



Headteacher: **Mr J Grant**  
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3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

You may be aware that, on Monday of this week, changes to the GCSE performance criteria for secondary schools have been announced which affect the current academic year 2013/2014. Given that the students currently in Year 11 are part of a year group that has already experienced significant change in the examination system, I wanted to write to you outlining these changes and explain our response as a school.

The Department of Education has taken the decision, for entries from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 onwards, that only a student's first sitting of an examination in English and Mathematics will count in any judgement of a school's performance. The school is obviously mindful that such judgements include those of significant bodies such as Ofsted. They also impact on performance tables, but I want to make it clear to parents that our position in a table relative to other schools, whilst relevant, is not a priority in comparison to meeting the needs and aspirations of all of our students.

At Sackville we have always made decisions about entering students early for an examination with great care and in good faith. Such decisions are only made when in the best interests of the student and taking into account the examination framework pertinent to each sitting. As an example, parents will be aware from Mr Feist's letter last July that the Department of Education's announcement that month to withdraw the speaking and listening element of the school's home board English GCSE exam after November made early entry the right way forward for our students. External factors do sometimes influence decisions, but only when it leads to the optimum outcome for the student.

Early entry is never used to 'cap' a student's attainment at a certain grade. On the contrary it is used to maximise a student's onward progress towards a final grade. Practice does, indeed, make perfect and we are committed to ensuring that students do have many opportunities to practise taking the exams in realistic situations, whether internal or external. Consequently, our intention continues to be that all Year 11s entered for the November examinations will sit mock examinations over the next two weeks. Based on these results, the English and Maths staff will consider if it is appropriate to withdraw any students from the external exam in November and therefore wait until June. This would happen on a child by child basis, with discussion. We anticipate only considering withdrawal if the mock result reveals a student falling well short of their target grade. External November entry would not be appropriate in these circumstances as a disappointing 'official' result received in January could be demoralising and not help the individual on his/her journey to success. I would also like to take this opportunity to reassure parents that the controlled assessment work completed in English is valid for whichever point of examination entry is chosen this year. The fine efforts already made will not be wasted.

You can remain assured that nothing matters more to us than our students attaining the highest possible grades in August 2014. Ensuring that our young people are able to access the broadest range of pathways at the end of Year 11 is as highly prized to us as ever. Also, on a personal note, my daughter is in Year 11 at a high school in Surrey and I understand only too well as a parent the anxieties created by current decision changes and the need for reassurance. I do hope this letter goes some way to reassure everyone.





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As a reminder, the English and Maths GCSE exams for those entered are on the following dates:

English	Tuesday 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2013 am
Edexcel Maths Paper 1	Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> November 2013 am
Edexcel Maths Paper 2	Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2013 am

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us. In addition to your child's teacher, the following staff may be of particular help:-

Mr Rahim, Head of Maths ([srahim3@wsgfl.org.uk](mailto:srahim3@wsgfl.org.uk))  
Mrs Stuart, Head of English ([rstuart@wsgfl.org.uk](mailto:rstuart@wsgfl.org.uk))  
Mr Maywood, Head of Year 11 ([smaywood@wsgfl.org.uk](mailto:smaywood@wsgfl.org.uk))  
Mr Feist, Deputy Headteacher ([nfeist@wsgfl.org.uk](mailto:nfeist@wsgfl.org.uk))

Yours sincerely

Julian Grant  
**Headteacher**

