

Question & Answer

St. Olave's P.A. Form Rep Meeting

March 2021

- **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies-due to the current C-19 situation, the usual Form Rep meeting cannot be held and thanks to Mr Budds, we are able to continue the sessions, albeit being in a Question & Answer format.

Questions for the school

1. A-level students would normally be going on study leave well in advance of their exams. When will study leave start this year, in advance of the Summer Assessments?
Pupils in Year 13 will be in timetabled lessons for the first fortnight after the Easter break. These lessons will focus on preparation for the Summer Term Assessments. Once the Summer Term Assessment programme starts on Tuesday 4th May, study leave will commence.
2. Will the school be using the Government's mini tests/exams? If so, will the school be releasing questions and mark schemes in advance, as mooted in the press?
All departments will be giving consideration to the use of the "additional assessment materials for 2021" which will be shared with schools on 31st March and made publicly available on 19th April. Even this timescale was only disclosed last Friday together with the rest of the guidance on how the materials may be used, so there is still much for the school to consider both at whole school and departmental level. All departments are giving clear guidance to students on how best to prepare for the Summer Term Assessments over Easter, irrespective of how much or how little of the "additional assessment materials for 2021" are used.
3. When will the teaching of new material stop, given that there is no obligation this year to have completed the curriculum?
Whilst pupils can only be assessed on what they have been taught, the school still needs to attest via its Head of Centre Declaration that "each student has been taught...an appropriate amount of content to form the basis for a grade." Whilst this suggests that not all content need be taught, departments must have regard to how they can evidence all aspects of performance as relate to the grade descriptors which we are told must inform grading decisions. These are linked to the boards' published Assessment Objectives by qualification. If we want to be able to evidence high grades for our pupils, we need to ensure sufficient coverage. All teachers are very mindful of the available remaining time for exam cohorts and are prioritising preparation for the forthcoming assessments in their planned teaching.

4. At this stage school would normally be running revision workshops/drop in sessions and doing everything possible to help students achieve their full potential, perhaps even exceeding their target grades. Does the school have any such plans for after Easter?

Each department is laying on an enhanced support programme via its COVID catch up funding proposals. In the cases of several departments and qualifications, this will include booster sessions in the Easter break which have already been advertised to pupils. Some departments are, instead, laying on additional one-to-one meetings, conferences or resources to support pupils' learning as they prepare for assessments.

5. Whilst in no way underestimating the difficult task ahead for staff in undertaking these assessments, the school's new role as principal assessor inevitably necessitates a change of relationship with students. How does the school propose to go about managing its different roles whilst maintaining overall student wellbeing and confidence that students will be supported to achieve their potential?

We are striving to reassure pupils that despite the different role of teachers this year, we all share a common goal in terms of ensuring that pupils can fairly and objectively achieve high grades, consistent with their high aspirations, supported by a firm base of evidence. The pastoral and academic teams remain aware of and sensitive to emerging specific concerns and take time and care to address them directly with pupils.

6. Apparently the year 13s do not need to go back to school after the May exams, but there may be some teaching to cover topics not tested. Can the school clarify this.

We anticipate that pupils will be returning after the assessments in order to access their marked summer term assessments. Where not all course content has yet been covered prior to assessment (and such instances are rare – the only example I can think of being Further Maths), schools still have a responsibility to ensure that pupils are able to access and make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education (or their career) – for some, this may mean brief content coverage of unassessed material which is on the A-Level specification but which we had not been able to cover during the planned teaching schedule owing to disruptions wrought by the pandemic

7. Are school planning any school leaving event for the year 13 group? Even something virtual will make a good memory!

We are keen to mark appropriate rites of passage for the current Year 13s, but planning and discussions are in the early stages and will be informed by updated guidance as it becomes available.

8. Some schools will be holding a 'reserve' mock for their students after the May mocks in the subjects they did not achieve their target grades and these mocks are not aimed at everyone, just the ones who missed out grades in certain subjects due to unavoidable circumstances. Is St. Olaves planning something similar ?

The school will look closely at the circumstances of individuals to contextualise aspects of their performance; the guidance enables us to do this. We are not explicitly planning a reserve mock, however, at this juncture.

9. As the students all have target grades, will there be a possibility that they will achieve higher than the predicted target grades? What is school doing to ensure this, especially for students

where they do not have a special rapport/relationship with the teachers as they may be missed.

Guidance is clear that teachers must not show any kind of bias so the issue of special rapport/relationship (or lack of one) is not one which should change anything in terms of grading processes; all judgements must be objective and grounded in evidence applied to the grade descriptors.

10. Can the school provide a timetable for the year 11s ie after they have taken the May assessments, especially when is their last day at school?

This will be provided as soon as it is finalised, but we are not yet in a position to circulate this.

11. Will the March mocks count towards their final grades or will the summer assessments supersede any previous results.

The school will be using both data sets as part of its broad evidence base per student per qualification. Whilst not to be rigidly applied given the varying circumstances of individuals, the guidance suggests that in general terms more recent evidence is preferable to older evidence.

