



LB05AT

January 2026

Dear Parents & Carers of Year 11,

### Year 11 Exam Season

I am writing to outline some key dates and arrangements for our Year 11 students as we approach the Summer GCSE examination period. This is intended to help students plan their time effectively and to ensure that parents and carers are clear about the provision in school during this important phase. Many students will already have completed some examination components by this point, particularly in subjects with practical or coursework elements, and our aim is to make decisions that best support both preparation and wellbeing for all students.

The summer exam season for Year 11 continues to start earlier each year. In 2026, the first GCSE examination will take place on **Thursday 7th May**, with a significant proportion of exams scheduled before the May half-term break. In previous years, students remained in timetabled lessons until half term, taking exams alongside their normal school day and beginning study leave afterwards. However, recent exam timetables have made this increasingly disruptive, with students balancing lessons, exams and revision sessions simultaneously. We believe this creates unnecessary pressure and is not in students' best interests, either academically or in terms of wellbeing.

For this reason, we have taken the decision to conclude formal teaching on **Wednesday 6th May**, with students moving to **Flexible Study Leave from Thursday 7th May**. This approach has been used successfully over the past two years, and feedback from students and families has been very positive. Wednesday 6th May will be a normal teaching day, and we plan to mark the end of lessons with a celebration lunch, while keeping the day calm, structured and focused.

We recognise that students work best in different ways. Flexible Study Leave allows students, with guidance from home, to decide how to use their time most effectively. Some students may choose to maintain their usual routine and attend school regularly, while others may prefer to study at home and attend school only for examinations. Many will opt for a combination of both, which is entirely appropriate. Throughout the exam period, staff will be available in school to support, encourage and reassure students, and to ensure they feel cared for during what can be a demanding time.

From **Thursday 7th May until May half term**, a full programme of supervised independent study and exam preparation sessions will run alongside the exam timetable. These sessions will cover the full school day. Students may attend as many or as few sessions as they wish, but when attending school they must remain on site for either the full day (8.50am–3.35pm), the full morning (8.50am–12.50pm) or the full afternoon (1.55pm–3.35pm), to ensure safeguarding and accurate registers.

Independent Study sessions will be based in the Dining Room. Students should bring their revision materials and may also bring devices, snacks and earphones if helpful. These sessions will be supervised to ensure a quiet, focused and purposeful environment but will not be taught lessons. Exam preparation sessions will run in the period immediately before each exam up until half term. Subject and pastoral staff will also be available in the Dining Room to answer questions and provide reassurance; again, these will not be formal teaching sessions. After May half term, Independent Study provision will continue in the Dining Room for as long as students require it.

On **Wednesday 17th June**, following the final GCSE examination, we will hold an **end-of-exams celebration** for Year 11, running from approximately 3.00pm to 6.00pm. We will work closely with students to shape an event they will enjoy and remember, including opportunities to spend time with staff and peers. Further details will follow.

A full timetable of Independent Study and exam preparation sessions from Thursday 7th May, along with further information about the celebration events, will be shared nearer the time.

Best wishes,

**Mrs L Begbie**  
Deputy Headteacher