

## Year 11 GCSE Guidance, Expectations & Suggestions for Successful Revision

Year 11 have had a great deal of guidance from school on the best ways to revise, organise time and prepare themselves for the summer examinations. Please check the school website for the information that has been shared with your child. However, we are often asked how you, as parents, can support your child's learning at home. I have compiled this list of suggestions in order to help you provide encouragement and assistance to your child over the next few months.

### 1. How you can help with motivation:

- Remind your child why they are doing this. What grades do they need to get into sixth form or to pursue a particular career?
- Praise their efforts.
- Offer incentives and rewards, if appropriate, for dedicated and purposeful work. Nothing large but many students respond well to short term rewards to keep them on track over a longer period of time. (Pizza night? Cinema trip?)
- Remind them that GCSEs are important, but after the exams things will return to normal and they have a summer to relax and enjoy themselves. This is short term pain for long term gain.

### 2. How you can help with revision planning:

- We suggest that students have a timetable at home where they do two hours school work per night, one hour of which could be an after school revision or help session.
- We have shared with students a revision planner blank. Help your child organise their time ensuring that they have sufficient time for revision but also are building in time for family and friends as well as hobbies and time to relax. Aim to finish in plenty of time for bed. Good sleep patterns are essential.
- When the examination timetable is published, ask to see it and help your child plan revision sessions in advance. This saves last minute panic over what is coming up and pre-makes decisions about what to revise when.
- Ask to see the personal learning checklists (PLCs) for each subject. Your child should be using these to identify gaps in their knowledge to target revision at the weakest areas rather than things they are already good at. These are all available on the school website.
- Maintain an interest in what they are doing and ask what you can do to help.
  - a. During term time:
    - The target by February half term is 15 hours per week spread over seven days. We would **strongly** recommend that students should not really be doing much more than this as the work becomes unproductive, and they need time to relax.
    - Encourage your child to attend any sessions offered in school.
  - b. During half term and holidays
    - Stick to a normal day. Set the alarm to get up and start work at 9. Follow the school timetable in terms of work covered.
    - Ensure leisure time is planned.

### 3. How you can help with revision sessions:

- The first 5 - 10 minutes of any revision sessions should be dedicated to what your child is actually going to do in the session. This should include which subjects, for how long, when to take breaks and when to switch tasks to something else.
- Check they have any revision guides or resources you have bought them (and they aren't gathering dust under the bed!)
- Check their working environment. Bedrooms often contain many sources of distraction. An hour playing games on the X-Box with a revision guide open is not revision. This does depend both upon the students and the setup of the household but ideally working downstairs on the dining room or kitchen table is often more effective. The key is for students to set themselves up in an environment where they can complete effective revision.
- If students are using apps or web based materials to revise, make sure this is what they are actually doing (Hegarty Maths, BBC Bitesize, SCool and Seneca Learning are all excellent sites). Ask them to produce some material to show they have been actively working.
- Some exams are two or more hours long so students will have to concentrate for long periods of time. Help them by increasing the length of revision sessions slowly over the next few months from half an hour to an hour and a half. This builds stamina and concentration skills.

### 4. How you can help with revision and memory:

- Ask your child to produce revision material which can be used for testing. This may include flash cards or a series of questions and answers.
- Test them. Endlessly!
- We would suggest that a revision session should include 10 minutes of planning, 40 minutes actively revising then 10 minutes of testing.
- A good tip is for students to work in pairs to produce questions then make a copy for both. Doubling the testing material they have.
- Download past papers from the exam board websites. Get students to do questions in timed conditions rather than copying the mark schemes.
- Get your child to teach topics to you. The act of explaining concepts to someone else really does increase understanding and fix knowledge in the longer term memory.

### 5. How you can help with some difficult issues:

- Problems that go Ping! If you hear a constant 'ping, ping, ping' while your child is 'revising. Then they're not revising! The simplest answer is for the phone to be in another room to avoid the temptation to check it during revision sessions (they have been told this in assemblies!)
- TV or not TV? Definitely not! Streamed videos can be good revision tools (YouTube has a number of excellent subject specific channels) but apart from this there should be no other visual input.
- The sound of silence. Many students argue they can revise better with music. For some students this may be true while making revision resources. However, during any testing phases (either Q/A or doing past questions)

please insist on silence. This more closely mimics how they will be tested in real examinations and also allows access to greater areas of the brain.

- Bed time. Having a good night's sleep is vital to maintaining good health. Doubly so during periods of high stress. Please encourage your child to stop working at least half an hour before bedtime and to engage in some relaxing activity that allows their brain to wind down ready for sleep.

#### 6. How you can help with exam stress:

It is quite normal for students to feel stressed during exam periods. Some may find it harder to cope with this pressure than others. They may want to talk more about their feelings during this period but equally they may choose not to discuss things at all. Here are few hints that may help!

- Make sure they stick to their revision timetable and are continuing to follow hobbies and have time for family and friends. Many students may try and skip relaxation saying they have to work more. This is not the case. Relaxation time is incredibly important and if they are revising well then they must take this time to destress.
- Encourage healthy eating and resist their impulses to reach for the sweets. Make sure they are drinking plenty of water and are continuing to exercise (even if it is just a walk every evening). Exercise has been shown over and over again to be a major factor in reducing stress.
- Think positively. Some students may have a tendency to say negative things about themselves such as 'I've failed everything.' Remind them of successes, praise their effort and keep them focussed on the next steps in revision rather than dwelling on exams that have already been taken.
- During the exam period:
  - Last minute revision (the night before) should be light reading of revision notes rather than trying to cram the whole course in!
  - Make sure your child knows which exams they have on each day and that they have the equipment they need ready in their bags.
  - Encourage them to eat breakfast and bring a snack and water.
  - As the exam period wears on and your child gets more tired, keep positively encouraging them for the final push.
  - When the last exam is over, buy *yourself* an enormous reward for having weathered the exam period with your child!

**We wish all our students the very best and every success over the coming months.**