

# GCSE Examinations

## Information for Parents and Pupils



*Believe, Succeed, Together*

## Introduction

Public examinations can be a stressful time for pupils and parents and it is important that all those involved are as well informed as possible. Well-informed pupils will realise that the rules and regulations are designed to ensure fairness and minimise disturbance and it is in the interest of all that the exams run smoothly.

The Academy will make every effort to ensure that pupils receive the best possible preparation for their examinations, that the administrative arrangements run smoothly, and that the examinations are conducted in a way that will cause as little stress as possible and help pupils to achieve their best. Mock exams are run to the same standards and rules in order that pupils are familiar with the process beforehand.

This booklet is intended to inform about examination procedures, to answer some of the most frequently asked questions to help to guide and support pupils and parents through the examination process.

If you have any other questions please feel free to make enquiries from the exams officer. You can contact the exams office by:

telephone on 01702 508 391

e-mail to [rhayward@eastwood.southend.sch.uk](mailto:rhayward@eastwood.southend.sch.uk)

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## **What arrangements are made for study leave?**

The Academy does **not** grant study leave for any pupils due to take external examinations. **All** pupils are required to attend school as normal up to their final exam. Absences during this period will be recorded as an unauthorised by our Attendance Officer.

## **Who is responsible for the examinations?**

The Academy's exams officer is responsible for administering all public examination arrangements and for oversight of pupils during exams, however direct responsibility for all exams lies with the Head of Centre, the Head teacher, Mr N Houchen.

There is a team of adult invigilators who will be present during the exams at all times and who are supervised by the exams officer.

The awarding bodies or examination boards set down strict criteria which must be followed for the conduct of exams, and the centre is required to follow them precisely.

## **Who is entered for public examinations?**

It is the Academy's policy to enter every pupil who is being taught a subject, for the most appropriate level of exam. Only by exception, after consultation with parents, and with the written consent of the Pastoral Manager, Mrs N Lillywhite, will pupils not be entered.

## **Can pupils take holidays during exam or term time?**

The Academy is not able to change the dates or times of any exams – these are set by the Exam Boards. Holidays during exam time are **not** permitted and will not be authorised by the Pastoral Director. If an exam is missed due to a holiday the Exam Boards will not be able to issue a grade for that exam. The Academy will also charge parents for any exams missed.

## **Controlled Assessment deadlines**

Most of the subjects have an element of coursework (Controlled Assessment) included in them which has to be completed to be marked and assessed and the marks and work sent to the boards well before the formal exam sessions take place. The centre sets deadlines that allow time for this process and to meet the board deadlines. These cannot be changed.

Pupils who don't submit coursework on time will not be allocated a mark for this portion and their overall grade will suffer. They may also not be eligible for special consideration for the written exams should they be ill as they will not have completed the minimum amount of work required to complete the course.

## **Controlled Assessment Grades**

Controlled Assessment work is marked by subject teachers. The marks then get submitted to the Exam Boards to be moderated and may be changed. Grades for controlled assessment are only received on results day – teachers do not have sufficient information to be able to predict an accurate grade for controlled assessments.

## **What information will pupils receive about their examination entries?**

Pupils will receive an Exam Timetable detailing the subjects and tiers for which they been entered. Pupils should check their personal information and the exam entries and inform the exams officer immediately if there are any mistakes.

**Where will the examinations be held?**

Seating plans for each exam are displayed outside the main hall for each exam room. Pupils are asked to be in the quad area 10 minutes before the start time. They will then be sent to their exam room by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The pupil will sit at the desk bearing a card with their name and candidate number.

**How do I know when the exams take place?**

Each pupil will receive a copy of their exam timetable. Copies are also sent home to parents.

**At what times do the exam sessions begin?**

The exam boards dictate the permissible start times for exams. Morning exams start at 9am, afternoon exams start at 1.30pm unless otherwise stated on the timetable. Pupils should arrive at the exam room in good time for their exams. The length of each exam is different and is set by the exam board. Please be aware that there may be occasions when the exam runs over time if the start of the exam was delayed.

