

PREPARE TO PERFORM

ISSUE 5
JAN 2026



Deer Park School

MESSAGE FROM MR SMITH

I hope the Christmas break allowed Year 11 to take some time to recharge after the busy Autumn term. The start of the Spring term sees the students taking their mock exams, a chance for students to see how they are progressing and what work still needs to be done before the final exams in the Summer term.

In this issue, you will find comments from subject teachers regarding the mock exam and what students should be revising in order to support them to complete these successfully. There is also a reminder about the exam conditions that all students are expected to follow throughout their mock exam period.

Completing mock exams is designed to give students a feel of what the real exams will be like, but will also support students with their revision between now and the final exams. Whilst the Year group will be completing these mocks with exam leave, it's important for them to remember that I, along with their teachers and the rest of the pastoral team are here for them should they need any support during the mock exam season.

Dates for your Diary

- **Year 11 Practice Exams** - Beginning 9th January for two weeks
- **GCSE Food NEA Catch up** - 2nd & 5th February
- **Coffee Morning** - 5th February
- **Year 11 Practice Exams Results Day** - 24th February
- **GCSE Food NEA** - 25th February
- **Parents Evening** - 26th February

COLLEGE OPEN EVENINGS / DAYS

FOR A FULL LIST OF ALL
OPEN EVENTS

CLICK HERE



PREPARE TO PERFORM AFTER SCHOOL SESSIONS

Prepare to perform sessions will be back after the year 11 exams

ASSEMBLIES

Year 11 had their exams assembly the week before Christmas. The slides can be found here:

[Year 11 Exams Assembly 2025 - Slides](#)

[Year 11 Exam Assembly Week 1 Jan 2026](#)

TUTOR SESSIONS

During tutor sessions this week as students prepare for their practice exams, we have been introducing them to habit-stacking. Where our willpower is a finite resource that drains during the day and week, we can use habit-stacking to 'piggyback' on your existing energy and systems. Our brains often work like a computer in that they like an 'If/Then' structure ('If this, Then that'). What this means is that we can 'stack' a new habit onto a pre-existing habit: 'After [current habit], I will [new small habit]'. A bad example of this would be: "I will revise more Biology." (Too vague, requires too much brainpower). A good example would be: "After I plug my phone in to charge at 7 PM, I will complete 5 minutes of active recall."

Basically, to build a routine, they can add a new small habit to anything they already do routinely: taking off their shoes, sitting down on the bus, opening the fridge, brushing teeth, etc. This is a way of 'hacking' into their brains systems to build new routines that willpower alone often fails to see through. Here are some examples:

- The school stack: "After I sit down in registration, I will read one index card."
- The home stack: "After I take off my school shoes, I will put my Physics folder on my desk." (This is a 'pre-habit' that lowers the barrier to starting later).
- The night stack: "After I get into bed, I will recall the top 3 things I learned today."

Follow this process to create a stack:

Identify the anchor: What do you already do?

Attach the habit: Make it tiny (<5 mins), specific (not 'study' but 'one practice question'), and involving a physical action (opening a book, clicking a link).

Reduce friction: Make it easy to start.

YEAR 11 SUCCESS



Students who had attended 20 or more Prepare to perform sessions last term were awarded with a Christmas lunch with Mr Jones in the school hall to celebrate their success. The next set of sessions have already begun, students will be rewarded for their commitment throughout the term with another celebration of success at Easter

GCSE PRACTICE EXAMS INFORMATION

Key Requirements for Students:

- **Check your timetable:** Students must check their timetable prior to each exam to confirm their allocated seat.
- **Punctuality:** Students must pay close attention to the dates and times and ensure they are punctual. They should arrive at the examination room at least 10 minutes before the official start time.
- **Equipment:** Students must be fully equipped with all necessary items, including a black pen. Black ink is mandatory for public examinations. A full list of equipment required can be found in the exam booklet below

Due to a very tight examination schedule, the standard Year 11 timetable will be suspended from Monday 12th January to Friday 23rd January 2026, inclusive.

