

17 February 2022

Dear Parents/Carers,

Summer examinations

Exam boards have now released further information regarding the structure of the summer examinations. Each subject has varying degrees of advance notice, changes to the structure of the exam and reduced content. Subject teachers and tutors will be discussing the subject specifics over the coming weeks but a summary of these changes can be found [here](#). If you have any questions regarding the advance information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mocks

As you know, Year 13 recently finished a comprehensive round of mock exams, as well as several external exams for vocational subjects, and we were generally very pleased with how our students responded to this process. Mock results will be reported home in the first week of Term 4, and we look forward to welcoming parents and carers to our Virtual Progress Evening on March 3rd. We are planning to arrange a second round of mocks in the coming weeks in order to ensure our students are as thoroughly prepared as possible for their summer examinations. We will keep you informed of the mock timetable.

Revision and Independent Study

The Sixth Form Team has placed great emphasis on independent study skills across the year, encouraging positive learning habits such as organisation, wider reading and consolidation of lesson content. For the remaining months of Year 13, revision must be frequent and ongoing. All students should have a revision timetable in place by this point, and should be using all unstructured time within school, and between 8-10 hours per week outside school hours, if they are to ensure they achieve their full potential this summer. Students are welcome to stay on site at school until 5pm in order to use our facilities, and an increasing number of students are choosing to do so. We appreciate that your support at home is invaluable and have assembled some tips for revision below.

1. Encourage your child to make a revision timetable - and stick to it. Find an excellent guide to making a successful revision timetable [here](#), via the Exam Coach. Agree on an independent study routine with your child. For example, will they work immediately when they come home or will they have a break first? It is important that students have time away from their studies, which day will this be and what will this look like?
2. Make sure your child has a quiet space to work, with no distractions. As mentioned above, we can accommodate early starts and late finishes within the Sixth Form block.
3. Help your child to find the method of learning and retaining information that works best for them. The [Learning Scientists website](#) has some great resources for ways you can support your child with revision techniques. We know from research that reading and making notes is not the most effective method of revision. Instead, encourage your child to try:
 - a. Quizzing themselves using flashcards. You can even help your child by testing them too!
 - b. Writing mindmaps
 - c. Watching video clips and answering follow up questions
 - d. Completing and self-assessing exam questions using mark schemes.

4. Check the exam specifications. All exam boards publish these, along with practice papers and mark schemes too. Alternatively, speak to teachers directly. We are always able to help with targeted ideas, example questions and past papers of our own.
5. Search out revision apps and online resources – such as Seneca, Hegarty, Isaac Physics and SparkNotes – to clarify areas your child feels less confident about. Students sometimes concentrate on their best subjects/topics and leave their weaker ones till the end but it is a good idea to tackle weak areas early on. They should revisit these challenging topics frequently.
6. Encourage them to break revision into manageable chunks and to take regular breaks in between revision sessions. It's far more effective to do 30 minutes of successful revision – rather than plough on for hours on end and not get anywhere. This is backed up by research by academics at the University of Sheffield who found that learning is more effective when spread out over stretches of time. At this time in the year, students should be completing three or four 20-30 minute chunks of revision alongside their homework.
7. Exercise is a huge factor in maintaining good mental health, physical health and sleep patterns. Encourage them to take walks and runs, or to participate in sport at school.
8. It has been proven that healthy food can aid focus, while unhealthy food can lead to poor sleep and sugar crashes. Try to keep an eye on what your child eats and drinks and encourage good choices.
9. Sleep is key. Set a bedtime and stick to it. Avoid 'blue light' devices for, at least, an hour before bed. We all know this is a tough ask but the benefits are huge.
10. Most important of all, help your child to keep everything in perspective. Remind them that the better they prepare and the more confident they feel in their subject knowledge the less stressed they will feel when the exams start. But by the end of June the exams will be over, it will be the start of the long summer holidays and an exciting future ahead.

Yours sincerely

Geraint Davies

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