**What happens if a pupil has more than 1 exam at the same time?**

If a pupil is timetabled to sit two or more exams at the same time this is known as a clash. If these are for the same subject this is intentional on the part of the board and the exams are meant to run one after another. If not, then this should be picked up during the checking process and notified immediately to the exams officer who can grant permission for one of the papers to be taken at a different time on the same day. The pupil will have to remain under supervision between the two papers. In rare cases it may be necessary for a paper to be done the next day and it is a requirement that the pupil is supervised overnight. This is essential to avoid compromising the integrity of the examination and needs to be organised well in advance.

If an exam is delayed from a morning to an afternoon session the pupil will be supervised over lunchtime. They should bring some revision or reading material and their lunch and a drink, as they will not be allowed to buy food. Even attempting to communicate with any other pupil will invariably result in the loss of all those exams for all of the pupils involved.

**How are pupils supervised?**

Adult external invigilators will supervise pupils under the direct management of the exams officer. Once pupils enter the exam room they must remain supervised and follow the invigilators instructions at all times. The invigilators are trained in exams procedures and subject to strict regulation, references and police checks. The exams officer and senior management are also present during the exams.

**What happens if a pupil is late?**

If parents are aware that their son/daughter has got the timing of the examination wrong and has missed the starting time, they should telephone the school immediately and get a message to the exams officer. Depending on how long the exam has been in progress, it may be possible for the pupil to be admitted. However, we are bound by examination board regulations on this matter. Normally pupils with a genuine reason and who are brought straight to centre may be admitted within the first 30 minutes of the start time, after this time the board will decide whether to accept any paper sat.

Pupils who arrive more than 1 hour after the start or after the end of the exam will not be admitted.

### **What should pupils bring to the examinations?**

Pupils should bring 2 black pens, 2 HB pencils, a ruler, an eraser and a pencil sharpener to all exams. A protractor and a compass are required for maths exams and in some maths and science exams pupils are permitted to use a calculator. All equipment should be in a transparent plastic bag or pencil case. Non-transparent pencil boxes or cases will not be permitted in the examination room.

Pupils are responsible for ensuring that they bring everything they need to each examination. The centre is under no obligation to provide equipment.

### **What should pupils not bring with them?**

Some items are strictly banned from exam rooms and should not be brought into the examination room under any circumstances. The exam boards treat mere possession of these items as an infringement.

- Mobile phones (see additional information below)
- Ipods, mp3/4 players, or other devices with text/digital facilities
- Watches of any kind – due to the development of smart watches and other watches that can access the internet, watches are not allowed in the exam rooms
- Calculator cases and instruction leaflets
- These items can be handed to an invigilator **before the start** of an exam, but the centre cannot be responsible for the security of these while the examination is in progress
- The use of tippex or correction pens is not permitted. Pupils should cross through work they do not wish to be marked
- Notes, papers and text books etc are not allowed in exams unless pupils are advised by their subject teachers in advance
- Pupils should not bring lucky mascots etc. into the examination room
- No food items or chewing gum are allowed

### **What are the regulations regarding mobile phones?**

Mobile phones are not allowed in the school in any year. Exam Board regulations also state that mobile phones are not to be brought into examination rooms under any circumstances. **The Exam Boards regard the presence of a mobile phone in an exam room as a very serious offence.** Any pupil found to have a phone in the exam room (even if it is switched off) will be reported to the appropriate examination board. Should this happen they are likely to be disqualified from that paper and possibly from the whole examination in that subject.

It is a very serious offence and our advice is that pupils should not bring their phones into school under any circumstances.

### **Regulations governing the use of calculators**

Calculators are only allowed in some exams. Some subject papers, especially Maths, explicitly prohibit the use of calculators. Pupils must not have on them or attempt to use any form of calculator for these.

Also calculators with any of the following facilities are prohibited:

- Data banks
- Dictionaries/Language translators
- Retrieval of text or formulae
- QWERTY keyboards
- Built-in symbolic algebra manipulations
- Symbolic differentiation or integration
- Capability of remote communication with other machines

The use, or attempted use, of any such calculators will be regarded as malpractice.

Calculators with graphic displays and programmable calculators are permitted if information and/or programs stored in the calculator's memory are cleared before the examination. Retrieval of information and/or programs during the examination is an infringement of the regulations. Pupils are responsible for clearing any information and/or program before the examination.

### **May pupils bring a drink?**

Pupils may bring a small clear plastic bottle of water only, with all labels removed. No other food or drink is allowed.

