

7th January 2021



Dear Parent/Carer,

As you'll be aware there have been a series of government announcements over the last few days relating to exams, and in particular to the upcoming January vocational exams. Apologies about the delay in contacting you, but we have been awaiting clarification and for the announcements made today by the Secretary of State for Education.

In light of the announcements made today accompanied with information received from Exam boards, we will be offering to run the exams as planned, giving all students in Year 10 to 13 due to sit vocational exams this week and next, the opportunity to do so. We feel it is important that students who have prepared for these examinations for a number of months get the chance to perform.

We have ensured that the exams can be conducted safely in accordance with government guidance and that risks can be mitigated in an exam setting. Students will be seated two metres from any other students in the exams spaces and the usual social distancing and hand hygiene protocols will be in place along with the requirement for masks to be worn in communal spaces on the way to and from the exams spaces. Please find attached updated details of the exam timetable and venues and associated arrangements.

We recognise that there will be some students and parents that wish to adhere to lockdown guidance issued earlier this week or may be anxious about returning to school site. Some students or parents would therefore rather not take up this opportunity to participate in the January exam series and this is understandable. Unfortunately, the government have released no further details or clarification on the implications for students of not taking the opportunity of sitting the exams or how assessments will take place in the future.

This will clearly be a cause of additional worry and anxiety for students, parents and carers and I know that making the choice of whether to come in to sit the exam is a complex one for some individuals given their circumstances. What I can give reassurance of, is that irrespective of the decision to undertake the exam or not there is a commitment from the government that this decision will not disadvantage students in terms of their final outcomes. As a school we hold firm to that commitment also.

In terms of the pre-exam sessions that are due to run in advance of the exams these will still take place. However they will, with one exception, take place remotely through Teams rather than students coming into school. Please see the attached overview for clarification. Subject teachers may be in touch through Teams or email to provide subject specific details.

I know how hard students have worked over the last few months towards these exams, having sat mock exams recently and probably given over time during the Christmas break towards revision. I have every confidence in students being able to perform well in these exams in spite of the circumstances in which they take place. The school stands ready to support all students irrespective of the decision on sitting the exams.

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If students or parents/carers have questions or queries please contact the school and we'll do what we can, given the limited additional information we have from the government, to address these and offer further reassurance. If the decision is taken not to sit the exam please contact the Exams Officer, Mrs Ireson sireson@garibaldischool.co.uk or by calling 01623464220. If you do not communicate with the exams officer we expect to see students in school for their exams.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Dawson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Dawson

Deputy Head of School
The Garibaldi School