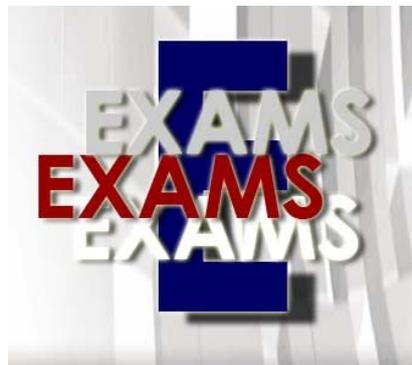




Exam Handbook

September 2025 – August 2026





Dear Candidate

This Exam Handbook has been designed to help you, please read and keep it. All the information you will need to know when completing your controlled assessments/non-examination assessments as well as when sitting your exams is included.

Hopefully this booklet will prove informative and helpful advice for you and your parents/carers. Please read it carefully and show it to your parents/carers so that they are also aware of the examination regulations and the procedures to follow in the event of any problems occurring.

The Awarding Bodies (Examination Boards) set down strict criteria which must be followed for the conduct of examinations and West Heath School is required to follow them precisely. You should therefore pay particular attention to the Notice to Candidates that is printed in this booklet.

If you or your parents/carers have any queries or need help or advice at any time before, during or after the examinations, please contact **Mrs Amanda Cowling** (Exams Officer), **Mrs Rachael Taylor** (Exam Officer), **Mrs Alana Walton** (Head of Curriculum) or **Mr Cormac McManigan** (Deputy Principal).

This year, GCSE written examinations will begin in May and continue up to the 15th of June. There are contingency days set which are 24th of June, these are for any issue with set exams, and students need to be available until that date, should they need to sit an exam that was cancelled. Practical exams will take place earlier. Please refer to the relevant Head of Department for the dates of these.

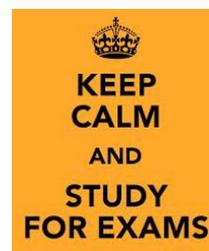
Any appointments, whether it is medical or not, should be re-arranged. The school is not allowed to change the start times of the exams whatsoever.

Finally, we are aware that the exam period can be very stressful. The school is here to help and support you. If you have any questions or problems at any time, please do not hesitate to talk to your tutor, Head of Key-Stage, Member of SMT or Mrs Amanda Cowling/Rachael Taylor in the Exams Office.

GOOD LUCK!



THIS IS THE BORING BIT BUT YOU
REALLY MUST READ IT BECAUSE IT'S
STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Everyone at West Heath School hopes that all pupils will be successful in their exams and that the exams you take run as smoothly as possible, so there are a number of rules and regulations that you must be aware of.

Absence from Exams

Students are expected to attend **all** examinations for which they are entered. Misreading the timetable will not be accepted as a satisfactory explanation for absence. If you are unable to attend due to circumstances outside your control, e.g. illness, please inform the school as soon as possible by contact the school reception - **01732 460553**. We must receive a call for **EVERY** exam missed.

Personal Belongings

Bags, coats and mobile phones may be stored in the upper school common room office. The school accepts no liability for items of value (e.g. money or mobile phones). **Please do not bring valuables with you when you have exams.**

Calculators

Calculators will be provided for you. If you bring your own calculator, it must be checked first by Mrs Amanda Cowling/Mrs Rachael Taylor prior to the exam starting.

Candidate Number

Your candidate number is a four-figure number allocated to you by the school. This number will be shown on your "statements of entry", personal timetables and results statements. The Awarding Bodies identify you by your candidate number as well as your name. This is a security precaution to ensure that candidate records do not become confused. This is the number you will enter on examination papers. It can be found in your pencil case on a laminated card, which also has your name and school number, It is imperative that you sit at the correct desk designated to you.

Certificates

Certificates are issued by the Awarding Bodies at the end of October and are distributed to all students at an Awards Presentation Evening later in the school year. It is important that you look after your certificates and keep them in a safe place as future colleges and employers will need to see them. Once issued, certificates cannot be replaced by West Heath School if lost or damaged and duplicates are rarely issued by Exam Boards. It is very expensive and time consuming to obtain a "certifying statement of results" and you must obtain them by contacting the Exam Boards directly.