Attendance:

- Students are only required to be in school for their scheduled examinations during this period.
- Study Provision: If you would like your son/daughter to remain in school to study, suitable accommodation will be provided in the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). Students must sign in and out with a member of staff.
- Friday 9th January: Students with an exam on this day will attend lessons as usual once their exam is finished
- If your child will be absent please report them absent through the usual absence protocol

Access for Afternoon Exams:

- For afternoon exams starting at 1pm, students must enter the school site via the main gate on Sika Avenue or through Reception. **We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, but this procedure is necessary as we operate a closed site during school hours, and the safety of all students on site must be ensured.**
- The bike sheds will be accessible for students cycling to and from school.

Our expectations are that if students are not sitting an examination or working in school, they are at home revising and preparing for their next exam. We would like to ask for your support in that students should not be out in the community during school hours and any students who are not abiding by this request may have their exam leave suspended and their normal timetable reinstated. Although these examinations are a practice for students to experience the questions and receive feedback on them they will also be taken into account if the school is asked to provide a Centre Assessed Grade as we were for previous Year 11 cohorts 2020 and 2021. Therefore, students should apply themselves to their studies and attempt each exam to the best of their ability.

All of the students should have the required revision tools and have information on what they need to revise but this will also be included again in our prepare to perform issue that will be sent tomorrow to enable parents and carers to support the students over the next two weeks

The exam booklet with full details can be found [here](#).

We strongly advise you and your child to read this booklet, along with other helpful information and guidance on the exam process, which is available on our website: <https://www.deerparksecondary.org/information/exam-info-and-results/>. Taking the time to review this material together contains vital information for successful preparation.

MATHS

Students will sit a full set of Maths GCSE papers comprising one non-calculator paper (Paper 1), and two calculator papers. Revision materials can be found on Google classroom, and on the Deer Park Maths Revision website. Students are advised to use their revision guides and previously completed past papers to help with their revision. Please ensure students arrive for each exam with a fully stocked equipment pack - they will need all necessary equipment, including a scientific calculator for papers 2 and 3.

ENGLISH

English will be looking at

- Language paper 2 - Non Fiction and
- Literature Paper 1 - Macbeth and A Christmas Carol

The first exam is English Literature. It is important that students don't just spend time revising the plot but that they know quotes and how to pick them apart and analyse them. On the English website, there are documents which go through key quotes and how they might be analysed. Students should use these in connection with the exam papers to apply them and practise in timed conditions.

For English Language, the questions are always the same, the students just need to practise applying their answers to different texts. In order to do so, the English Website might be useful for them to look at past papers.

SCIENCE

Students will sit Biology Paper 2, Chemistry Paper 2 and Physics Paper 2. Please note that the Chemistry exam for separate scientists will be redacted to reflect only the topics that have been covered so far.

Revision materials are available on Google Classroom for each paper. Please make use of revision guides to help structure revision and remember that reading and highlighting is the most ineffective use of time- quizzing and self-testing is key to building long-term memory.

PE

The January mock exam will cover all aspects of the course. Year 11 have now completed all GCSE PE exam content so all topics could come up. Practical marks will be finalised this half term following a useful mock moderation with Wildern in December.

Please see useful revision links below;

1. Please find the following useful revision video playlist - AQA GCSE PE . This has been shared on google classroom for all students.
2. Please find the 2018 paper via the link here and the mark scheme.
3. Please find the 2020 paper via the link here

We will be working through previous exams in the new year, in the build-up to May.

GEOGRAPHY

As we approach the January mock exams, all Year 11 geographers will be sitting both Paper 1 and Paper 2 of the AQA specification, providing a vital opportunity to practice for the summer.

To support your preparation, please make full use of the wide range of resources available, including your revision folders, the dedicated case study booklet, and our Geography website/Google Classroom. A key priority for your revision should be the mastery of case studies; ensuring you can apply the correct examples to the right questions—and remembering 3-4 specific facts for each—is the most effective way to unlock the higher mark bands and secure a stronger overall grade.

Finally, please ensure you arrive with the correct equipment for your exams, specifically a calculator for numeracy and statistical questions, and a pencil to accurately complete graphs or draw diagrams.

FOOD TECH

This term in lessons, students will be working towards their final practical exam and completing their NEA 2. Students will need to choose three dishes to cook which reflect the skills they have shown in their first practical exam from December, but with the aim of increasing the complexity of those skills. This practical exam is worth 30 marks of a possible 70 overall for NEA 2, so it is vital they push themselves. Any pupils missing lessons must attend Prepare to Perform sessions to catch up on the hours missed.

