



Thomas Adams School

**GCSE
Exam
Handbook
2026**

Key Dates

27th April – 8th May 2026 MFL GCSE Speaking Exams

7th May – 24th June 2026..... Summer 2026 Exams

Thursday 20th August 2026 at 9am GCSE Results Day

Phone numbers and email addresses for all exams queries:

Exams Office: 01939 237051 / rebecca.kinnon@tas.318education.co.uk

Mr L Winter: lea.winter@tas.318education.co.uk

School: 01939 237000 / contactus@tas.318education.co.uk

Contingency Day

Please be aware that every year, a day is identified as an Exam Contingency Day which will be invoked in the event of widespread, sustained local or national disruption to examinations.

The decision comes following the tragic events of 2017, namely the Manchester attacks and the Grenfell Tower fire, and gives exam boards the option to postpone an exam in the event of an incident and rearrange it for a later date to allow all students a fair and equal chance.

The date that has been set aside for the contingency day is Wednesday 24th June 2026. This means that all exam candidates must be available to sit exams from the start of the exams on Thursday 7th May 2026 until Wednesday 24th June 2026, whatever the last date on their personal timetable might be. This decision is not a school decision and applies to all candidates in all schools.

All students must:

- Read and fully understand the JCQ Notices to Candidates included in this booklet;
- Follow the examination rules and regulations at all times - you could be disqualified from your exams if you don't. The school must report any breach of regulations to the exam boards;
- Read and fully understand the Information for Candidates NEA and NEA appeals process;
- Check all the details on individual candidate timetables and report any errors to the exams office;
- Inform the school, via the exams office, of any special circumstances which may affect your exams. Special Consideration can be sought from the exam boards for illness before or during an exam, bereavement or other trauma, or disadvantages or disturbances during an exam.

Mobile Phones in Exams

The JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) rules state categorically that mobile phones and other electronic equipment, such as smart watches, smart glasses, AirPods, earphones, earbuds and any potential technological/web enabled sources of information such as an MP3/4 player or similar device, a smartwatch or a wrist watch which has a data storage device, must be switched off prior to exams and either placed in your bag for safekeeping or handed to invigilators as you enter the exam room.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR HAVING A MOBILE PHONE OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICE IN YOUR POSSESSION DURING AN EXAM.

The consequences of breaking these rules are serious, and students who are discovered to have any of these items on their person must, as per the rules, be reported by the school to the appropriate exam board for malpractice.

The very least consequence of a student having a mobile phone in their possession, whether switched on or off, whether they have used it or not, is disqualification from that particular examination. The fact that a mobile phone is switched off or wasn't used is not a defence and will not sway the board's decision. Depending on the severity of the offence, exam boards also have the power to disqualify students from entire qualifications, or all exams taken with that exam board.

If a mobile phone is in a student's bag, but not switched off, and disrupts the exam by making a noise, students are required to be reported to the exam board for malpractice.

This information is reiterated to students in assemblies before each exam period, including mocks, and again before they enter exam rooms, and again once they are seated at exam desks. There is no excuse for any student to be in possession of a mobile phone in an exam.

Because of the possible implications of this, and because of issues during GCSE exams in Summer 2023 which resulted in a number of students being disqualified from exams, Thomas Adams took the decision to introduce metal detector wands into exam rooms from 2024, which are used to search for mobile phones in the possession of students as they enter the room. By eliminating the possibility of mobile phones being taken into exams, we are maintaining a fair and level playing field for all students and ensuring the integrity of all exams. This will also reduce the potential for disruption to exams, for example, if a mobile phone went off, which affects all students in the exam hall and not just the owner of the device. Most importantly, for those students who forget they have their mobile phones on them, or simply don't wish to hand them in, we are protecting their qualifications by removing the possibility of malpractice.

Watches

Wristwatches are banned from examination rooms. You are not allowed to wear a watch in the exam room, or have one on your desk. The possession of a watch in the exam room is a malpractice offence and the consequences are, as with mobile phones, as serious as disqualification.