Complaints and Appeals Procedures

West Heath School has a written complaints and appeals procedure, which covers general complaints regarding its delivery or administration of a qualification. If you need further information, please contact **Mr Cormac McManiagn** (Deputy Principal), **Mrs Alana Walton** (Head of Curriculum) or **Mrs Amanda Cowling** (Exams Officer)/**Mrs Rachael Taylor** (Exams Officer).

Conduct in the Exam Room

Candidates must be quiet at all times when entering and whilst in the exam room. Should you require any assistance, please raise your hand clearly and wait for an invigilator to attend to you. Once candidates have entered an exam room, they are not allowed to leave unescorted until the conclusion of the exam. Remember that once in the exam room, rules of conduct are very strict and must be obeyed totally. **Infringement of examination rules could lead to you being disqualified from ALL examinations of that Exam Board.**

Dictionaries

Dictionaries may not be used unless they are specifically permitted by the subject specification or unless special arrangements have been approved by the Awarding Bodies.

End of the Exam

Absolute silence must be maintained until you are well away from the examination room. Other exams may be continuing when you leave the exam room. Question papers, answer booklets and additional paper must not be taken from the exam room. Please abide by any "Silence" signs during the examination period.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of the fire-alarm sounding during an examination you must:

- Listen to the invigilator in the examination room
- Stop writing and close your answer booklet
- Calmly evacuate the examination room in silence, leaving all questions papers, scripts, bags, phones etc in the examination room.
- Assemble outside the staff room, boarding, or cricket pitch and wait in silence for further instructions

Entries

Your teacher notifies Mrs Cowling (Exams Officer) which exams you are to be entered for towards the end of January 2026, having taken into consideration the results of your mock exams taken earlier that month. You will then receive a "statement of entry" and will be asked to check this carefully. During the Spring term, you will receive individual examination timetables, and a copy will be sent home to your parents for their information.

Equipment

West Heath School will provide you with all the equipment you require for examinations.

Examination Regulations

It is the candidate's responsibility to familiarise themselves with the JCQ regulations pertaining to examinations. Copies of these are attached and can also be found on the Examination Noticeboard.

Invigilators

West Heath teachers will be invigilating the examinations. Candidates are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all invigilators and follow their instructions at all times.

Invigilators are in the examination room to supervise the conduct of the examination room and to ensure everyone is given the appropriate environment to perform to the best of their ability. They will distribute and collect the examination papers, tell candidates when to start and finish the examination and deal with any issues that occur during the examination.

They are unable to help with any part of the exam, read any words or provide any explanation other than the instructions on the front of the exam paper. If candidates fail to follow invigilator instructions, this would be classed as malpractice and must be reported to the Exam Board which may result in sanctions and penalties being issued.

Candidates who are disruptive or behave in an unacceptable manner may be removed from the examination room and escorted to a member of the senior leadership team. These candidates may face disqualification from the exam.

Location of Exam

Examination seating plans will be displayed on the Exams Notice board. It is imperative that you check this before your exams to ensure that you know where your exam is taking place, its duration and start time. This will help towards an efficient start to the exam.

Mobile Telephones, Digital Watches and all Electronic Storage Devices

Mobile phones and other electronic means of communication or electronic storage devices are not allowed during into an examination, however, should they not have been handed in they must be handed-in to the invigilator when a candidate enters an examination room. The invigilator will store any items in a named plastic bag in the exam room. A candidate must not have access to a wristwatch which has a data storage device. All wrist watches must be removed and given to the invigilator.

Be aware that should a mobile phone or other electronic communication or storage device be found in your possession during an exam EVEN IF IT IS TURNED OFF, it will be taken from you and a report made to the appropriate Awarding Body.

The Awarding Bodies have advised all schools that students discovered to have an electronic device with them during an examination face DISQUALIFICATION from the subject concerned.

