

KS4 Parent Information Evening

Supporting student success through partnership

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We'd like to warmly welcome all parents of Key Stage 4 and thank you for your continued support. Your involvement plays a vital role in your child's GCSE journey, and we at Cottenham truly value the partnership between home and school. Together, we can help every student feel confident, supported, and ready to achieve their best.

'STRONG PASS'

In the new GCSE grading system in England, a grade 4 is known as a standard pass. A grade 5 is considered a strong pass, showing a slightly higher level of attainment – most post-16 providers and courses will require a 4+ in English Language and mathematics. These grades replaced the old A*–G system, with 9 being the highest and 1 the lowest.

NEW GRADES	OLD GRADES
9	A*
8	A
7	
6	B
5	C
4	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

How does the school support students?

- Carefully planned curriculum (KS3 and 4)
- High-quality teaching and learning and CPD/training for staff to keep improving in our provision
- Y10 – mock exam series

- Y11 – mock exam series x2; use of AM tutor time in English, maths or science so we have more teaching time for content and revision with class teachers
- Y11 – maths and English specialists as form tutors so that tutor times can be targeted revision in these subjects in addition to lessons, whilst still ensuring that PD, post-16 applications and other important aspects of form times in Year 11 are given time
- Period 6 sessions – the dates and times for these will be advertised with students and families
- Both Y10 and Y11 – regular timed assessment practice – increasing in Y11 to fortnightly for English and maths
- Providing platforms to support students to revise e.g. Sparx Maths, Sparx reader, quizlet, Seneca etc.
- Explicitly teaching revision strategies and providing revision materials; advising on revision sites and resources for students (because there are some great revision tools out there, and there are some platforms/content creators who advertise themselves as experts and are actively giving incorrect advice – please listen to us about who to use!)
- Pastoral support
- Advice on how to look after yourself and developing good habits
- Being really clear with students about the competition element for grades – students are in competition with **all** students taking the qualification they are taking across the whole country.

How can families help to support?

Family at home has a huge impact, and your support and guidance for students will make the difference.

- Attendance has a direct impact on the grades that students attain – if they are not in the lesson they are missing the content. We will be talking about attendance a lot, because it has such a substantial impact on what grades students attain.
- Discussing lessons and subjects with your child – read the same books as they are reading so you can discuss them!
- Monitoring their homework – habits and amount. They should be getting 90 minutes of maths and 90 minutes of English every week plus other subjects.
- Supporting with revision – testing students' knowledge with resources they have e.g. knowledge organisers, flashcards etc.
- Communication – if you are worried, please let us know. If we are worried or can offer feedback we will. Your child's form tutor is the first port of call
- Attendance at progress review events
- Monitoring healthy habits – sleep, not overworking as well as avoiding work
- Supporting good revision habits - little and often revision is the most effective

Curriculum Vision

Astrea Curriculum Vision

"We believe that every Astrea scholar is capable of achieving something wonderful. By providing a rigorous, carefully sequenced, academic curriculum that is full of powerful knowledge, we are enabling scholars to understand and challenge the world around them."

What this means is that Cottenham believe every child deserves the best possible start to their GCSE journey—and that has begun long before Year 10. Our curriculum is carefully and purposefully synchronised from the very start of Year 7, so that by the time students reach Key Stage 4, they're not just ready—they're confident, capable, and equipped to thrive. Every topic, skill, and learning experience in earlier years is designed to build towards GCSE success, ensuring that students aren't overwhelmed by new content, but instead feel prepared and empowered. This thoughtful approach means your child can focus on deepening their understanding, mastering exam techniques, and achieving their very best—because the groundwork has already been laid with care and intention.

English at Key Stage 4

English Language GCSE AQA (8700)

- **What is expected from students?**

Understanding and using information.

Analysing how a text is written.

Comparing different texts and inference of information- working out what a text *really* means by using clues and context.

Giving a critical opinion.

Section B expects well-organised writing with the right tone.

Correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and a varied vocabulary.

Paper 1 is creative writing; Paper 2 is non-fiction (articles, letters, speeches)

AQA

Please write clearly in block capitals.

Centre number Candidate number

Surname

Forename(s)

Candidate signature

I declare this is my own work.

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Thursday 6 June 2024 Morning Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

Materials
For this paper you must have:
• **Source A** and **Source B** – provided as a separate insert

Instructions
• Answer all questions.
• Use black ink or black ballpoint pen.
• Fill in the boxes at the top of this page.
• You must answer the questions in the spaces provided.
• Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
• If you need extra space for your answers, use the lined paper at the end of this book. Write the question number against your answers.
• Do all rough work in this book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
• You must refer to the insert booklet provided.
• You must not use a dictionary.

Information
• The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
• There are 40 marks for **Section A** and 60 marks for **Section B**.
• You are assessed on the quality of your writing and your presentation in your answers.
• You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in **Section A**.
• You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in **Section B**.

Advice
• You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the sources and all five questions you have to answer.
• You are advised to plan your answer to **Question 5** before you start to write.
• You should make sure you have sufficient time to check your answers.

For Examiner's Use	
Question	Mark
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
TOTAL	

8700/2

AQA

Please write clearly in block capitals.

