



H A R B O U R
V A L E
S C H O O L

EXAMS GUIDE

2025 – 2026

Introduction

This exams handbook has been designed to inform you about examination procedures, to answer some of the most frequently asked questions and to help, guide and support you and your parents/carers through the examination process. All students will expect to have Mock Exams in addition to your final exams.

Taking exams can be stressful but knowing what to expect will help you approach yours in a calm and well-organised way.

If you or your parents/carers have any questions or need help or advice, please do not hesitate to come and see me in the Reception.

Good luck in all your exams and remember that we are here to help.

Key Dates

Year 11 Mocks:	17-21 st November 2025
	2 nd – 13 th March 2026
Summer Exams:	7 th May – 26 th June 2025
GCSE Results Day:	Thursday 20 th August 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

What to do if I have an accident or am ill before the exam?

If you have had an accident or are ill you must call as soon as you can, ideally no later than 8.30am. We can help or advise you on what to do.

In the case of an injury that prevents you from writing; it may be possible to provide you with a scribe to write your answers or for you to use IT.

Medical evidence may be required to support any request for Special Consideration if you miss an exam. In some cases, a missed exam can result in no grade for that subject.

What happens if the taxi is delayed?

Don't panic. The taxi usually contacts the school to inform us of delays and breakdowns, but, if possible, phone the school and let us know.

If I am late, can I still sit the examination?

You must contact the school as soon as you know that you may be late for your exam.

Provided you are not more than 1 hour late, it may still be possible for you to sit the examination. You should get to school as quickly as possible.

What equipment do I need?

You need the following equipment in a **clear** pencil case:

- Pens – black ink at least 2
- Pencils – at least 2
- Eraser
- Pencil sharpener
- Ruler
- Compass
- Protractor
- Calculator
- Coloured pencils

(However, do not worry, we supply all the above for you)

Why do I have to use a black pen?

It is an exam board regulation. Scripts are scanned and black ink shows up better.

What can I wear?

Make sure that you are wearing school uniform and dressed appropriately for an exam. You are not allowed to wear hoodies, hats, caps, scarves or coats during exams.

What room am I doing my exam in?

You will be told which room you will be sitting your exam in, and you will be allocated a specific seat.

Am I entitled to extra time and/or other special arrangements – How will this affect the way I take my exams?

You may be entitled to special arrangements etc. These will have to be pre-arranged by mid March. This is arranged through our SENCO Jayne Cottingham. Please do contact us.

Can I take my bag and coat into the exam room?

Bags, coats, scarfs and hats cannot be taken into the exam room.

What about my mobile phone, smart watch or wristwatch?

Mobile phones, smart watches, other electronic means of communication or electronic storage devices and wristwatches are not allowed into the exams room.

If you are found in possession of one of the above, even if it is turned off, it will be taken from you. You may face disqualification from the subject you are taking.

Can I take food and drink into the examination room?

You are not allowed to take food into the exam room. However, you can take in a bottle of water, but it must be in a clear bottle with the label removed. You are not allowed squash.

What if I feel ill during the exam?

Put your hand up and an invigilator will assist you. You should inform an invigilator if you feel ill before or during an exam and if you feel this may have affected your performance.

What time does my exam start?

Unless otherwise stated, morning exams start at 9.30am and afternoon exams start at 1.00pm.

If I miss the examination, can I take it another day?

No. Exam timetables are published Nationally, and you must attend on the stated date and time.

How do I know how long the exam is?

Invigilators will tell you when to start and finish the exam. They will write the start and finish times on the notice board at the front of the exam room.

There will be a clock in all exam rooms, if you are unable to see these please tell an invigilator.

Which questions do I answer?

It is important that you spend 5 minutes reading the instructions on the front of the exam paper carefully so that you know exactly which questions you must answer. Some sections are compulsory, and others give a choice. If you are in any doubt, please ask an invigilator.

Can I go to the toilet during the exam?

Only if absolutely necessary, as this disrupts the concentration of others. You will be escorted by an invigilator and will not be allowed any extra time in your exam.

Can I leave the exam early?

Unfortunately, you cannot leave the exam room early, make good use of the time available to you to check your answers.

When do I get my results?

GCSE result day is Thursday 20th August 2026. You can come in and collect your results in person or between 10.00am – 12.00pm. If you are unable to collect them yourself, we will need written permission from you stating who will be collecting them and that person will need to bring in some form of identification. We do not give results over the phone or by email.

What about my Certificates?

Your certificates should be in school towards the end of November.

We will post out certificates by recorded delivery to the address that we have. Please tell us if you move.

It is very important that you keep your original certificates safe at home. In the future you maybe asked for copies.

Exam Words

These are all words that you will find in examination questions. You will need to **REMEMBER WHAT THEY MEAN** if you are going to be able to write the **RIGHT SORT OF ANSWER**. Every subject has its own set of words that are used to ask questions.

Make sure that you know and understand the “question words” for each of your subjects.

CALCULATE:	Do the sum and show all of your working out.
COMPARE:	Are the things very alike (similar) or are there important differences? Explain which do you think are best? Make sure that you write down your reasons for thinking as you do?
CONTRAST:	Find the differences and describe them clearly.
CRITICISE:	Use EVIDENCE to support your opinion on the value and importance of theories, facts or other people’s ideas or views.
DEDUCE:	Use the information you are given or already know to find the answer.
DEFINE:	Give the meaning of.....
DESCRIBE:	Write in detail about....
DETERMINE:	Put the numbers you need into the equation and then do the sum.
DISCUSS:	Write about the important parts of this topic. Are there two sides to the question? Make sure that you write about all the points which are for the argument and all the points which are against the argument.
DISTINGUISH:	Explain the difference.

ESTIMATE:	Think of some 'best guess' numbers for the bits of the problem and do your sums using these 'best guess' numbers.
EVALUATE:	Decide why something is important or successful.
EXPLAIN:	Make everything clear so that the reader can understand what you mean.
FIND:	Work out the answer.
ILLUSTRATE:	Write down some examples to make your ideas clear.
INTERPRET:	Explain the meaning in your own words – for example you might be asked to INTERPRET a graph. Here you should write down what the graph shows you.
JUSTIFY:	Write down your reasons to support an argument or an action.
MEASURE:	Decide what sort of measurement is needed and then use this measuring scale (Such as length = ruler. Macbeth's actions = your view of his actions based on evidence from the play)
OUTLINE:	Write about the most important parts of a topic and leave out all those little details.
PREDICT:	Using your own knowledge of what has happened before in the same sort of situations, work out what you think will happen in this situation. Make sure you write about the reasons for your answer.
RELATE:	Write about the connection between things
REVIEW:	Write about the topic, explaining it clearly from all points of view
SKETCH:	Draw a simple diagram, graph or picture – and LABEL it –to show what is important.
STATE:	Write a short answer about the main point.

SUGGEST: Think about an answer that might be reasonable – you might find several ways of solving the question – write about them all.

SUMMARISE: Bring together and mention all the main points when you write your answer. You don't have to write about all the details of each point you make.

TRACE: Show how something has developed from its beginning to its end.

WHAT IS MEANT BY/WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY:

Write about what the title, statement or word means and then give some more information about it. Look at the marks for the question for a guide to how much you need to write and how many points you need to make. Sometimes each point you write about is worth a mark, sometimes each point you make will be worth only half a mark.

REMEMBER some words mean **slightly different things in different subjects**. Choose the **most sensible meaning** for your answer.

**Finally, we wish all our students the very best of
luck in your exams.**