Non-Examination Assessments

Please see the appendix at the end of this booklet for guidance on completing non-exam assessments. It is vital that you adhere to these rules when carrying out your NEA work.

You will be notified in the spring term of the mark you have been given for your NEA. You are entitled to ask for a review of marking if you are unhappy with your grade, and guidelines for doing this are also included at the end of this booklet in the appendix entitled 'Review of Marking for Centre Assessed Marks'.

Written Exams

You will receive an individual candidate timetable in March. Closer to the exams, at the end of April, you will receive a further timetable which will tell you which room you are in for each exam. On exam days, you should go to the room which is on your timetable.

If you have any queries with any information on your timetable, please see the exams officer.

The name on your timetable (and the name which will be printed on your certificates) is your LEGAL NAME. This is the name which you MUST write on the front of each exam paper that you sit. Even if you are known by a different first name or surname, you MUST USE YOUR FULL LEGAL NAME ON YOUR EXAM PAPERS.

As well as using your legal name on the front of your exam papers, you must write your information in BLOCK CAPITALS so that they can be easily read by whoever marks your exam. You must also check that you have put on the correct centre number and candidate/exam number, which you can check on the desk card which will be on your desk for each exam.

What to do if you arrive late for an exam

If you are going to be late for an exam, you must phone the school on 01939 237000 or you can phone the exams office directly on 01939 237051. You must always come directly to the exams office in the Lamont Centre as soon as you arrive at school; do not enter the exam room by yourself.

If you arrive very late (more than an hour after the exam has started), the school must inform the exam board, giving the reason for your lateness. The exam board may decide not to accept your work.

Exam clashes

Very occasionally, candidates may have two subjects timetabled at the same time. Candidates with clashes will be given the option to choose the order in which they sit these exams, one in the morning session and one in the afternoon. During the break, candidates will be supervised by an invigilator, and will have to hand in mobile phones and any other electronic devices, and will not be allowed to communicate with other candidates. The only exception to this is when the two clashes add up to less than three hours, these will be sat one after the other, with a short comfort break in between.

What should you wear to your exams?

Hoodies, sweatshirts with large front pockets, and coats are not permitted in the exam room and you will be asked to remove these; this includes leavers' hoodies. Hats and caps are also not permitted to be worn.

Exam Conditions

As soon as you enter the exam room, you are under exam conditions. These are detailed in the appendix 'Information for Candidates: Written Exams'.

You must not:

- Speak;
- Take in any notes to the exam;
- Turn around;
- Distract or communicate with other candidates;
- Take in electronic devices, such as mobile phones.
- Write anything until you are instructed to do so. This includes 'brain dumping' on to your desk card or any exam stationery.

You must:

- Face the front at all times;
- Listen to, and follow the instructions of the invigilator at all times;
- Put your hand up if you need anything, and wait for the invigilator to come to you; do not call out;
- Only take in a clear plastic pencil case.

Supervision during your exams

Exams are supervised by a team of invigilators employed by the school.

Students are expected to behave in a respectful manner towards all invigilators and follow their instructions at all times.

Invigilators are in the exam room to supervise the conduct of exams and they must follow the strict rules and regulations when conducting exams, as directed by JCQ and exam boards.

Invigilators will distribute and collect the exam papers and deal with any problems that occur during the exam.

Invigilators cannot discuss the exam paper with you or explain the questions. However, if you think there is an error on the exam paper, tell the invigilator, who will investigate. In the meantime, move on to the next section of the exam paper.

The exams officer and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will remove any student from the exams room who is disruptive or behaves in an unacceptable manner.

All acts of inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy, or, if necessary, will be reported as malpractice to the exam boards.

Exam equipment

You are responsible for providing your own equipment for exams. You must not lend equipment to, or attempt to borrow from, another candidate in the exam room.