Centre number Candidate number

Surname

Forename(s)

Candidate signature

I declare this is my own work.

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing

Thursday 23 May 2024 Morning Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

Materials
For this paper you must have:
• **Source A** – provided as a separate insert

Instructions
• Answer all questions.
• Use black ink or black ballpoint pen.
• Fill in the boxes at the top of this page.
• You must answer the questions in the spaces provided.
• Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
• If you need extra space for your answers, use the lined paper at the end of this book. Write the question number against your answers.
• Do all rough work in this book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
• You must refer to the insert booklet provided.
• You must not use a dictionary.

Information
• The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
• The maximum mark for this paper is 90.
• There are 40 marks for **Section A** and 40 marks for **Section B**.
• You are assessed on the quality of your writing and your presentation in your answers.
• You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in **Section A**.
• You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in **Section B**.

Advice
• You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the source and all five questions you have to answer.
• You are advised to plan your answer to **Question 5** before you start to write.
• You should make sure you have sufficient time to check your answers.

For Examiner's Use	
Question	Mark
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
TOTAL	

8700/1

- **How parents and guardians can contribute to success.**

Read and discuss a variety of texts together.

Encourage your child to read a range of materials e.g. broadsheet newspaper articles, blogs, magazines, short stories, or book extracts. For example, whilst eating breakfast, a student could aim to read one broadsheet newspaper article a day. Parents then can discuss it.

Discuss different viewpoints and opinions surrounding the daily news. Supports them to voice their viewpoints clearly and then encourage them to hear others' opinions. Build vocabulary and confidence with key terms using knowledge organisers and the attached tier 3 vocabulary resource.

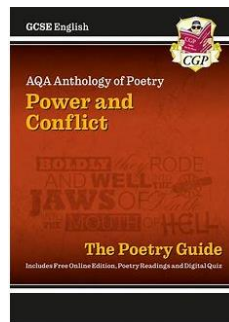
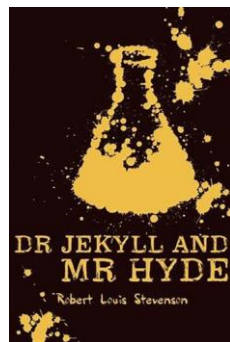
Make simple flashcards with terms like simile, metaphor, or tone and talk about them in everyday conversations, when watching TV, reading, or even looking at adverts together.

Create flashcards with new vocabulary and help students use it within the every day. Ensure your child is completing all set homework as a minimum and monitor use of AI. Remind students that AI will not be in the exam hall and as such, shouldn't be used for homework. It doesn't benefit your child in the long run, even when considering its benefits. This is a huge task in 2025, however, we hope that we can tackle this issue together.

English Literature GCSE - AQA (8702)

English Literature GCSE set texts

Our texts at Cottenham are Romeo and Juliet, Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, An Inspector Calls and Power and Conflict poetry. These texts are available to buy online retailers or at a discounted price using Iris. Should your child need any adaptations to the school printed versions, please contact your child's English teacher and we can help.



How parents and guardians can contribute to success.

Help them with reading the texts. Encourage your child to read their literature texts (novel, play, poems) more than once and ask questions. Year 11 will have Sparx reader homework which will ask them to reread the texts each week.

Ensure your child has completed all of their homework, not just the 30 minutes of Sparx. Homework is vitally important to secure their knowledge and offers extra time away from the classroom. If they are struggling, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will help.

Support with quotation practice. Help them revise key quotations by testing them or creating flashcards or even sticking them around the house on post it notes. Focus on short, memorable quotations they can easily remember and analyse in the exam.

Encourage them to watch stage versions. Versions which remain loyal to the original can be found on YouTube, Digital Theatre, Marquee TV and National Theatre at minimal cost.

Practice questions can be found online or available from teachers.

Encourage writing stamina. Research has shown the power of regular writing practice. Some of these exams are over 2 hours long and students need to be prepared for this. Your child's teacher will happily provide additional feedback on any additional extended writing they

Revision materials can be found online for minimal cost. Websites such as BBC Bitesize, Revisely, Oak National Academy are free and invaluable. YouTube videos from trusted creators such as Mr Bruff and Mr Sales are valuable for plot, quotation and character revision. However, **many online video creators are not to be entirely trusted** so please email to ask or encourage your child to ask us for advice, first.

KS4 Maths

Exam Board

- The exam board studied is AQA (specification code 8300)
- There are 3 papers
 - Paper 1 – non-calculator – 90 minutes
 - Paper 2 – calculator – 90 minutes
 - Paper 3 – calculator – 90 minutes

How to revise for Maths

Use appropriate channels to help you revisit materials you have learnt previously

Revisit Amber and red topics. The aim is to move from amber to green and from red to amber – progress over time.

Practice exam questions in a calm, quiet space. Put away distractions and set yourself a time limit.