MUSIC

For their music mock, students will sit a full paper, with an hour of the exam focusing on listening and the final 30 minutes asking specific questions about the Set Works studied in class (Beethoven and Queen). When revising at home, students should focus on the elements of music and any words that fit under each of these, as the listening part of the paper will focus on this.

DRAMA

- Students need to be revising Blood Brothers and Live Theatre Review.
- Students have been given a Blood Brothers revision guide which they can work through. This covers all of the important content.
- Additionally, students should be recapping and revising subject-specific terminology, which can be found in the glossary of [OCR GCSE Specification](#).

Lastly, using the Thing I know to be a True resource pack to revise will be very useful for students wanting to expand their knowledge- [TIKTBT Resource Pack](#).

ART

This term you will be handed your AQA Art Exam paper, where you will have to choose ONE theme for Component 2. This exam paper makes up 40% of your GCSE grade and you will have 11 weeks to include your assessments 1, 2, 3 and your final piece in April. I have already shared a detailed explanation about what Component 2 is about on Google Classroom - make sure you read this thoroughly.

I have created slides to help you all achieve your targeted grades. It is important you complete these tasks on time, and they will also be uploaded onto Google Classroom for reminders.

During study leave, make sure you are using the slides on Google Classroom to help guide you through Component 2. In the first 2 weeks, you need to be focusing on primarily researching ideas, artists and taking your own photos.

Presentations in your sketchbooks are expected to be of high quality. Make sure the written work is readable or typed. Images you find on the internet should not be pixellated but of high quality. Primary images get higher grades.

REMINDER: Use helper slides to guide you through this on Google Classroom! Sketchbooks have been ordered but have not arrived yet, so you will need to work on paper for now.

IT

We have now completed 60% of the course with both NEA's now with the exam board.

The focus is all on the exam, which is worth 40%.

The lessons will include content and exam technique so they feel ready to get the best grade possible.

Please encourage revision for the mocks, as we will use these to determine what areas we focus on for the revision lessons.

Revision guides are still available for £5.50.

MEDIA

Students have almost completed their CSP study - we have just newspapers left to complete. Students will then focus on revising all CSPs, ensuring they are confident in the assessed framework.

DANCE

Students have now completed 30% of their practical grade for GCSE Dance. The next NEA is on Wednesday, 18th March and will focus on their Choreography, which is worth 30% of their overall grade. Students MUST begin creating material outside of lessons as well as during curriculum time. The Dance Studio is available to Year 11 students at the following times:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Break 1	Year 11 Choreo	Year 11 Choreo	Year 11 Choreo		Year 11 Choreo
Break 2	Year 11 Choreo		Year 11 Choreo	Year 11 Choreo	Year 11 Choreo

Students have been given a checklist for completion and will be set very clear deadlines that will be posted on Google Classroom. It is imperative that students adhere to these deadlines to ensure the best outcomes for their Choreography.

Dance Revision:

All topics studied will be made available on Google Classroom under the topic of REVISION. Students should focus on ALL section C works that have been studied so far, as well as revising sections A and B of the paper. I strongly encourage students to rewatch the Anthology Works that they have studied so far as part of their revision:

- A Linha Curva
- Shadows
- Within Her Eyes
- Infra

Useful Revision Tools:

[AQA GCSE Dance Vocabulary](#)

[Infra Handbook - Free Revision Resource](#)

[A Linha Curva - Free Revision Resource](#)

Practice Papers:

[Dance - June 2022](#)

[Dance - Nov 2021](#)

DESIGN TECH

This half term brings the Design and Technology mock exam. Please remind your young people that there is a very clear 'topics to revise' list on GC for them. They should be focusing their revision on this topic list.

In terms of their NEA the students are about to start the challenging practical part of their coursework. I am going to be spending the study leave working hard on preparing for this.

Please be aware that the final deadline for NEA to be completed is the 13th March. This includes a 2-week study leave and a half-term break so we are running out of time fast! Please discuss the NEA with your child and make sure that they are up to date and happy with what they are making and what needs to be done.

