Painsley Catholic College

Specialist Science College
Specialist Mathematics and Computing College
Principal: Mrs R Waugh BA (Hons). PGCE
CEO: Mr S G Bell, BA (Hons), PGCE, MA, NPQH

Station Road, Cheadle, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST10 1LH
Telephone: 01538 493777
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Dear Parent/Carer

Following the outcome of the consultation related to examinations in 2022 (Year 11 & 13), I wanted to share some of the key outcomes with you.

Next year, the government's intention is that students will sit exams. However, it is recognised that the pandemic has caused massive disruption over the last two years. Therefore, measures are being implemented to ensure students are not disadvantaged. The following questions/ answers from the Department for Education will provide you with the information known at the current time:

"Why are you bringing exams back?

Exams are the best and fairest form of assessment.

We recently ran a consultation, with the exams regulator Ofqual, on what adaptations we should make to GCSE, AS and A level exams in 2022 in response to the pandemic.

The consultation gathered more than 6,000 responses – with almost a quarter from students – and showed that more than 90 per cent of students and parents were in favour of giving advance information on the focus of exams next summer to support students with revision, and around 80 per cent or more agreed with offering choices of topics in some GCSE subjects.

What measures will be in place to make sure they are fair when different students have missed different amounts of time?

Students will benefit from a range of adaptations to GCSE, AS and A level exams in England – these adaptations will help them reach their potential following the disruption they've faced.

They include:

- A choice of topics or content on which students will be assessed in GCSE English literature, history, ancient history and geography.
- Providing advance information on the focus of exams to support students' revision in subjects where there is not a choice of topics.
- Giving students formulae sheets in GCSE maths and revised equation sheets in GCSE combined science and physics.
- Changing requirements for practical science work and practical art and design assessments to ensure fairness. (For example, art will be assessed on portfolio work only).

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These changes will also apply to the November 2022 GCSE English language and mathematics re-sit exams. There will be advance information deployed for both subjects in July, and a formulae sheet will be available for mathematics.

While it is the Government's firm intention for exams to go ahead next year it is right for contingency plans to be in place in the event they cannot. Ofqual and the department plan for Teacher Assessed Grades to be used and have launched a consultation on how this might work in 2022, building on the 2021 process.

What about grading – are you making any changes to that?

For the past two years, summer exams haven't been able to take place and, instead, students have been awarded grades by their teachers. Due to the difference in assessment approach, we have seen higher outcomes.

As we return to exams, we want to get back to the pre-pandemic standard, but in the interests of fairness, Ofqual (who take the decisions on grading) won't do so in one jump.

Instead, 2022 will be a transition year to reflect that we are in a pandemic recovery period and students' education has been disrupted. In 2022 the aim, therefore, will be to move grading to a point close to midway between 2021 and 2019.

Results are likely to be higher than in 2019, but not as high as in 2020.

Ofqual aims to return to results that are in line with pre-pandemic years in 2023.

When will GCSE exams happen in 2022?

GCSE exams will happen in May and June, as normal. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) will confirm the summer exam dates shortly.

When will A level exams happen in 2022?

A level exams will happen in May and June as normal. The JCQ will confirm the summer exam dates shortly.

When will advance information be made available for GCSE and AS and A level students?

Advance information on the focus of summer exam content will be given in early February, though we are keeping the timing under review in case the course of the pandemic worsens. For English language and maths GCSE exams in November 2022, advance information will be given in July.

What is being done for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) in 2022?

It is the Government's firm intention that exams and assessments for VTQs and other general qualifications, including T Levels and Functional Skills qualifications, should go ahead in 2021/22 academic year.

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Adaptations for Vocational and Technical Qualifications have already been confirmed, following consultation. Colleges and schools are now being made aware of these changes by their awarding organisations.

We have also published our contingency plans for VTQs, which seek to achieve parity and consistency where relevant with the arrangements proposed for GCSEs and AS/A levels.

When will students get their results?

A and AS level results day will be held on 18th August 2022.

GCSE results day will be held on 25th August 2022.

VTQs most similar to GCSEs and A levels, that are used for progression, should be awarded on or before GCSE and A level results day. Other types of qualifications such as Functional Skills Qualifications, and those that are not tied to an academic year will continue to be awarded throughout the year."

Painsley's support for students

Please be assured that we are working very closely with the awarding bodies and, in turn, our curriculum is being adapted to meet the requirements of each qualification for 2022. Subject staff will be sharing subject-specific information (including details of any non-examination assessments i.e. coursework) with students throughout the next few weeks.

For students, it is essential that attendance is maximised, they are engaged in learning and completing all homework or private study to the appropriate level, and that they are committed to interventions and support on offer. Assessment points are crucial; we are very aware that Year 13 students have not experienced the traditional GCSE period and thus exposure to examinations has been through our assessments. We are running a full mock programme for Year 11 & 13 to support students to prepare for examinations and also to inform our teaching and learning. Indeed, in all subject areas we are enlisting the help of examiners and external support to set papers, mark and moderate and provide a report for our teaching staff on the trends of our students.

Learners who fall into Support or Aspire in Year 13 should be using their diaries to capture learning guidance from subject staff which is unique to them. The aim for the diary is that it is used to capture quality conversations that are taking place on how learners can improve their learning and their progress and to evidence the work taking place towards this.

As you know, throughout the pandemic our teaching and learning was maintained through live lessons. However, we recognise that this is never a complete substitute for the face-to-face learning required by students. Teaching staff are working hard to ensure any gaps in learning are secured in each subject area.

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It is crucial that all parents engage with staff through our parents' evenings in order to inform you of your son/ daughter's progress throughout this academic year. In addition, we will be sending out regular progress reports as per the calendar:

Parents' evening Year 11 – Thursday 23rd September and Thursday 10th March

Parents' evening Year 13 - Thursday 4th November and Wednesday 16th February

Should you have any additional enquiries, please contact your son/daughter's Pastoral Lead who will be able to direct your query to the most appropriate personnel. Please be assured we will do all we can to ensure your son/daughter can achieve their full potential and, as always, this will have the greatest impact when we work in one partnership as students, parents and school/college.

"We must move forward, all of us together, each as we are, but always looking ahead to the building of a civilization of harmony and unity, in which there will be no room for the terrible pandemic of the throw-away culture…education bears itself a seed of hope" (Pope Francis)

As always, we will keep in touch with regards to any changes and amendments to the arrangements and please be assured of our dedicated commitment to each and every student.

Yours faithfully

R. A. Waugh

Mrs Waugh

Principal

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