



**SIR WILLIAM BORLASE'S
GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

GCSE Public Exams Handbook 2026

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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	3
Key Dates	3
JCQ Information for Candidates Statutory Notices – link	3
Access Arrangements	4
Examinations Sessions	4
Multiple Examinations in one session	4
Exam Day procedure on arrival in school	4
Being onsite during study leave	5
Study Leave for Lower School Students	5
What can I take into an exam room	5
What can I not take into an exam room	5
Calculators	6
Procedures in the exam room	6
Malpractice including *NEW FOR 2026* Fake Paper Scammers	6
Smart Glasses	7
End of the examination and leaving the room	7
Emergency Procedures – Fire and Lockdown	7
What do to if you are late to an exam	8
What to do if you are unwell, including getting a positive test for Covid	9
Medication in exams	9
Menstruation supplies	9
Special Consideration	10
Results Day	10
Post-results services	10
Certificates	11
Exams where supervision until 10am or 2.30pm will be required	11

Introduction

This handbook contains information relating to all aspects of the public GCSE exams taking place in Summer 2026. Both candidates and parents/carers need to read this handbook carefully before the start of the examination period and should refer to it in the event of a situation arising.

Students will have their own candidate timetable showing them all the information they need. The school website in the Exams section - [Summer 2026 Timetables](#) - also has a generic timetable of dates and subjects. It is the student's responsibility to know exactly when and where each examination will be taking place. They will be alerted to any changes/updates through their school email account, so **should check this daily throughout the exam period.**

Normal school uniform rules apply throughout the examination period.

Key Dates in 2026

Thursday 7 May:	Exam season starts – German in the pm session All Year 11 expected in school if not in an exam
Friday 8 May:	Drama in the pm session All Year 11 expected in school if not in an exam
Monday 11 May:	Year 11 study leave starts
Wednesday 24 June:	National Contingency Day – end of exam season

The public exam season starts on Thursday 7 May. Were there to be a period of regional or national disruption such that an exam board felt it necessary to move an exam, this could be rescheduled onto any day up to and including National Contingency Day – Wednesday June 24. Candidates cannot ask for exams to be rescheduled. They are sat, or they are missed and then dealt with via the absence procedure detailed later in this booklet.

Joint Council for Qualifications – Statutory Notices

All candidates must adhere to the statutory notices published by the JCQ. These are published on the school website in the Exams section - [JCQ Information for Candidates Documents](#)

- Non-exam Assessment – Information for Candidates
- Preparing to sit your examinations
- Written Examinations – Information for Candidates
- Social Media - Information for candidates
- Warning to Candidates poster
- Unauthorised items poster

Each awarding body also has its own privacy notice which can be found on the same page as these statutory notices. It is the student's responsibility to make sure they are aware of the content of these notices and abide by them.

The Exams Office, a professional development organisation for those involved with exams, have

produced [this](#) short animation of Instructions for Candidates. We recommend students and parents watch it and it is used in the exams briefing assemblies.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are individual adjustments to examination conditions such as 25% extra time, use of a laptop, a reader or a scribe. Sir William Borlase's Grammar School (SWBGS) follows the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidelines for assessing and granting access arrangements.

To qualify for an access arrangement, evidence needs to have been collected in previous years and an application made well before the examination season. There needs to be evidence from a specialist teacher and clear evidence of a history of need in the classroom and in previous exams.

Access Arrangements at SWBGS are managed by the School Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCo).

Examination Sessions

There are two exam sessions each day. Students should take note of the required times of arrival for exams later in this handbook.

Exams are scheduled by the examination boards. There may be one or more exams scheduled in each session. Regardless of the actual finishing time of an examination, students must be supervised until 10.00am or 2.30pm, so for very short exams, there may be a period of supervision after the exam has ended. There is a specific section about this later in this document.

Please note that the expected finish time of an exam is not the length of the exam added to the expected start time. That is only the time that the students are told to stop writing. The exam papers must be collected before students can leave the room, collect their belongings etc. Please be aware of this when planning for collection after an exam.

Multiple examinations in one session

An examination session usually lasts up to 3 hours. More than one examination may be scheduled in each session. This most notably occurs for GCSE language listening and reading exams which are treated as two parts of one exam and are run back-to-back with just a pause for collecting one paper and handing out the other. The order of such papers will be shown on a student's timetable.

Where two different subjects are scheduled at exactly the same time in the same session, this is known as an "Exam Clash". There are no GCSE clashes in 2026.

