

St Bede's Catholic School
GCSE Public Examinations
Information for Parents and Students
Year 11

Introduction

Public examinations can be a stressful time for students and parents and it is important that all those involved are as well informed as possible. Well-informed students 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 centre will make every effort to ensure that candidates 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 students to achieve their best. Mock exams are run to the same standards and rules in order that students 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 students and parents through the examination process.

It also contains the formal notices that are required by regulation to be given to each candidate.

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 01724 861371

e-mail to kglynn@stbedesscunthorpe.org.uk

On exams days it is best to contact the mail centre reception on 01724 861371 and leave a message, with the nature of your query, since the main priority will be the starting of exam sessions on time.

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Who is responsible for the examinations?

The centres' exams officer is responsible for administering all public examination arrangements and for oversight of students during exams, under direct responsibility from the head of centre, the headteacher.

There is a team of 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.

Can students take holidays during term time?

Dates for exams are rigidly fixed by the exam boards and are subject to change until close to the time that students start study leave. The exams officer will not give actual dates for exams to parents or students in advance, wishing to book holidays. Parents are reminded that they require the headteacher's permission to take students out of the centre and they book holidays during term time at their own risk. It is strongly against good practice, careful preparation and centre policy to take holidays in term time.

Coursework deadlines

Most of the subjects have an element of coursework included in them which has to be completed, 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. Students who don't submit coursework on time will not be allocated a mark for this portion and their overall grade will suffer.

What arrangements are made for study leave?

The school does not operate a study leave system as such students are expected to attend lessons until the completion of the examination.

What information will students receive about their examination entries?

When the entries have been entered on the centres computer system, students will receive a student entry summary detailing the subjects and tiers for which they been entered. This should be checked and you are asked to inform the centre if you believe there are any errors or problems.

This document serves two purposes:

- I. to check that all entries have been made and are correct,
- II. to inform parents that they undertake to pay the entry fees should their son/daughter fail to take the examination without good reason.

Once the examination boards have received entries, Statements of Entry will be issued showing the subjects entered with that board, and giving the dates of the examination. These should be checked and kept safely by the candidate, as they are evidence that an entry has been made. They should be brought by the candidate to each examination as an additional check on papers entered, tiers of entry, candidate number etc. but not written on. Sometimes candidates will receive updated statements if the entries made for them change.

What are modular examinations?

Modular GCSE levels involve the written examinations on sections of the syllabus being taken at intervals throughout the course rather than all at the end.

Most modular sessions are in November, March and June according to the Board used. Students have the opportunity to retake certain units on the advice of their subject teachers but the centre only pays the entry fee if the original examination was missed through illness and a medical certificate was produced.

Where will the examinations be held?

The main locations for written papers are the main hall and the sports hall. Candidates are asked to be there 10 minutes before the advertised start time to enable seating procedures to be carried out efficiently, and to allow for any unforeseen room changes. They are asked to wait quietly outside the room until invited to enter. Where a candidate sits will be determined by their candidate number, which appears on all statements of entry. The candidate will sit at the desk as detailed in the seating plan, these are displayed on the Exam's notice board and copy will be in all the examination rooms. This arrangement follows examination board rules and the centre cannot change it.

How do I know when the date exams take place?

The main period for exams is from the start of May – until the end of June/early July but some oral examinations and practical examinations will take place earlier. All candidates will receive individual entry statements from the examination boards, which will give them the dates and sessions (a.m. or p.m.) of the papers they are taking. They will also receive a centre produced timetable all GCSE examinations. This will include start times and the location of the examinations. It is helpful if parents make sure a copy of this timetable is available to them at home with their son's/daughter's exams highlighted.

At what times do the exam sessions begin?

The exam boards dictate the permissible start times for exams. Candidates are asked to report no later than 8.45am for morning examinations and 1.00pm for afternoon examinations. Students will not be allowed out of an exam early for any reason.

Some students may also receive an allowance of extra time for the examinations and so their finishing times will be even later. Timings for some papers may deviate from this pattern and the candidates will be made aware of this. It is the candidates' responsibility to be aware of the start time of each exam, but parents should be warned there is a tendency for students to confuse AM and PM. sessions. Please ensure your son/daughter checks his/her exam commitments for each day on the previous evening.

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

If a candidate 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 candidate will have to remain under supervision between the two papers.

If an exam is delayed from a morning to an afternoon session the candidate 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 candidate will invariably result in the loss of all those exams for all of the candidates involved.

How are students supervised?

Invigilators will supervise students under the direct management of the exams officer. Once candidates enter the exam room they must remain supervised and follow the invigilators instructions at all times.

The Invigilators call candidates in by candidate number or subject group and should find the desk from the seating plan displayed.

In some sessions, papers will be already open or on exam desks, these must not be opened until candidates are advised to do so.

What happens if a student 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 centre 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 candidate to be admitted. However, we are bound by examination board regulations on this matter. Normally candidates 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.

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

What should students bring to the examinations?

Candidates should bring writing equipment, coloured pencils, erasers etc. in a transparent plastic bag or pencil case. Non-transparent pencil boxes or cases will not be permitted in the examination room. All candidates should have their name clearly marked on their calculators, as these have to be collected in for some mathematics papers, which are non-calculator.

Pens should be **black or blue**. Modular papers require the use of a **black biro only**. Some subject papers will require the use of dictionaries or set texts, and candidates will be advised by their subject teachers about this.

