixture of GCSE and IGCSE examinations, these adjustments may not apply to IGCSE qualifications - but we have been promised more information from the IGCSE boards later this month.

We do know, however, that the examination period will begin in early May for some IGCSE qualifications, and most GCSE examinations will take place in June. Study leave dates will be confirmed when the final timetables are published, but we plan to make good use of any additional teaching time available.

Trial Examinations, January 2021

The GCSE/IGCSE trial examinations take place from **Tuesday 5 January to Saturday 16 January 2021 inclusive** - the timetable for these trial examinations is now posted on the portal [here](#). You will also find here 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. These rules contain important information about the social distancing and hygiene measures that will be in place for this period. Boys will be given full information in an assembly next week and will also receive personalised copies of their exam timetables.

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. 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.

Some boys will find that they have some long days of trial exams with very short break times. This can happen in the GCSEs themselves, and is beyond the school's control – indeed in summer 2021 there are likely to be more instances of long days given the delay to some GCSE examinations (and consequent compression of papers). The trial exams therefore give boys a valuable opportunity to experience this and develop appropriate strategies.

Taking the trials seriously means treating the trials like 'real' GCSEs, revising thoroughly and devoting suitable time to all subjects. The winter holidays are therefore a crucial time for consolidation, learning and revision, and it is imperative that boys find regular and structured times amongst their festivities to work and to revise. To help them, Mr Prior (Fifth Form Academic Year Head) and their subject teachers have been giving the boys detailed guidance, all of which can be found on the Fifth Form Firefly site [here](#). This site also includes quick links to the relevant academic department information about their trial exams in each subject.

We hope that all boys will rise to the challenge and find an appropriate combination of preparation and rest 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 families also play a vital role in helping to create a work-conducive atmosphere at home. Parents and guardians can support boys in their revision by supporting 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.

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. I will write next week with further information to accompany your son's full report.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Baldock
Deputy Head (Academic)