Exam day procedure on arrival in school

Please line up by **8.30am** for morning exams and **1.00pm** for afternoon exams. Exams will usually take place in the Sports Hall but other venues will also be used. All venues will be shown on a student's candidate timetable. Please wait outside the building that houses the venue, unless the weather is wet, in which case students should line up quietly in the relevant corridor or foyer. Registration will take place outside the exam room and students will be called to enter the room in seating order.

Students must be ready for registration and have all equipment needed for the exam. After their name has been called, students must enter the exam room in silence, as they will then be under exam conditions and must remain completely silent unless spoken to by an invigilator. Any kind of communication - even non-verbal - once inside an exam space is malpractice that must be reported. At the entrance of every exam room all unauthorised items will be collected by an invigilator. These will be made available for collection at the end of the examination.

Being on-site during study leave

In previous years, students have had rooms made available to them if they wish to study on-site when not in an examination. Students should look out for details of this year's arrangements which will be communicated by the KS4 team.

Study Leave for Lower School students

Students in year 10 who are taking a GCSE may, if an exam paper is scheduled for the afternoon session, take the morning as authorised absence for revision. Their teachers have been informed of the various dates & times but it is polite for students to tell their teachers which lessons they will be missing. Classwork and homework must be caught up on.

If a student has a morning exam, it will be over by Break and they are therefore expected back into lessons for P3. If a student has an afternoon exam, they do not have to go to P5 if the exam is finished by then, but they must sign out of school with the Attendance Officer if leaving the site before 3.30pm. This is so that we can account for everybody correctly in the event that one of the emergency (Fire or Lockdown) alarms sounds.

What can I take into the exam room?

Black pens – ensure these are the ordinary non-erasable type as the scanning process can melt erasable ink. Please do not write exam answers in any other colour as papers must scan well for electronic marking. If you are unsure, the Exams Team are happy to look at your intended pen for you.

Equipment for a specific exam - it is the student's responsibility to check any special items with their subject teacher. The invigilation team may not have enough to lend out if lots of students forget something. If that should happen then we will not be able to lend anything out, as it cannot be decided fairly who should or should not receive an item.

All these items must be in a clearly transparent pencil case.

Water bottles must be made of clear material and all labels must be able to be removed. They must only contain water; no other drink is permitted.

What can I not take into the exam room?

Any kind of written notes – on paper, equipment or anywhere on the body. If you have a tattoo that could be visible in the summer, please speak to Mrs Haldane as soon as possible.

Any kind of internet-enabled device. Including, but not limited to, mobile phones, i-pods, MP3 players, airpods and any kind of earbud/headphones. If handed in, please ensure any cases are clearly labelled.

Any type of watch, clock or fitbit.

Food of any kind or any other drink but water, unless agreed in advance with Mrs Haldane.

Calculators

ALL graphical calculators must be put into UK exam mode immediately prior to ANY exam into which they are taken. This will be checked by members of staff. Failure to do so is reportable malpractice. The Maths department can help if anyone is unsure. If you are intending to use a graphical calculator, please ensure you have changed the batteries.

Procedures in the examination room

- : Remain silent at all times and listen carefully to all instructions given.
- : Sit in the seat indicated to you.
- : Listen carefully to the instructions at the beginning of the exam.
- : Do not open or write on the exam paper until you are told to.
- : Attract help by raising your hand and waiting for an invigilator to come to you
- : Remain facing front at all times and do not make contact in any way with other students

Malpractice in examinations

Examples of malpractice include, but are not limited to:

- : Bringing unauthorised notes into the examination eg writing on hands
- : Bringing a mobile phone, watch, airpods/earbuds/headphones even if turned off
- : Copying
- : Communicating with other candidates
- : Leaving the exam room without permission
- : Deliberate disruption
- : Breach of instructions, such as failing to stop writing when told to

NB: students should note that if they request a toilet break, they will be asked to turn out their pockets before they are allowed into the toilet.

The school is required to report all incidences of malpractice in order to maintain its Centre registration. An investigation will be carried out by the examination board which is likely to result in a penalty. This penalty could be a warning, zero marks for the paper being sat, disqualification from the entire subject or even from all exams sat in that year or in years to come.

***NEW* - Fake paper scammers**

Each summer there are individuals who claim on social media to have copies of question papers.

Candidates who think they will get an advantage by buying a paper online or by making money from selling a question paper or confidential exam-related information are at a serious risk of being

disqualified, not just from that paper itself, but the whole qualification and maybe all exams for a number of years. The exam boards have been granted injunctions that make this behaviour illegal.

If a candidate sees something which appears to be a question paper leak, they must report it immediately to their school or college exams officer or to the relevant awarding organisation if that would be quicker. It can also be reported directly to the social media platform where it was seen.