### **What is meant by Malpractice?**

Malpractice is the term that the exam boards use for any irregularity, or breach of the regulations of any form. The exams officer is required to, and will, report all infringements to the appropriate body and they will decide on what action to take based on the nature of the infringement. There is a tariff system of actions from which they can decide within limits and some infringements carry automatic loss of marks as a **minimum** penalty. The exam boards take the integrity of exams very seriously and it is important that pupils heed the exam officers instructions carefully.

### **What happens if a pupil is absent for an examination?**

Pupils are required to attend all exams. Pupils are required to complete at least 50% of the total assessment (written exams/controlled assessment) in order for the exam boards to be able to award a grade. The exam boards may not be able to award a grade if pupils fail to complete their controlled assessment work or fail to attend a written exam.

### **What do I do if my son/daughter is unwell at the time of one of the examinations?**

Your son/daughter should attend all exams where possible. In the case of severe illness, you should visit your doctor. Your doctor will advise as to whether your son/daughter is fit to sit the examination. If the pupil is unable through severe illness to sit a paper, the exam board **may** decide to award a grade provided they have completed coursework and/or other written exams for that subject which make up at least 50% of the total assessment. Grades will not be awarded unless these conditions are met.

Please telephone the centre prior to the start of the exam if your son/daughter will **not** be attending an examination or if he/she will be present but is unwell. It is often helpful for the invigilator to be aware that a pupil is not feeling well.

Medical evidence/letters are required in all cases and copies should be given to the exams officer within 3 days of the exam.

### **What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?**

Pupils are asked to wait quietly outside the exam room, and to enter and leave in silence. This avoids disturbance to other pupils and does help to maintain a calm atmosphere for those pupils who are nervous about their exams.

As soon as pupils enter an exam room they are required to be silent until they are dismissed at the end of the exam. They should not communicate with other pupils in any way once they have entered the exam room. Once seated, they should always face the front of the room.

Pupils who try to communicate with other pupils inside the exam room, or who create a disturbance in the examination room will be asked to leave, and the circumstances

will be reported to the examination board. This may result in the pupil not receiving a grade for the whole of that examination.

All pupils are given a copy of a 'notice to candidates' produced by the examining bodies, which gives general guidelines for conduct, which must be observed. A copy of this is attached for your information.

The centre and the examination boards regard breaches of examination regulations very seriously. Parents should please impress on your son/daughter the importance of good behaviour in an examination, as any activities that may disturb or upset other pupils will not be tolerated.

The head of centre and exams officer have the power to remove disruptive pupils.

### **What should pupils wear for examinations?**

Full school uniform is required to be worn by all pupils whilst on the school premises and during all exams. Please refer to your son/daughter's contact book for clarification on this.

### **What do Pupils do who finish early?**

Pupils should use all of the available time on their exams and spend any time at the end checking their answers. They are not permitted to leave before the duration of the exam. They must sit in silence at their exam desk so as not to disturb other pupils.

### **What do I need to do if a pupil has problems that may affect his/her examination performance?**

Some pupils are eligible for special examination arrangements. These are identified by the Special Education Needs department in the school. If your son/daughter has been identified as requiring special arrangements, a letter will have been sent to you confirming which arrangements have been made.

Any illness or family circumstances which may affect examination performance, arising shortly before or during the exams should be notified as soon as possible to the exams officer so that an application for special consideration can be made to the exam boards. Parents should be aware however that any adjustment is likely to be small and that no feedback is ever provided.

### **How can parents best help their son/daughter during the examination period?**

Examinations are inevitably a stressful time for some pupils and support from both centre and parents can be helpful. The centre will provide advice about revision programmes and examination techniques, and if this is followed it should not be necessary for any pupil to work abnormally long hours during the revision period. It is probably helpful to discuss with your son/daughter how he/she intends to organise revision and to talk through any anxieties about particular techniques or subject matter. Testing knowledge of factual material can benefit the pupil if such help is requested, but often all that is needed is a quiet place to work and lots of encouragement. Pupils should get plenty of sleep and some opportunities for relaxation.

### **Results**

Results day will be Thursday 24th August 2017. Results will be available for pupils to collect from the school from 9am onwards. Results cannot be given out over the phone under any circumstances.

Some 6th form schools/colleges require the pupils to go to the school/college on results day. Please check with them prior to booking holidays etc. whether this is the case so as not to jeopardise your child's place.