Sites to use

- www.onmaths.com
- www.mathsgenie.co.uk
- www.AQA.co.uk
- www.savemyexam.com
- www.1stclassmaths.com
- <https://corbettmaths.com/>
- Sparx maths

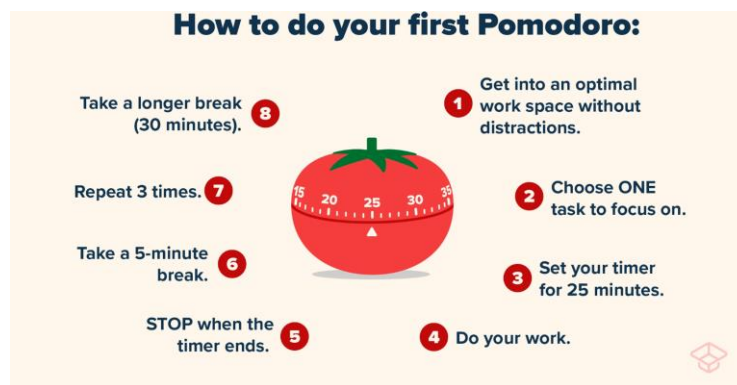
Which Tier?

Students will eventually take either Foundation or Higher tier for Maths. The decision on which tier each student takes is not taken until later in Year 11 – there is no early decision made because students can make sudden and rapid progress in subjects, therefore we do not make the decision until we have to (there is a deadline from the exam boards for entries – we work to this deadline in about March).

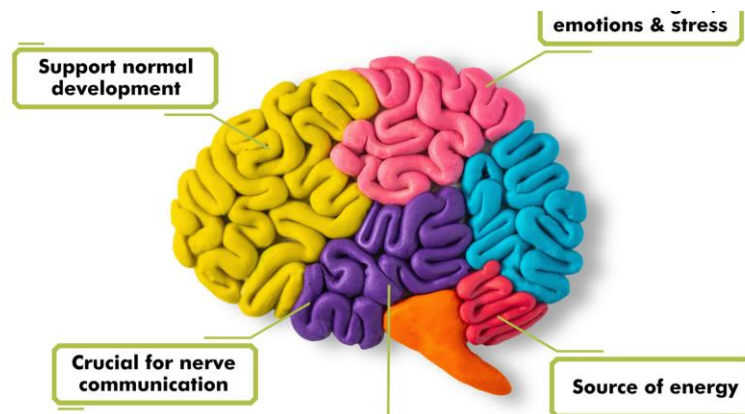
Tier entry is decided by the maths team and is informed by a large range of data. Please speak with your child's maths teacher or the Director of Maths if you have questions.

Revision strategies and wellbeing.

We know that exam stress can affect students in different ways, which is why our school takes a whole-child approach to wellbeing. We offer practical support to help manage anxieties—whether that's through structured revision help, quiet spaces, or emotional check-ins. We're especially mindful of students with SEN (Special Educational Needs), ensuring they have tailored strategies and the right support in place. Our aim is to create a calm, caring environment where every student feels understood, supported, and ready to do their best.



This image introduces the Pomodoro Technique, a simple but powerful way to help students manage their time and stay focused. It breaks work into short, focused sessions—25 minutes of concentration followed by a 5-minute break. After four sessions, students take a longer 30-minute break. The steps shown guide them to choose one task, work without distractions, and build healthy study habits. It's especially helpful during homework or revision, making tasks feel more manageable and reducing stress. Many students find it boosts both productivity and confidence.



A balanced diet, regular exercise, and good sleep are essential for students' wellbeing, especially during busy school terms and exam periods. Eating nutritious meals fuels the brain and body, helping with concentration and energy levels. Daily movement, even a short walk, boosts mood and reduces stress, while quality sleep helps memory, focus, and emotional resilience. Together, these healthy habits support not just academic success, but also help manage anxieties and promote a positive mindset, especially important for students with SEN or those facing extra challenges.

Pastoral support, Heads of Year, and Form Tutors all play a crucial role in helping students manage exam stress and maintain their wellbeing. These trusted adults are often the first to notice when a student is struggling—whether with anxiety, pressure, or personal challenges—and can offer both emotional reassurance and practical strategies. They work closely with our families and SEND team to ensure every student, especially those with additional needs, feels supported and understood. By creating a safe, caring environment and building strong relationships, they help students stay calm, confident, and focused during exam season. If you have any queries, concerns or just need advice, please do contact your Head of Year or form tutor and they will advise you.

For further information, the following online resources are available:

Resource	Description	Access
Ofqual Student Guide to Exams	Practical advice on revision, managing stress, and understanding exam procedures.	gov.uk/ofqual
Oak National Academy	Free online lessons and revision strategies tailored to UK curricula.	thenational.academy
BBC Bitesize	Interactive revision materials, quizzes, and videos across subjects.	bbc.co.uk/bitesize

Wellbeing & Mental Health

Resource	Description	Access
Young Minds Exam Wellbeing Hub	Tips for balancing revision with rest, plus downloadable guides.	youngminds.org.uk
NHS Guide for Parents	Advice on supporting children through exam stress, sleep, and nutrition.	nhs.uk
Childline	Confidential support and coping strategies for overwhelmed students.	childline.org.uk

Resource	Description	Access
National Careers Service	Free advice on next steps after results— apprenticeships, T Levels, etc.	nationalcareers.service.gov.uk