



Queen Mary's Grammar School

Headmaster: T J Swain, M A

21st September 2016

Dear parent/guardian

Homework and assessment changes 2016-17 (Years 7-11)

Homework

Following feedback in the spring term, I wrote by e-mail to parents of boys in Years 7 and 8 regarding homework. Some of you wanted more clarity and consistency on the setting of homework and I suggested a three staged solution:

1. In the *short term* (i.e. up to the end of the summer term) I requested that staff stick (as far as possible) to the existing homework timetables, and encourage the students to write these down in their diaries
2. In the *medium term*, we would look into reassessing the homework timetables for 2016-17
3. In the *long term*, we would be undertaking wide-scale research within the school as to the purpose and impact of homework, with a view to a possible change in policy for 2017-18

As promised, we have reassessed the timetables for this September, which has resulted in a simplification in key stages 3 and 4. Each subject will be set once a fortnight, with a maximum of one hour attributed to it. This will mean, in practice, a student will receive one or two pieces per evening. The reason for doing this was to allow for longer projects to be set, as well as trying to de-clutter the arrangements. At GCSE, some subjects (e.g. DT and Computing) also require ongoing coursework which need to be built into the routine. The exception to this is in Maths, where one piece will be set each week.

I would also like to emphasise the importance of reading regularly as part of your son's literacy education. The benefits of reading widely extend across the entire curriculum and are proven to improve GCSE achievement, so this is in addition to regular homework. Pupils' reading choices will be supported by reading recommendations from their teachers and the Library.

I am aware of how busy the students are and the outcomes of the pupil surveys on positive mental health (which I carried out in the summer term) highlighted homework as a potential trigger, especially with short deadlines. With that in mind, staff have been told that they must allow 2 working days minimum for a deadline. In the case of a weekend, that would mean something set on a Friday shouldn't be expected until the following Tuesday. The students should have received their new homework timetables and I would encourage you to discuss this with your son. Please do feed back to your son's head of year if you feel that there are inconsistencies with how these new arrangements are being applied.

Assessment changes

I am sure you are aware of the vast amount of changes we have had to deal with in the last few years with regards to curriculum and assessment. I wrote to you last year to explain the changes in GCSE grading (and the impacts on STAR estimates) and we have carried out a review of formal assessments in the School.

Because of changes to A-level courses (i.e. the new linear style with all exams at the end of the course), it has become necessary to re-introduce a Year 12 internal exam period. Previously all students sat AS levels at the end of Year 12, which provided us with accurate internal progress data, as well as information for UCAS applications. The internal exams will allow us to generate similar data, but this obviously adds to an already congested summer term for staff, in terms of marking and report generation. We have therefore reviewed our arrangements for assessment in the different year groups and I have provided a summary of these overleaf, along with useful information on parents' evenings and reports.

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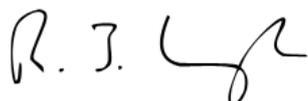
e: postbox@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk  @qmgs1554

Proposed Year 7-11 assessment structure 2016-17

	Internal exam procedure	Parents' evening and consultations	Other data/reporting
7	Removal of the traditional internal exam week in the summer term (3-9 May in 2016) and a replacement with more frequent (but formal) assessments in class time over the course of the year which contribute to the end of year grade	Academic reviews 12th-14 th December 2016 Parents' evening Thursday 2 nd March 2017	List grades December 2016 April 2017 Reports (and end of year grades) July 2017
8	Removal of the traditional internal exam week in the summer term (3-9 May in 2016) and a replacement with more frequent (but formal) assessments in class time over the course of the year which contribute to the end of year grade	Parents' evening Thursday 24 th November 2016	List grades December 2016 July 2017 Reports April 2017
9	Exams to move to an earlier slot than in previous years (2 nd -8 th May 2017) in the sports hall. Students will sit a mock exam for the iGCSE in ICT in January 2017.	Parents' evening (including options presentation) Thursday 16 th February	List grades December 2016 April 2017 Reports July 2017
10	Exams to move to an earlier slot than in previous years (2 nd -8 th May 2017) in the sports hall	Parents' evening Thursday 19 th January 2017	List grades December 2016 April 2017 Reports July 2017
11	Mock exams as in previous years (14th-22 nd November 2016)	Parents' evening Thursday 13 th October 2016 Academic reviews 11th-13 th January 2017	Mock exam grades December 2016 Reports February 2017 List grades April 2017

If you have any queries regarding this matter please contact me at School.

Yours sincerely



Richard Langton
Deputy Headmaster