Prohibited Material

The following items are NOT allowed to be taken into the exam room:

- Correction fluid
- Highlighter pens (may be used in texts but not in answers)
- Gel pens
- Dictionaries (unless specified) – these will be provided by school if required
- Electronic devices (mobiles, ipods, ear buds, air buds, earphones, smart watches/watches, smart glasses, or any other electronic storage devices)
- Watches of any kind!
- Calculator lids or instruction leaflets
- Bottles (unless they are clear with the label removed and must only contain still water)
- Food of any kind
- Pencil cases – unless they are transparent, alternatively candidates may use a transparent plastic bag
- Books (unless set texts for a specific examination), notes, letters, diaries or other printed material
- Bags, briefcases, coats etc
- Any item that is not listed on the exam paper – as it may be classed as unauthorised and may need to be reported to the Exam Board who may take disciplinary action.
- Any writing/marks/symbols must be removed from skin before entering the exam room

Results

Provisional results are available in school on **20th of August 2026** between 9.00am and 1pm. Results not collected will be posted to your home address. If you would like someone else to collect your results for you, it will be necessary for you to provide them with written authorisation, and they **MUST** provide photographic evidence of their own identification e.g. passport or driving license.

Results can be given over the telephone to the candidate but not to anyone else without prior written authorisation; results cannot be emailed to anyone. Ideally students should collect their own results in person.

Special Consideration

Special consideration can only be applied for if an event has affected the candidate's performance on the day of the exam. Only in "very exceptional circumstances" are candidates granted special consideration for absence from any part of an examination. It is essential that medical or other appropriate evidence is obtained on the day by the candidate and given to Mrs Amanda Cowling without delay. In all cases where an application can, be made for special consideration, it must be submitted within 5 days following the exam. It may be that if you do not sit a particular unit – you may not obtain an overall result for that subject. Where an application for special consideration is submitted to the Exam Board, it is for them to consider – it is not the decision of the school.

Times

Unless otherwise stated, all exams at this school start at 9am for morning papers and 1.30pm for afternoon papers. Pupils should ensure they arrive in good time.

If you are unavoidably delayed (for example your taxi fails to turn up), please contact the school immediately; we will do what we can to get you to your exam. **DO NOT use your mobile phone after 9.00 am or 1 pm; ensure it is then switched off.** This may sound strange, but the Exam Boards will need to ensure that the security of the exam paper is not compromised. Your phone log may well be checked.

Timetables

When you receive your individual candidate timetable, you should check this carefully. If there are any errors (e.g. correct legal name, date of birth, gender, exam entry) you should notify Mrs Cowling immediately. Dates of your exams are given on the timetable issued to you. Check carefully to see if the exam is in the morning or the afternoon – allowances cannot be made for candidates who misread their timetable. **You alone are responsible for checking your exam timetable.** Your exams can sometimes be at a different time to other members of your tutor/class group, therefore if you lose your timetable or are unsure of the details of an exam, please either check the Exam Noticeboard or with Mrs Amanda Cowling, the Head of Upper School or your tutor. Do not refer to a friend's timetable. Mrs Amanda Cowling can issue you with a new timetable.

Valuables

The school accepts no liability for items of value (e.g. money or mobile phones). Please do not bring valuables with you when you have exams.

Warning

All the Awarding Bodies make it clear that the official examination sessions must be run under strict fair conditions, with no form of deception – this rule severely excludes any form of communication between students during an examination as well as any other practice that could conceivably be seen as an attempt to deceive.

Anyone attempting unfair practices can expect cancellation of examination entries and possible exclusion from GCSE/AS and A2 examinations for a **period of up to five years.**



REVISION

GOOD and BAD Revision - If you read nothing else, READ THIS!

What is Revision? It means literally "re-looking" at information you have learnt previously. The aim is that you know the information you will be tested on and can remember it for the exam. Knowing something depends on understanding it.