You will need:

- See through pencil case or clear plastic bag;
- BLACK ball point pens. No blue pens and no gel pens. Exam board scanners cannot read blue ink or gel ink.
- Pencils, pencil sharpener and rubber eraser.
- Ruler with centimetres and millimetres marked on it;
- Highlighters can be used in questions, but NEVER in answers. If you highlight an answer, this cannot be read by the scanner and you will lose marks.
- Calculators are allowed in exams, unless specifically stated otherwise (for example, for non-calculator Maths exams). You must not bring in the calculator lid or any instructions. Please see the section below on using calculators.
- Clear, untinted, plastic drink water bottle (if desired) with water only (no coloured liquid), and the label removed. There should be no writing whatsoever on any bottle brought into the exam room, and non-see-through reusable drink bottles will not be allowed. This is due to the possibility of notes being written on labels or hidden inside bottles.

<p>Calculators must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ of a size suitable for use on the desk; ○ either battery or solar powered; ○ free of lids, cases and covers which have printed instructions or formulas. 	<p>Calculators must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be designed or adapted to offer any of these facilities: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ language translators; ○ symbolic algebra manipulation; ○ symbolic differentiation or integration; ○ communication with other machines or the internet;
<p>The candidate is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the calculator's power supply; ○ the calculator's working condition; ○ clearing anything stored in the calculator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be borrowed from another candidate during an examination for any reason; • have retrievable information stored in them - this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ databanks; ○ dictionaries; ○ mathematical formulas; ○ text.

Length of exams

The durations of your exams are shown on your individual timetable and also on the front of the question paper.

Invigilators will tell you when to start and finish the exam. The start and finish times will be displayed on boards in the exam room.

There is at least one clock in every exam room. If you have problems with your eyesight and cannot see the clock, please let the invigilator know. All exam rooms now have a digital clock in them. If you need a small clock on your desk, please let the exams office know in advance.

You will not be allowed to leave an exam room early if you have finished. If you choose to leave the exam room early without being accompanied by an invigilator or other member of staff, the exam board may disqualify you from that exam. You are not permitted to leave an afternoon exam room before 2.30pm, even if the exam has finished.

If you are sure you have finished, use the remaining time to check your answers. Check the exam instructions and be sure that you have completed everything correctly.

Remember to cross out any rough work you don't want marked.

If you have finished, you must sit quietly, facing the front of the room. Do not turn around or look around the room, make any noise, or distract other candidates in any way.

At the end of the examination

The invigilator will announce when you have five minutes left, and will tell you when to stop writing.

You must stop writing immediately and remain silent, facing the front. Remember that you are still under exam conditions until you have left the room.

Invigilators will collect all question papers, answer booklets and additional paper.

If you have used additional exam paper, ensure your name and details are written on them all, and insert them into your answer booklet.

Remain seated in silence until you are dismissed.

Leave the room in silence. Show consideration for other candidates who may still be working.

What to do if you are unwell on the day of an exam

Telephone the exams office on 01939 237051 so that we can help or advise you. For example, if you have an injury which makes you unable to write, it may be possible to provide you with a scribe or laptop. You can also email the exams officer on: rebecca.kinnon@tas.318education.co.uk

If you are hospitalised or extremely ill and are going to miss the exam, you must inform the school immediately, and speak to the exams officer. You must obtain medical evidence from your GP or the hospital if you wish the school to make an appeal for Special Consideration on your behalf.

If you feel ill during the exam, put your hand up and tell one of the invigilators.

If you feel ill before the exam, come to the exams office.

If you miss an exam, you cannot take it on another day. Timetables are regulated by exam boards and you must attend on the given date and time.

What happens in the event of an emergency in the exam room?

If the fire alarm sounds during an examination, the invigilators will tell you what to do.

Don't panic.

Leave everything on your desk.

If you have to evacuate the room, you will be asked to leave in silence and in the order in which you are sitting.

You will be escorted to a designated assembly point.

You must not attempt to communicate with anybody else during the evacuation.

When you return to the exam room, do not start writing until the invigilator tells you to.

You will be allowed the full time for the exam and a report will be sent to the exam board with details of the incident, with a request for special consideration.