Candidates are responsible for ensuring that they bring everything they need to the examination.

What should candidates 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
- Personal CD/tape/minidisk players - unless permitted for individual language exams.
- 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. Candidates should cross through work they do not wish to be marked
- Notes, papers and text books etc are only allowed in certain exams and candidates will be informed by the subject teachers in advance
- Candidates should not bring lucky mascots etc. into the examination room
- No food items or chewing gum are allowed

May students bring a drink?

Candidates may bring a drink with them into the exam room. However no more than 750ml of still water or dilute squash may be brought in a clear bottle, preferably a sport cap bottle. No fizzy drinks, cans or pouches will be allowed due to the risk of spillage. Drinking too much may cause an issue since candidates may not be allowed to use toilet facilities during short exams due to issues of supervision.

Regulations governing the use of calculators

Some subject papers, especially Maths, explicitly prohibit the use of calculators. Candidates must not have on them or attempt to use any form of calculator for these.

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

What are the regulations regarding mobile phones?

The regulations state that mobile phones are not to be brought into examination rooms under any circumstances. This applies to all public and centre/mock examinations. They cause disturbance to other candidates if they ring and can present opportunities for malpractice. Any student found to have a phone in the exam room 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 the phone should not be brought to centre. We can take no responsibility for the security of mobile phones brought to centre.

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 candidates heed the exam officers instructions carefully.

What happens if a student does not turn up for an examination?

A student who absents themselves from any examination without presenting a doctor's note or a satisfactory reason for a request for special consideration will receive a grade based only on those elements of the examinations which have been marked.

Parents should be aware that the centre will seek to recover the exam fees if a child does not turn up for an examination and parents be asked for a payment of around £30 per GCSE subject, depending on the examining board in the event of non-attendance. It is in all our interests to ensure that the centre's examination budget is not wasted.

How are exams started?

The exams officer will usually announce the exam formally, and candidates cautioned that they are subject to the regulations. Any instructions or board notices, changes to papers etc will be read out and the candidates asked to complete their details on the answer papers.

What standards of behaviour are expected during examinations?

All candidates are given a copy of a 'notice to candidates' produced by the examining bodies, which gives general guidelines for conduct, which must be observed. The wording of this is included at the back of this booklet.

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 candidates will not be tolerated.

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

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

Candidates who try to communicate with other candidates inside the venue, 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 candidate not receiving a grade for the whole of that examination.

What should students wear for examinations?

Examinations are a centre activity and students must wear normal uniform. We ask for the co-operation of parents in ensuring candidates are correctly dressed as we wish to avoid causing stress to candidates in the examination room by pointing out when they are not in correct uniform. All students know the uniform rules and it is their responsibility to ensure they observe them. Students not dressed properly or modestly will not be permitted to sit exams.

Jackets, jumpers or other clothing are not allowed over the backs of the chairs.

Candidates should bring as little as possible in the way of coats and baggage into the examination room.

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

Even if you would not normally visit your doctor's surgery for minor illnesses it is important that you do so at examination time. Your doctor will advise as to whether your son/daughter is fit to sit the examination. If the candidate takes the paper, your doctor should give you a letter, which the centre can forward to the examination board asking for special consideration on the grounds of illness. If the candidate is unable through illness to sit a paper the board **may**, after examining the doctor's letter and any evidence of performance on other papers, decide to award a grade. It is essential that you see your doctor on the day of the examination or previously. Retrospective information is not accepted by the examination boards and any doctors' letters must be forwarded to the exams officer **without delay**, as there is a tight deadline.

Please telephone the centre 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 candidate is not feeling well.

Please be aware that any medical certificate must be accompanied by a note detailing the examinations to which it refers and the date on which the papers were sat. We cannot guarantee otherwise that all relevant examinations will be covered

There is a standard JCQ form (JCQ/ME Form14) available from the exams officer available for self-certification for a missed exam/s, which can be countersigned by your doctor/nurse or surgery receptionist.

What do Students do who finish early?

Students should use all of the available time on their exams and spend any time at the end checking their answers. In any event they are not permitted to leave before the duration of the exam. They must sit quietly at their desk so as not to disturb other candidates.

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

Some candidates are eligible for extra time or special examination arrangements. These are normally identified by the centre and appropriate applications made supported by an educational psychologist's report, the exams officer and head of centre are empowered to grant extra time, the provision of a prompter or similar arrangements, but only given the correct evidence and at their sole discretion. The learning development department will make arrangements for providing any other special assistance and inform the candidates of any special rooming arrangements. 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 boards. Parents should be aware 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 candidates 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 student 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 student if such help is requested, but often all that is needed is a quiet place to work and lots of encouragement. Students should get plenty of sleep and some opportunities for relaxation.

When and how are the results distributed?

GCSE results are published on Tuesday 23rd August 2010. Results will normally be available for collection from 8.30 a.m. Students wishing for a relative or friend to collect their results **must** send a signed letter of authorisation with the collector. Uncollected GCSE results will be posted out to candidates

When do students receive certificates?

The examining boards issue certificates well after the examinations have taken place. The centre distributes the ones issued for the main summer's exams at the centres presentation evening in November each year. If students do not attend the presentation evening students are required to collect in person, a friend or family member may collect them but only bearing a letter of request signed by the candidate and some form of ID.