



St Mary's Catholic High School Leyland Examinations Information Handbook for Parents and Carers 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

A warm welcome to your exams information handbook for 2026.

This handbook is split into two main parts:

Part One: A list of the rules and regulations for examinations. Please note that these rules are not set by us, but are given to us by the exam boards, and they are the same rules that we asked your children to follow for their mock examinations. We would encourage you to spend some time reading through them with your child, so that you both understand them. We will do everything we can to support your child during their exam season, but it is important to stress that **not knowing the rules is no excuse if your child breaks them, and it can seriously harm their exam results if they do.**

Part Two: A timetable covering the full eight-week period of the summer written exams. There is plenty of space to add in any family events or other commitments that your child may have during this time, in order for you to support and help them plan their revision effectively.

Additionally, towards the back of the handbook we have included a section for you to make any notes that you would like to during parents' evening today.

Your child will receive their own copies of the exam rules and timetable in due course, so this is *your* copy! Please make sure that you keep this handbook for yourself.

We wish your child all the best for their exams, and please do not hesitate to get in touch with the school if you have any questions.

Mr Thompson
Head Teacher

Mr Shone
Examinations Officer

How to best support your children... Exam season coping strategies from Mr Diffley!

Dear Parents / Carers,

Thank you for your support and efforts over the last 4 years as your child has navigated the ever-changing dynamics of secondary school. No matter the personal journeys your children have had so far, I hope we all agree that the next 5 months are by far the most important in their educational lives to date. It is imperative that we work together to ensure the very best for your child as they face the final stages of their GCSE courses – please note I am always on hand if you need me.

Below are a few tips that may help you support your child. They are based on educational research and have been tried and tested with success!

- 1) **Help them write a realistic and organised revision timetable.** Procrastination and becoming overwhelmed is highly common in teenagers. They need structure, a sensible and quiet space and resources. Ideally 2 hours per night and not for more than 40-45 minutes at a time. We find that many pupils work well with rewards built in and a set routine. Please don't forget to use the after-school revision timetable as part of any plan!
- 2) **Being healthy.** A study in 2019 found that school pupils who eat breakfast regularly score nearly 2 GCSE grades above peers who often miss this vital meal. Ensuring your child is nutritious each morning will literally give them a head starts. Healthy foods, such as oats, berries, eggs, Greek yoghurt and whole grains are ideal fuel for the brain on any day of the week! At the same time, a cut off point from studying and screen time will allow them to rest, recover and be ready mentally as well as physically.
- 3) **Revise appropriately.** Teens sometimes fall into default status of spending hours upon end reading and re-reading the same set of notes. This is likely to not be effective for them and ends up being time wasted and causing anxiety. Encourage them to step out of their comfort zone, interact with materials via quizzes and knowledge checks will be much more beneficial in identifying gaps in their knowledge and help them focus on these. Revision isn't easy, otherwise everyone would be experts at it! Use past papers, mark schemes (check you are using the right exam board!) and other resources.
- 4) **Maintain calmness.** Remind them you are on their side, and that you are proud of them regardless of what they achieve. Discuss their worries with them and prioritise self-care activities as often as you can. Maintain their hobbies as often as possible, relax with their family and friends. Avoid as much as possible any putative phrases or threats if you can; We need to maximise their motivation and not make them feel disillusioned. Be their cheerleader!

Everyone has been through this stage of their lives. We know it can be stressful and difficult for all. Be positive with them, praise them and of course, as Jesus Christ taught us to, love them.

We can do this. I wish you the very best of luck.

J Diffley

PART ONE: EXAM RULES AND REGULATIONS

Preparation

- Candidates should know the dates and times of all their exams.
- Candidates need to arrive at least ten minutes before the start of each exam.
- If a candidate arrives late into school, they must report to the office so that they can be escorted to their exam room. If they arrive more than one hour after the start time for the exam, **they may not be allowed to take it, and the exam board may not accept their paper.**
- If they miss an exam without explanation, **we could request payment for the cost of that exam.**
- Candidates should set off from home with all the items and stationery that they are going to need for the day. Please see the photograph on the next page of an ideal examination kit. It's always a good idea to have spares too. The general equipment list for written exams is:

Pencil case (see-through)
Drink of water (in a clear bottle)
Black pens
Pencils (for graphs and diagrams only)
Eraser
30cm Ruler
Highlighter (which may **only** be used to highlight words or passages of text in the questions, and must never be used to complete any answers)
and, for maths, a Protractor, Pair of Compasses and Calculator.

Certain exams may require specific equipment, and their teacher will advise pupils if additional items need to be taken into the exam or not.

- For the maths and physics exams, candidates are provided with a small number of formulas with the exam paper, and for the chemistry exams they will be provided with a periodic table. They *should not* bring their own copies of these.



Equipment

- **Candidates must not take into the exam room:**
 - (a) ANY notes or papers (including notes written anywhere on their body or clothing).
 - (b) an iPad/tablet, a mobile phone, an MP3/4 player or similar device, ANY watch (including all smartwatches and Fitbits), AirPods, earphones/earbuds, 'smart glasses' or any other smart device. Bringing any of these things in could lead to disqualification.

