



4 February 2020

Dear Parent or Carer,

In a relatively short time students in year 11 will be sitting their GCSE exams, and then moving on to the next chapter in their lives as they undertake further study, training, or employment. This is a very exciting, but potentially worrying time. I am writing to you, following on from my previous letter last October, to share some information with you about how we can make the most of the last few months of school.

Practice Exams in March

During the week beginning 9th March, Year 11 will complete their final Practice Exams. They took part in mock exams in October last term, and those results have been used to diagnose areas for development and further planning. The March exams act as a rehearsal for the GCSE experience, which begins in the middle of May and lasts until the end of June. Although all exams can be stressful, the March exams will help year 11 to engage confidently with the GCSE subjects and highlight areas of strength. They will also serve to highlight any parts of the courses where students may need to fine-tune their knowledge and understanding.

How you can help:

All students have received clear advice from their subject teachers, together with a revision timetable. Please support your child in encouraging them to be organised with their work and to keep to deadlines as they occur. Staff will remind and encourage students to continue using their student organisers. Please contact the form tutor in the first instance if you have any queries.

The Pastoral Programme

Students have been studying personal and social skills during assemblies and form time to help them make the most of their GCSE year. Students have received extensive careers advice and the opportunity of a mock interview with a representative from either a local business or service organisation. We have been proactive in ensuring that all of our students have clear direction as to choices they have at the end of Year 11, whether that means applying to our sixth form, applying to a different sixth form or college, or seeking an apprenticeship placement. During this final term, there have been fortnightly pastoral and assembly themes; self-care, personal organisation, and revision skills. In addition, there have been visitors to assembly to encourage students about volunteering and social opportunities during the long summer break.

How you can support:

It's an important idea to make time for recreation and relaxation even during the busiest times of the year. We encourage students to use the coming half term and Easter breaks to continue revision and to accept that "busyness" is a fact of life for year 11. It is crucial to keep study in perspective and to stay healthy so please help your child to make time for things they enjoy.

The last time I wrote to you, I ended the letter by summarising some key thoughts that can help make this important time as smooth as possible for all of our young people. I would like to reiterate them now:

- Please keep talking to your child about their work at school and get in touch with us if you need to ask anything or tell us anything. Communication between home and school is essential. The form tutor is the best initial contact.

continued overleaf



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- Make sure that their attendance is as near to 100% as possible. If students are present, we offer an excellent level of support and can help them to be ready for exams. In simple terms, if they miss a significant amount of time they will have gaps in their knowledge and will complete less preparation for exams. They might also miss important information about revision opportunities or deadlines. It is also important that students are punctual, as we offer significant help during the daily form period.
- Remember that year 11 work is paced so that students "peak" at the end of the year when they sit their exams. Performance can vary a great deal during this time. Trial exams and other work is there to see what is going well and what needs to improve, so there is never a need to panic if things seem to hit a snag. Teachers are highly experienced in helping students overcome barriers.
- That said; please help your child keep to a good routine at home, in order to manage their workload. Encourage them to complete homework in good time and not let things pile-up. Learning is best when tackled incrementally.
- It is important for normal activities to keep going during the year. Recreation, and fulfilling activities, are important to staying balanced, healthy and focused. Sport, music, voluntary work, social activities, are all good examples of things that help keep academic work in perspective.

Information evening for parents and carers: Monday 10th February 2020

Finally, I would like to invite you to attend an information evening on **Monday 10th February**. There will be two identical sessions, one beginning at 3.30 p.m. and the second beginning at 4.30 p.m. Parents and carers are at liberty to choose which one to attend and we recommend that all students attend with you. There will be presentations by Mr O'Sullivan, Mr Wright, Mrs Lennon and myself on topics that will help you support your children in their endeavours. We regret that there will not be an opportunity to speak to subject teachers, however senior leaders and I will be available to answer questions and will forward any specific questions that you raise with me on to Subject Leaders.

I look forward to supporting and encouraging students through this challenging time and I look forward to seeing them reap the rewards of their hard work in the summer.

Yours faithfully,



M Simpson
Head of Year 11