



Pittville School Cheltenham

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Headteacher Richard Gilpin

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Dear Parents/Carers

As you know, the new style GCSE English language and GCSE English literature qualifications have now been running for two years. Both these qualifications have 100% exam content. In 2017 when Year 11 students reached the end of their academic year they sat two exams for GCSE English language and two exams for GCSE English literature, four exams in all; seven and a half hours in total.

After much consultation with staff and governors, lengthy consideration and evaluation of the courses, we have decided that from this September, all students will sit their GCSE English literature exams at the end of year 10. The current year 10 will therefore take their English literature exams in May 2018.

We believe that this will enable students to concentrate fully on just two exams in year 10 (GCSE English literature) and then only two exams at the end of year 11 (GCSE English language). 46% of the schools that use the AQA exam board are now managing the GCSE English curriculum in this way. We strongly believe that this will benefit all students by allowing them to manage the vast amount of information they need for four exams into two 'manageable chunks'.

Students are no longer allowed to take their texts into the exam which presents a key issue for them. We feel that after a full year concentrating on literature texts only, students will be ready to sit the exam in May 2018 rather than retain this information for another year, revisiting key texts throughout year 11, whilst trying to fully prepare themselves for the GCSE language course.

Students currently in year 10 have already been introduced to the key reading and writing skills for GCSE and they have studied 'An Inspector Calls', one of their set texts for GCSE literature. They have begun analysing some of the poetry from the exam anthology. They have been assessed after each unit of work under strict exam conditions to mimic the expectations of the exam and have been exposed to exemplar materials and the marking criteria for the literature GCSE questions. Having completed so much of the ground work already last year, we feel the current year 10 students are well placed to be successful this summer.

By sitting the Literature examination at the end of year 10 students can then fully focus on the second English qualification; GCSE English language, starting this at the end of year 10 and continuing in year 11. This will allow students to solely concentrate on GCSE language skills without having to revisit the literature set texts in their last important year at Pittville. Year 11 is a difficult, intense year for any student and we believe that taking away some of this stress and reducing the number of exams they sit in year 11 will be of benefit to all students.

You may also be aware that both GCSE English literature and GCSE English language are now subjects that no longer have foundation or higher tiers. Therefore all students have the opportunity to gain the best grade they can whatever group they are in. Please be assured we will be doing everything we can to maximise your son/daughter's potential and help them gain the best grades they can in both subjects. There will be an opportunity for students to re-sit English literature in year 11 if necessary.

Finally, should you like to find out more information about the literature course or ask any questions, we will be holding a GCSE 'drop in' literature forum for all year 10 parents on **Tuesday 26th September from 6:00pm to 6:30pm in Room 3.**

Yours faithfully

Louise Davies (Mrs)
Head of Communications Faculty