There will be clocks around the exam room for the candidates to see.
- Candidates do not take their school bag into the exam room, and they should not bring to school anything that isn't needed for that day. Space will be provided for them to store their belongings.
- **Pencil cases must be see-through.** See the Preparation section for what to put in it. Pencil cases that aren't see-through will need to be emptied and kept to one side during the exam.
- Candidates can't use correcting pens, fluid or tape, erasable pens, highlighters or gel pens in their answers, but can use a highlighter to highlight words or sections of text in the questions.
- Calculators have to be taken into the exam without lids or covers, with nothing written on them, and with no labels stuck on them. **Everything must be cleared from the calculator's memory.** Candidates must check that their calculator is working correctly.
- Candidates are allowed to take into the exam a drink of water. It must be in a clear, colourless drinks bottle, and if they have bought a bottle of water the **labels must be removed.** Drinks bottles that don't conform will be taken away and kept to one side if they are brought into the exam room, and the drink given back in a clear bottle or cup.
- Candidates generally aren't allowed food, including sweets or gum (this includes 'cough' sweets). However, if there is a medical need for a candidate to eat at set times, we will arrange this.
- Candidates aren't allowed their own tissues, but we will have a large supply on hand.
- No cuddly toy 'mascots'. Sorry!
- Candidates aren't allowed a dictionary unless it's been given to them as part of an access arrangement.

Behaviour before, during and after exams

- Candidates must not become involved in any unfair or dishonest practice during the exam.
- If a candidate tries to cheat, or breaks the rules in any way, **they could be disqualified not just from that exam but from all their subjects**. This is a really important one to understand.
- Just before it is time to go into the exam room, candidates are asked by a member of staff to be silent. They enter the exam room **in silence**, and will not be allowed to speak again until they have left the room, unless they are asking an invigilator or member of staff a question. **They must not attempt to communicate with any other candidate** in the room, by any form of whispering, signalling or gesturing. This could be as simple as turning round and trying to catch someone else's eye. It could cost them their exam grade!
- Candidates should follow all the instructions given to them by the invigilators or other members of staff. They will be instructed what to write on the front of their answer booklet, when to begin and when to stop writing. There is always a plentiful supply of extra paper. Candidate details must be put on all additional paper that is used.
- **Candidates should tell an invigilator straight away if they think they have been given the wrong exam paper.** Exam boards are very clear that it is the responsibility of the candidate to check. Multiple advisory warnings will be given to candidates about this before each exam starts. Candidates should also tell an invigilator during the exam if they think a page has been badly printed and can't be read clearly, or if there is something missing.
- Invigilators cannot, and will not, give candidates any explanations of the questions.
- All rough work needs to be written in an answer booklet or on other official exam paper, but then crossed out if the candidate doesn't want it to be marked. Everything must be handed in.
- In the event of a fire alarm, candidates must follow all the instructions given to them by the invigilators or other members of staff. **They are still under exam conditions.** They will be taken outside and shown where to stand and wait. **They must not communicate with any other candidate.** The exam time will be paused.
- Candidates must not write any inappropriate, obscene or offensive material on their question paper or answer booklet. That paper will not be marked. This includes any kind of 'doodling'.

- Trips to the toilet are allowed if a candidate has a toilet pass, or are absolutely desperate. They will be escorted there and back. They will not be allowed extra time to make up for it, so they **must make sure they have used the toilet before they go to their exam!**
- If a candidate gets up and leaves an exam room before the time has finished, without an invigilator or other member of staff, **they will not be allowed to come back in again.**
- If a candidate finishes an exam early, they are required to remain in the exam room, under exam conditions and following all the exam rules, until time is up. They should be encouraged to continue checking their work. 'I was bored' is never accepted as an excuse for breaking exam rules!
- At the end of the exam, candidates may leave the room once they have been told that they can, after their work has been collected in. They must not take the question paper or anything else which does not belong to them. They should **remain silent** until they are out of the room.
- On each desk is a candidate ID card. This should not be written on, taken, or damaged in any way.

We realise that this is a lot to take in, but we are always here to support our pupils and they should be encouraged to ask as many questions as they need to before the exams start. You can ask questions too of course, and if you would like to please contact your Exams Officer, Mr. Shone - l.shone@lsmchs.com

PART TWO: EXAMINATION TIMETABLE 2026

The following pages contain details of when all the written examinations will take place in May and June.

This timetable is for written exams only and does *not* include the following:

Music performance examinations

Art practical examinations

Photography practical examinations

Speaking examinations for modern foreign languages

This is because these exams are scheduled by the school rather than the exam boards, and so the pupils involved in any of the above will be told by their teachers when these exams are taking place, nearer the time. Some of the above exams may be assessed by a visiting examiner, while others will be recorded and sent to the exam board.

On the **24th June** there is a national **Contingency Day**. This is a day set aside in case of an unforeseen emergency which requires an exam to be cancelled and re-scheduled. Please note that this is **not** a day where pupils can catch up on exams that they have missed through illness.