Smart Glasses

Smart Glasses are banned in public examinations. Please do not buy your student smart glasses. JCQ give us the authority to remove any pair of glasses that we are suspicious about. This would leave your student potentially unable to complete their examination and no special consideration would be given. This would also be reportable as malpractice.

End of the examination and leaving the exam room

Students have to stay in the room until the end of the standard time for the examination irrespective of the time they actually finish.

If a student finishes the exam early, they should check their work thoroughly. They must keep their eyes on their own paper and avoid the temptation to look around.

When students are told to stop writing, they must do so immediately.

Students should remain seated and silent. Exam papers must be collected before students can leave the room.

Students will be dismissed from the examination room one row at a time. They must walk to the front of the row and not cut through the desks.

Students must remain silent until they are well away from the building where the examination has been held. They should not gather in corridors or wait for others outside the exam room; there will be students still working.

Emergency Procedures – Fire and Lockdown

If either of the emergency alarms sound, students should stop writing immediately and wait for instructions. The invigilator will make a note of the time. Students should remain silent and facing the front of the room.

Students must not communicate with anyone other than a member of the examinations staff, even if they are asked to evacuate the venue.

In the event of an evacuation, all materials must be left on the desk. Students will be escorted to the fire assembly point **where they must remain in order and silent**. They must stand away from the rest of the school and at least a pace away from any other examination student, **remaining in silence throughout**.

Once the "All Clear" has been given, students will be escorted back into the examination room. Again, they must walk in complete silence. When seated, students must wait for instructions from

the invigilator before resuming work. Students will be given the full remainder of the examination time.

What to do if a student is late for an examination

If for any reason, a student knows that they will be late arriving for an examination:

The student or student's parent/carer should leave a message for the Exams Officer with Reception via 01628 816500. Please do not just email in as it may not be seen in time. The Exams Officer will need to know

- : the student's name
- : the student's year group
- : which exam the student is sitting
- : why they are late
- : when they are expected to arrive

If a student arrives late such that the Archway is closed, they must enter the site via Reception and wait to be collected by a member of staff. They **must not** go to the examination venue unaccompanied, so that all exam-related procedures can still take place.

If a student arrives after 10.00am for a morning exam or after 2.30pm for an afternoon exam, they are classed as 'very late'. The school must report this to the examination board, who can choose whether or not they accept the paper for marking. Such students will still be given the full time to sit the examination paper but depending on the time, it may involve changing the planned venue, so they must enter the site via Reception and wait to be collected by a member of staff.

If a student arrives after the examination they were expecting to sit has finished, they may not be permitted to sit the paper as its security and integrity will have been compromised.

To try and avoid students being classed as 'very late', if a student is missing from the examination register, a member of school staff will telephone the emergency contacts we have listed for the student in an attempt to get them into school before the 'very late' deadline. Leaving a message with Reception if a student is known to be running late will help with this process. If your landline rings on an exam day, please answer it.

Students may not be admitted to an exam involving listening – eg languages or Music – if they are late, due to the nature of the exam. The time and venue of these exams should be very carefully noted.

What to do if you are unwell

External examinations cannot be moved or sat at another time. Therefore, a student must make every effort to attend. Examinations are not able to be rescheduled due to illness or to any other unforeseen circumstances.

In order to apply to the examination board for special consideration in the case of absence, candidates will be sent JCQ/ME Form 14 to complete, stating their illness symptoms and whether a medical professional was contacted. This needs to have been returned within three days of the

student's last examination. If a student misses more than one examination, it will need to be completed for each one.

If a student is too unwell to sit an examination their parent / carer should send an email to examabsence@swbgs.com The Exams Officer will need to know

- : the student's name
- : which exam the student was due to sit
- : details of the illness that is preventing them from sitting the paper

If you need to phone rather than email to notify the absence, the school switchboard on 01628 816500 is open from 8am to 4pm and this would be the quickest way to let us know during school hours. If you need to leave a phone message out of school hours please use the normal school absence phone line: 01628 816545

Covid

If you have a high temperature or other Covid 19 symptoms, you should not attend school, even for an examination, until these symptoms are gone. The Government does not recommend testing for Covid unless advised to by a medical professional. However, if you have taken a test and you receive a positive result, even if you feel well, you should not attend school for 3 days, counting from the day after the date of the positive test. If this means missing an examination you should inform the school immediately, as detailed above, so that a JCQ/ME Form 14 can be sent for completion. It needs to be completed by both student and parent and it should be noted that electronic signatures are not acceptable.