The aim of revision. The aim is to reduce the amount of information relating to a subject to a series of key-points, any of which you can expand upon in an exam answer. The key point, phrase or word prompts your brain to retrieve the information stored in it. At the end of your revision for each topic or sub-topic, aim to end up with a card or A4 sheet with the KEY points for that section.

The structure of revision sessions. Good revision techniques always include: -

- An aim for the session, e.g. "By the end of this hour's revision session I will understand and be able to answer questions on photosynthesis".
- Thinking about what you know already and identifying the bits you need to spend more time on (usually by doing some sort of self-testing).
- Breaking down each topic into "do-able" chunks. Revise each section – not just reading the information but doing something active with it (see below).
- Producing notes (shorter each time you revise a particular area) noting key points, phrases or words.
- Testing yourself to see what you have learnt.
- Ticking off the subject on your "overall list" so that you can see regular progress.
- Revisiting your notes briefly after one day, one week and one month, as well as just before the exam – THIS REALLY WORKS!

The key to doing effective revision. Useful revision involves DOING SOMETHING with the information you are trying to learn and remember. This is ESSENTIAL to allow your brain to learn, make connections and remember. Different people find different activities useful, and you need to find out how you revise best. Some ideas are:

- Drawing “spider maps” on large pieces of paper – to show how different parts of a subject hang together.
- Use pictures, big flip-chart sheets and colour to make posters with key points and display these on the walls or where you can see them regularly.
- Put revision aids up around the house – especially for any “rote learning” – chemical or mathematical formulae, French verbs etc. – read them when sitting on the loo, brushing your teeth or eating your breakfast.
- Record yourself making 10 key points about a particular topic, then play it back when you are travelling, running etc.
- Highlight key areas of note or books and plays and discuss them with another person.
- Watch revision YouTube videos but don't just sit back passively – pause them and make notes of key or difficult areas, test yourself or get someone to watch with you and test each other.
- Read a page and shut the book – what can you remember?
- Tell someone about what you have learned – explain how the heart works over a meal (or perhaps stick to something less gory!!)
- Get people around you to test you on “rote knowledge” – have a family quiz.



Memory techniques. Find out what helps you to remember stuff. Some ideas are:

Acronyms (using the first letter of each word to make a word to prompt your memory)

e.g. you may find it hard to remember this sentence "Wholly Inadequate Needless Damned Outrageous Waste of Space". However, turn it into an acronym and it becomes much easier: WINDOWS.

Picture Stories (Thinking of a strong visual image to associate with each word and linking them together with an unlikely and silly story) e.g. you may find it hard to remember the facts in this sentence, simply by reading it through "The great Plague struck London in 1665, followed by the fire of London in 1666, starting in the shop of the baker to King Charles II in Pudding Lane".

Try this out: get a picture, for example of a large rat (the plague) running around before being burnt (plague year before fire) in a bread oven (baker's shop) with the flames curling up around it like the curls of the numbers 666 (1666) and them being put into a pudding eaten by two King Charles spaniels. Go through the picture sequence a couple of times and then see if you can remember the seven facts in the sentence. Ask someone to test you and see if it works for them. It's magic!

Mnemonics are also useful – make up a silly sentence to help you remember the order of something e.g. Never Eat Shredded Wheat (North, East, South, West)

Review. Take time occasionally to ask yourself how well your revision techniques are working for you. How much have you covered? Have you stuck to your timetable? Are you ending up with notes you can use for last minute revision? Congratulate yourself for all the subjects you have covered. Change your timetable plan if necessary.

Later on. When you have revised and revisited each topic, have a go at some old exam questions. Make sure you set the appropriate time limit and try to work under exam conditions. Don't do this too early (although it's worth looking at them early on to get an idea of the sort of question you will be answering – essays, multiple choice etc). Do these in plenty of time so that your teacher can mark them.