It is a highly unlikely scenario, but we politely request that pupils are not taken on holiday until after this date. Many thanks in advance for your cooperation.

EXAM RESULTS DAY – This year will be on Thursday 20th August 2026, and the school will be open from 9am until 11am approximately for results collection. Please keep an eye on the school website, nearer the time, where the planned schedule will be confirmed.

We are aware that the Government intends to roll out the use of a mobile app this year, which will allow pupils to view their exam grades on their phones on results day. It is likely to release the exam grades after 11am on results day, so the only way to receive grades prior to 11am will be attending in person. Otherwise, your child will need to receive their grades through the app. We will let you know more once we have received further information regarding the onboarding process. Thank you.

Week One, 27th April 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 27 th April	No exams	No exams
Tuesday 28 th April	No exams	No exams
Wednesday 29 th April	No exams	No exams
Thursday 30 th April	No exams	No exams
Friday 1 st May	No exams	Travel & Tourism – 2 hrs

Week Two, 4th May 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 4 th May	BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY	
Tuesday 5 th May	No exams	No exams
Wednesday 6 th May	No exams	No exams
Thursday 7 th May	No exams	German Listening – 50 mins (foundation) 1 hr 05 mins (higher) Y11 Thanksgiving Mass and early finish
Friday 8 th May	Sport Studies – 1 hr 15 mins	No exams

Week Three, 11th May 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 11 th May	English Literature paper one – 2 hrs	No exams
Tuesday 12 th May	Religious Studies paper one – 1 hr 45 mins	Biology paper one – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)
Wednesday 13 th May	Geography paper one – 1 hr 30 mins	Computer Science paper one – 1 hr 30 mins
Thursday 14 th May	Mathematics paper one – 1 hr 30 mins	German Reading – 45 mins (foundation) 1 hr (higher)
Friday 15 th May	History paper one – 1 hr 20 mins	No exams

Week Four, 18th May 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 18 th May	Chemistry paper one – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)	No exams
Tuesday 19 th May	English Literature paper two – 2 hrs 30 mins	Computer Science paper two – 1 hr 30 mins
Wednesday 20 th May	French Listening – 50 mins (foundation) 1 hr 05 mins (higher)	Religious Studies paper two – 1 hr 45 mins
Thursday 21 st May	English language paper one – 1 hr 45 mins	No exams
Friday 22 nd May	No exams	Business Enterprise – 1 hr 30 mins

Week Five, 25th May 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
25 th May - 29 th May		HALF TERM!

Week Six, 1st June 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 1 st June	No exams	German Writing – 1 hr 15 mins (foundation) 1 hr 20 mins (higher)
Tuesday 2 nd June	Physics paper one – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)	Russian / Polish Listening – 35 mins (foundation) 45 mins (higher) Russian / Polish Reading – 50 mins / 45 mins (foundation) 1 hr 05 mins / 1hr (higher)
Wednesday 3 rd June	Mathematics paper two – 1 hr 30 mins	Geography paper two – 1 hr 30 mins
Thursday 4 th June	History paper two – 1 hr 50 mins	French Reading – 45 mins (foundation) 1 hr (higher)
Friday 5 th June	English Language paper two – 2 hrs	Music Appraising – 1 hr 15 mins (approximately)

Week Seven, 8th June 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 8 th June	Biology paper two – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)	French Writing – 1 hr 15 mins (foundation) 1 hr 20 mins (higher) Creative iMedia – 1 hr 30 mins Further Mathematics paper one – 1 hr 45 mins
Tuesday 9 th June	Spanish Listening – 50 mins (foundation) 1hr 05 mins (higher)	History paper three – 1 hr 30 mins
Wednesday 10 th June	Mathematics paper three – 1 hr 30 mins	Design & Technology – 2 hrs Russian Writing – 1 hr 20 mins (foundation) 1 hr 25 mins (higher)
Thursday 11 th June	Geography paper three – 1 hr 30 mins	Food Preparation & Nutrition – 1 hr 30 mins
Friday 12 th June	Chemistry paper two – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)	Polish Writing – 1 hr (foundation) 1 hr 15 mins (higher)

Week Eight, 15th June 2026

Day	Session 1 (9am start)	Session 2 (1pm start)
Monday 15 th June	Physics paper two – 1 hr 15 mins (combined science) 1 hr 45 mins (separate science)	Further Mathematics paper two – 1 hr 45 mins
Tuesday 16 th June	Spanish Reading – 45 mins (foundation) 1 hr (higher)	No exams
Wednesday 17 th June	Spanish Writing – 1 hr 15 mins (foundation) 1 hr 20 mins (higher)	No exams
	Y11 EXAMS FINISH	
Wednesday 24 th June	National Contingency Day	

Y11 PARENTS' EVENING, JANUARY 2026

Please use the spaces below to make any notes you would like to as you speak to your child's teachers this evening.

Mathematics	Teacher:
Your notes:	

English	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Science	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Religious Studies	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Option One	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Option Two	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Option Three	Teacher:
Your notes:	

Additional space for notes	
Your notes:	