Special consideration

Special consideration is an adjustment to the marks of a candidate under special circumstances such as illness, bereavement, injury, domestic crisis, or for circumstances outside their control, such as fire evacuations or noise disturbance.

The allowance for special consideration is from 0% of the total marks available on the exam paper (consideration given, but addition of marks considered inappropriate) to 5% of the total marks gained (reserved for really exceptional cases).

You should be aware that any adjustment is likely to be small and no feedback is provided by exam boards.

If you feel you have a case for special consideration, you must see the exams officer immediately.

Candidate Malpractice

Candidate malpractice means malpractice by a candidate in the course of any examination or assessment, including the writing of any exam paper, the preparation and authentication of any non-exam assessment, the presentation of any practical work and the completion of portfolios of assessment evidence.

Examples of candidate malpractice include:

- Disruptive behaviour in the exam room or during an assessment session, including the use of offensive language.
- Cheating in an exam; exchanging information by means of talking, electronic, written or non-verbal communication.
- Bringing notes, unauthorised materials, study guides, calculators (when prohibited), dictionaries (when prohibited), mobile phones, smart glasses, AirPods, earphones, earbuds, ipods, MP3/4 players, wristwatches, smartwatches or other electronic devices.
- A breach of the instructions of an invigilator, supervisor or the exam board in relation to the examination or assessment rules and regulations.
- Failing to abide by the conditions of supervision designed to maintain the security of the exams or assessments.
- Collusion: working collaboratively with other candidates beyond what is permitted.
- Allowing work to be copied, e.g. posted on social networking sites prior to an exam or assessment.
- Walking out of the exam room unaccompanied before the appropriate time, as per JCQ rules.

Penalties for malpractice:

- If a candidate is suspected of malpractice, the invigilator/exams officer will warn the candidate that they may be removed from the exam room.
- The candidate will be warned that the exam board will be informed and may decide to disqualify the candidate.
- Penalties for malpractice range from a warning, to loss of marks, loss of a qualification or even being disqualified from all exams with that exam board.

THE MOST COMMON FORM OF MALPRACTICE IS TAKING A MOBILE PHONE INTO AN EXAMINATION, MAKING UP 44.3% OF PENALTIES IN 2025.

Results

GCSE results can be collected from the Stanier Hall from 9am on Thursday 20th August 2026.

Results can be emailed out to students. Email requests must be made to the exams officer - rebecca.kinnon@tas.318education.co.uk - by the student in advance of results day. Due to GDPR, these requests MUST come from a student's own email account and parental requests will NOT be accepted.

Results can be collected by another person, but written authorisation must be given to the exams officer in advance of results day.

No results will be given over the telephone.

Any results not collected from school will be posted to the address held on the school's system unless the exams officer is instructed in writing beforehand.

Post-Results Services

The exam boards offer the option of having a script reviewed (for a fee), if a student is unhappy with their marks. There are two different types of reviews – a clerical check or a full review of marking. Priority reviews of marking are available if a university place depends on the result of the review.

A clerical check is a check of the paper to make sure every page has been marked and the marks counted and added correctly.

A review of marking by the exam board means that the exam paper is checked to make sure it was marked correctly according to the mark scheme. Marks are changed ONLY if the new examiner feels there has been a clear marking or administrative error, or an unreasonable exercise of academic judgement, but not where the original mark is reasonable. This is in line with Ofqual's review of marking guidance. Please note that marks can go up, down or remain the same following a review of marking. Reviews of marking are costly and school does not fund these.

Priority copies of scripts are also available if you want to see your exam paper before deciding whether to apply for a review of marking. Priority copies of scripts will arrive in school in good time for candidates to then apply for a review.

It is important to consider the following before making a request: Are you close to the grade boundary? Reviews of marking can certainly sometimes change the number of marks awarded, but these can go down as well as up, or remain the same. If you are very close to a higher grade boundary, a review may be worth considering, as long as you understand the risks and are willing to lose the fees. Be careful if you are close to a lower grade boundary. If a grade does go down, you cannot refuse the new grade and ask for the original higher grade to stand. The fee will be refunded if your overall grade changes.