Quick tips for revising

- Make yourself start, however much you don't want to – the hardest bit is over with then!
- Build in short breaks
- Do frequent short exercises – stretches, neck and shoulder rolls, walking around etc.
- Drink water and get fresh air. Keep the room temperature cool.
- Eat “brain food” – avoid sugar and have lots of healthy snacks around to eat little and often.
- Take a day off from revision and do something completely different.
- Don't leave the difficult bits to the end.
- Do something relaxing between revising and bedtime.
- STOP and take a break if you start feeling frustrated, angry, and overwhelmed. Make a note of the problem to take to your next lesson and move on to something else.
- Focus on what you have done, not on the things you haven't – every little helps.
- Promise yourself little rewards after each session – a favourite TV programme, reading a trashy novel or going out with friends.





Manage your time and plan

Forget four-hour sessions where you do only 10 minutes in that time. Get real – and start with the ten minutes you know that you will do. Have a 10-minute break and start again, for another 10 minutes. You can do that. When working, work. When relaxing, relax. The two don't mix. Remember that.

No phoning friends, looking out of the window or playing with the cat in that time. Your room can wait for another few years before you tidy it up. So now you have started and doubled the amount of work you normally do in an evening, all within 30 minutes of starting.

But don't stop there. Build up the working periods to 30 minutes or so at a time – and keep the breaks at 10. Don't think about it, just do it – and do it now. Congratulate yourself for having done it. You've made a start. Keep going.

You are in training, and you need to pace yourself in the lead-up to your exams and between exams too. Discipline and technique play their part, but so does common sense.

Staring into space won't help but the "10-minute rule" will whenever you have difficulty in starting something. Remember it and practise it, along with the other hints and tips given here.

- ☺ Know where and when your exams are and the work you must do.
- ☺ Highlight your notes or abbreviate them on cards, so that the information can be referred to easily. But don't spend all your time doing it. Practise on past exam papers.
- ☺ Ease in an extra half hour of work a day at least, by getting up earlier or taking less time over lunch. Over five days that will give you a minimum of two and a half hours of quality study time.
- ☺ Cover two or three subjects in the one evening. Start with the one you dislike most and then look forward to finishing with the one you like best. Otherwise, you will spend all evening working on the one you enjoy, without doing the others.
- ☺ You can work with a friend if you really do work.
- ☺ And if you get stuck, ask a teacher for some help. They are also anxious that you do well.

Be Warned

- ☺ Make sure you know what equipment you will need for each exam.
- ☺ Don't cheat or break any rules. You could be disqualified or even arrested. Mobile phones are a menace and barred from the exam room. Don't take one in!
- ☺ Don't cram the night before an exam.
- ☺ Be at school and at the exam room in good time.
- ☺ Avoid chatting with friends outside the exam room. They could confuse you. Keep your thoughts to yourself and concentrate on the exam. That's why you are there.

In the exam room

- ☺ Take six deep breaths, ignore everyone else and concentrate solely on what you must do.
- ☺ Read the instructions on the exam paper carefully – do the appropriate number of questions from the right sections and answer compulsory questions.
- ☺ Know how many marks each question carries – don't spend too long on anyone. Use the number of marks on the paper as a guide.
- ☺ Read questions carefully before you write anything. Time is allowed for this. Use that time to choose your questions and write notes on the question paper to help you remember later.
- ☺ Make sure you answer the question asked. No marks if you don't.
- ☺ If you run out of time, more marks can be gained by completing your remaining answers in outline only. State what you would do and how to do it, by outlining your main arguments in an essay – without writing the essay – and by jotting down formulae in science – stating how you would complete the question – without doing the calculations

After the exam

- ☺ Don't worry about the exam you have just taken – you can't do anything about it now. Concentrate instead on the next one, where you can influence the result.
- ☺ Avoid friends again if they want to discuss the exam paper. That can be unsettling.

Don't panic

- ☺ Being calm and thoughtful will help you to get the most out of your preparation

Attached are the following JCQ and West Heath School documents:

- No Mobile Phone Poster
- Warning to Candidates
- Notice to Candidates – Coursework
- Information to Candidates – NEAs
- Information for Candidates for written examinations
- Information for Candidates – Privacy Notice
- Information to Candidates – Social media
- Exam entries
- Letter regarding study leave
- Exam timetable