12. For the students who will be sitting their A- levels in a couple of years' time, why is St Olave's still doing a 4th subject at AS level when all the evidence suggests that universities no longer look at AS level results but only the 3 A levels? It is an extra subject to study for no apparent reason and it adds to the student's already heavy workload. Would the school consider scrapping it as hardly any other school is doing it

This was explored during the curriculum review of Autumn 2019 and the feeling remains that the provision of a fourth subject in Year 12 adds breadth, enables an element of choice to students in Year 12 if their aspirations change, is consistent with the level of challenge appropriate to high performing pupils and does not disadvantage students in terms of their Year 13 prospects. A 4:3 (Y12:Y13) model also enables us to run less popular subjects which might otherwise not be viable under a 3:3 model. Also, it is not true to say that hardly any other school is doing it; we benchmark our offering relative to other similar schools in the BASS group, many of whom offer 4:3 or even 4:4. Whilst the curriculum remains under ongoing review, the school does not feel there is an argument to change this aspect of the curriculum in the near future

13. Why are Year 10 boys not actively pursuing the DfE – all other schools are doing it (via online opportunities) – why is St Olave's not taking the same approach?

This process has been significantly affected by the Covid-19 national lockdowns. The students that are currently in Year 10, should have taken part in an Introduction to DofE on the day of Commemoration 2020 (when they would have been in Year 9), which obviously didn't go ahead. After that event, they would have then been encouraged to sign up with eDofE and dates would have been circulated regarding expeditions.

Following a meeting with SLT on 19th March, we agreed that we would try to help students complete awards that had already commenced, since we are almost a year behind with the process. There is nothing stopping Y10 signing up with eDofE and commencing the Bronze Award but currently we are unable to run an expedition for this year group.

However, we have been in contact with London DofE who manage us, and they have suggested that we encourage students to sign up for eDofE and complete all other sections of the Award apart from the Expedition. For the time being, they will instead receive a “Certificate of Achievement” recognising the partial completion; if they then move up to Silver and complete a Practice Expedition, this will qualify them for the full Bronze Award.

14. Why are the Year 10 students not completing (or at least starting off) the HPQ, should they choose to? GCSE will be a demanding year with a lot of catch-up work and students could get a head-start now, rather than pushing it later.

The programme of study for HPQ commences in the second half of the summer term for Year 10. This timetable, which I have overseen for the last decade, is optimised to ensure that the summer break can be spent focusing on HPQ research such as to minimise the disruption to core learning. To start much earlier in Year 10 would either unnecessarily extend the timetable for running it, or compress it into an earlier phase of the pupils’ schooling when they are not as likely to achieve the strongest possible marks (which they do in Year 11). Many Year 11 pupils enjoy the HPQ as an outlet where they can focus on a subject of particular interest to them at a time when their main GCSE studies feel pressurised. For all these reasons, we do not believe there is a strong argument for introducing the HPQ any earlier into the Key Stage 4 curriculum – particularly as the planned timetable does not have a Year 10 HPQ allocation for it.

15. Can some students (who wish to) choose to appear for the FSMQ (whilst other who don’t wish to, don’t) under the school’s guidance later this year?

This is a subject under ongoing discussion and a decision will be clearly communicated to the year group when available.

16. Will the school offer CRY testing this year for the 14 year olds?

It has not been possible this year under current regulations given the premium on space in the school and the need for mitigating the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Guidance-permitting, the school would welcome the opportunity to run this important initiative again, with the support of the PA as in previous years

17. When will children have organised interactive drama lessons (as these are important for children’s creative and interpersonal skills) or when will they reintroduce Lamda clubs?

Everyone misses and laments the absence of these important extra-curricular activities. The simple answer as to when they can return is “When available guidance and risk-mitigation permit.” This will be clearly communicated to pupils and parents.

18. Is it possible for the school to provide footballs etc to play with during break/lunch times? Apparently students don't have anything much to do during break times.
Not at present. That said, many pupils do bring their own footballs, tennis balls, table tennis balls etc

19. As year 11 second mocks finishes in May, what plans do the school have for them after that? With so much time lost not only academically but socially, will the school consider summer term activities/enhanced sixth form induction week rather than dismiss the boys in May and expect full engagement in September?. Can any additional funding be used on their well-being which is equally as important as results.
We are yet to finalise the precise plan for Year 11 post-assessment, but I can confirm that it will involve:

*Feedback on the summer assessment series
Bridging work for Sixth Form subjects and Sixth Form induction programme
Possibly also some Careers-related activities (tbc)*

Precise dates and timings are also tbc and are under discussion at school; I anticipate these questions will be resolved relatively swiftly after the start of the coming term. I can give a timeframe in very broad terms: the programme will certainly involve some elements after the half term break, but we would not wish or expect for Y11 to be in school beyond the end of June. We are hoping they may even be done within the first two weeks post half term, but this much is all to be confirmed.

20. Year 9N would like to convey their huge thanks and gratitude to all the teachers, support staff and senior leadership at Olaves for their astonishing hard work over the current academic year to date. We are profoundly lucky and grateful that our young men are in such good hands. Thank you!
Thank you for these kind words – I will ensure that they are shared more widely with staff

- **Any other business**
- **Date of next meeting - tbc**