Medication in exams

If a student needs to bring medication into an exam, this should be notified to Mrs Haldane in advance. It should be brought in in as little packaging as possible but please do not decant medication in case it gets lost and is then unidentifiable, as this would be dangerous. Medication should be left on the student's desk so that the student does not have to reach into a pocket to get it.

Menstruation Supplies

Students who menstruate can access necessary supplies from the Sports Hall by discretely asking an invigilator when they are being escorted to a toilet break. In other venues, they are already provided in the staff toilets that students will be using.

Special Consideration

A student's parent/carer must notify the school of circumstances arising shortly before or during the examination season, which may affect examination performance. Notification must be made to the Exams Officer via exams@swbgs.com together with any supporting documentary evidence available, no later than three days after the student's last examination.

All decisions are made by the examination board concerned. If the application is accepted, then a small adjustment may be made. No feedback on applications is provided and the examination boards will not enter into communication with either the school or parents about applications.

Results Day

Results Day is Thursday 20 August 2026. How the results will be made available will be notified nearer the time by email.

Post-Results Services 2026

Enquiries about results will be accepted in the Exams Office from the start of the new school year in September unless there is a Sixth Form place dependent on the outcome of the review. There is no priority review of marking procedure for GCSE papers.

Enquiries about results (EAR)

The information below is to give parents and candidates advance information of the services available. This information will also be supplied with the results on results day as by then, the deadline dates will have been published.

Teachers may be available to provide advice and support before a post-results service is requested. However, the final decision on whether or not to apply remains with the candidate.

To request any of the post-results services, candidates must request a post-results service form from the exams office and submit it with the appropriate payment by the relevant deadline. The charge for each service will include the examination board charge and the cost of administration by the school. The school is authorised to make applications and will receive the results, which will be forwarded by the exams officer to the e-mail address provided on the application form. The exam boards will not deal directly with students or parents.

The services are:

EAR1 Clerical Check

The script is checked to ensure that all the questions were marked and that all the marks were totalled correctly.

EAR2 Review of Marking

A different examiner reviews the marking of the original script to check that it has been carried out in accordance with the marking guidelines. Candidates are required to sign the request form to indicate they are aware that marks and grades can go up, down or remain the same. A fee is payable for each examination paper for which a review of marking is required. It is not necessary to have all papers in a qualification reviewed.

If a candidate's mark increases enough to increase the overall grade then no fee is payable for at least the paper that increased the grade. Candidate marks could increase without a grade change. This service automatically includes the EAR1 Clerical Check.

NB: this service is not a re-mark whereby a second examiner would sit down with a fresh copy of the paper and mark it without seeing the first examiner's marks. Such a service does not exist.

ATS: Access to Scripts

Students may request a copy of their marked script to help them decide as to whether they wish to request either of the EAR services outlined above.

Students may also request a copy of their marked script to use as a study tool or an example of work if they wish to study that subject at a more advanced level.

Fees for all post-results services are payable at the time of request. No application will be processed until payment has been received.

Certificates

Exam certificates arrive in school in early November. Once they have been checked as correct, they will be issued through a student's tutor group. If a student leaves Borlase at the end of year 11, they can be collected from Reception.

**There are some specific arrangements for certain papers this year
All students should read the next section carefully**

Supervision after the end of a short examination

As exam students must be supervised until 10.00am or 2.30pm there is a possibility, depending on exactly what time an examination starts, that students will need to be supervised until these times even though their examinations have finished. They will be collected from the exam room by a member of staff. It isn't necessary to be in silence during this supervision, but devices cannot be collected until it is over and they must not contact any other student and will not be released before 10.00am or 2.30pm.

Students will be reminded of this where relevant and should follow staff instructions.

Papers that could be affected

Foundation Tier German Listening & Reading papers – Thursday 7 May, pm

Combined Science Biology Paper 1 – Tuesday 123 May, pm

Foundation Tier German Writing – Thursday 14 May, pm

Combined Science Chemistry Paper 1 – Monday 18 May, am

Foundation Tier French Listening & Reading papers – Wednesday 20 May, am

Combined Science Physics Paper 1 – Tuesday 2 June, am

Foundation Tier French Writing – Thursday 4 June, pm

Combined Science Biology Paper 2 – Monday 8 June, am

Foundation Tier Spanish Listening & Reading papers – Tuesday 90 June, am

Combined Science Chemistry Paper 2 – Friday 12 June, am

Combined Science Physics Paper 2 – Monday 15 June, am

Foundation Tier Spanish Writing – Tuesday 16 June, am