You can also request a copy of any of your exam scripts by filling in the form or by emailing the exams officer: rebecca.kinnon@tas.318education.co.uk

You cannot request a review of moderated work (non-examination assessments). You are given the chance to request a review of your NEA marks when your teacher gives you your mark in April/May before these are passed to the exam boards (see attached appendix for details of how to do this). Only the school can request a review of moderated work, since it involves the reviewing of the work of the entire year group, and all students involved have to agree to a re-moderation before it can take place.

If you want to request a review of marking, or any other post-results service, you must complete the relevant form that you will receive with your results, and return it to the Exams Officer with your payment by the stated deadline.

Certificates

Certificates arrive in school at the beginning of November and are usually ready for collection by the end of November.

Certificates will be either be presented at a Celebration Evening in November 2026, or should be collected from the exams office, either by the student, or by a person nominated by the student in writing.

Certificates will not be routinely posted out. If you wish your certificates to be posted, you must contact the school by email with an up-to-date address. The school cannot be held responsible for certificates which are lost or damaged in the post. Should you wish your certificates to be posted out by recorded delivery, this can be arranged if the cost is transferred to the school bank account.

INFORMATION FOR GCSE AND A LEVEL CANDIDATES

Reviews of marking of centre assessed marks (coursework and Non-Examination Assessments)

The Joint Council for Qualifications stipulates that candidates for GCSE and GCE subjects which involve coursework or non-examination assessments must be informed of their marks for these assessments so that they may request a review of the centre's marking before marks are submitted to the exam board.

This means that you are entitled to appeal against the mark you receive for your coursework or non-examination assessment before the exam season begins in May. This is the only time you will be able to appeal against your mark – this option is not available post results.

Below is an extract from the school policy on how and when to appeal. Please ask your Subject Leader or the Exams Office if you have any questions about this information.

The Thomas Adams School is committed to ensuring that whenever its staff mark candidates' work, this is done fairly, consistently and in accordance with the awarding body's specification and subject-specific associated documents.

Candidates' work will be marked by staff who have appropriate knowledge, understanding and skill, and who have been trained in this activity. The Thomas Adams School is committed to ensuring that work produced by candidates is authenticated in line with the requirements of the awarding body.

- 1. The Thomas Adams School will ensure that candidates are informed of their centre assessed marks so that they may request a review of the centre's marking before marks are submitted to the awarding body.*
- 2. At the same time, the Thomas Adams School will inform candidates that they may request copies of materials to assist them in considering whether to request a review of the centre's marking of the assessment.*
- 3. The Thomas Adams School will, having received a request for copies of materials, promptly, within one working day, make them available to the candidate.*
- 4. The Thomas Adams School will provide candidates with sufficient time, but with a clear deadline of five working days from the receipt of their centre assessed mark, to allow them to review copies of materials and reach a decision.*
- 5. Requests for reviews of marking **must** be made in writing by the candidate on the internal appeals form, which is available from the Exams Office or Subject Leader, and must be made to the Subject Leader within five working days of the candidate receiving their centre assessed mark.*
- 6. The Thomas Adams School will allow a further five working days for the review to be carried out, to make any necessary changes to marks and to inform the candidate of the outcome, all before the awarding body's deadline and within ten working days of the centre assessed marks being given to candidates.*
- 7. The Thomas Adams School will ensure that the review of marking is carried out by an assessor who has appropriate competence, has had no previous involvement in the assessment of that candidate and has no personal interest in the review. This could either be another teacher within the centre, or a teacher from another centre.*
- 8. The Thomas Adams School will instruct the reviewer to ensure that the candidate's mark is consistent with the standard set by the centre.*
- 9. The candidate will be informed in writing of the outcome of the review of the centre's marking.*

After candidates' work has been internally assessed, it is moderated by the awarding body to ensure consistency in marking between centres. The moderation process may lead to mark changes. This process is outside the control of The Thomas Adams School.