FRENCH

With mock exams coming up, all Year 11 linguists will be revising and preparing for all four skills; however, it will be more focused on Reading, Listening and Writing as they have already done their speaking mock exam before half term (well done everyone!). Pupils should be using their revision guides to also support them with their revision at home, and they should bring their revision guides to school, as we will also be using them in lessons to complete as much revision as possible. After the mocks are finished, we will be focusing on the last two modules and then focus on grammar to ensure everyone is confident and ready for their GCSE's!

Please ensure that revision is also being done at home, and make a list of any vocabulary or grammar points which you would like us to go through again during Prepare to Perform. Bonne chance à tous!

HISTORY

All year 11 students will be examined on all 4 topics we have been studying since Year 9. The topics are:

Paper 1

Section A Germany; Democracy and Dictatorship 1890-1945

Section B Conflict and Tension The Inter-War Years 1918-1939

Paper 2

Section A Britain: Health and the People

Section B The Normans

There are lots of revision resources on Google Classroom and students should be referring to their exercise books and folders. They also have a wealth of practise exam questions that they should be tackling whilst using the structure sheet and sticking to timings. All students have been reminded the importance of leaving enough time to complete the final question on each section as these are the biggest questions (16 marks).

The AQA exam rewards students who can move beyond simple descriptions to provide sophisticated analysis and evaluation. By revisiting key teachings, sacred texts, and diverse perspectives, you build the "mental library" necessary to construct persuasive arguments under pressure. Consistent revision ensures that when you face a complex ethical dilemma or a deep theological question in the exam, you have the confidence to not just state what people believe, but to explain why they believe it and how those beliefs influence their lives today. Please continue to complete your self-study booklets as part of your ongoing revision for RS.

Top Tip for revision:

Quote "Micro-Quotes"

Long passages of scripture are hard to memorise and often unnecessary.

The Tip: Aim for "micro-quotes"—short, 2-to-5 word snippets that can be easily embedded into a sentence.

Instead of the whole Golden Rule, just use: "Love thy neighbour."

For Islam: "Closer than his jugular vein" (Omnipresence).

Please continue to utilise the drop in sessions below:

Mrs Williams- Tuesday break 1- 112

Mrs Watson- Thursdays -lunch- 112

Please note that some of you need to attend fortnightly on Wednesday, Week B in 112 from 3-3.45pm revision sessions to help you be successful in meeting your target grade. These invitations have been sent out to your parents/guardians directly and they will need to be in contact with me if you are unable to attend.

Our Third Year 11 Parent Coffee Morning will take place on:

Date: Thursday 5th February

Time: 9.30 - 10.45

Location: The school Library

Theme: How to support your child's health and Wellbeing during Year 11

Your insights and involvement are invaluable as we work together to make this year successful, however we do appreciate the constraints of working parents and the slides and information will be sent out via our Prepare to Perform newsletter, should you not be able to make it.

To help us arrange seating and refreshments, please complete the sign up on edulink

Our future coffee mornings will be held on the following dates between 9.45-10.45

Friday 20th March - How to support your child's resilience during the final term

REVISION STRATEGIES

As pupils head into their practice exams, we've been emphasising the importance of building routines. In particular, at this time of year we often make New Year's resolutions and rely on willpower to see us through. And this is why they can often fail, because willpower is a finite resource. What our brains like are systems to follow: our brains are designed to be efficient, not necessarily productive. So they build 'loops' to save energy. Every study session students have ever had (or avoided) follows this three-step neurological pattern:

The cue: A trigger (e.g., your phone vibrating or sitting at your desk).

The action: The behavior (e.g., checking TikTok vs. opening your Biology folder).

The reward: The dopamine hit (e.g., social validation vs. the "ah-ha!" moment of understanding a concept).

The way to use these 'loops' to our advantage is to get rid of the cue that is distracting. Putting your phone in another room is a great way to do this!

Furthermore, when students practice a past paper or memorise a formula, their brain performs a process called **myelination**. Think of your neurons like electrical wires. **Myelin** is the insulation around those wires. Every time you repeat a task, the myelin sheath gets thicker, making the electrical signal travel faster and more accurately. Distracted study (checking their phone every 5 minutes!) prevents thick myelin from forming. A good way to beat this is to set a timer for just 20 minutes of pure focus. This 'intense firing' tells the brain: "*This pathway is important; insulate it!*"

