



4th October 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

Four years ago, some 267 pupils from over 36 different primary schools were completing Year 6 and were anticipating the commencement of a new phase of life and learning at secondary school. Their final year of secondary school has now begun. I am writing to share with you some important information regarding the months ahead so that we can work together and give your child the best possible chance of success.

Supporting progress in year 11

Supporting every student as they move towards their GCSE exams is an integral part of how we offer support at Durham Johnston. This happens in lessons as part of daily learning, but sometimes further support may be needed for brief or extended periods.

Departments and subject teachers will be supporting students by offering specific support and guidance and to promote achievement. Some of this will take place before and after regular lessons, and we seek to ensure that our students feel supported and challenged but not overstretched. The key thing in year 11 is for students to pace themselves and to peak at the right time.

It is our aim to make sure that every student has the necessary level of support. This may be from the form tutor, who is always the first point of contact and communication in the morning; from specific subject teachers; pastoral staff; subject or senior leaders and support from outside agencies when required. There are many ways in which individual students benefit from extra help and there will be a variety of opportunities across the year. There will be specific points in the year where we will analyse progress and performance, and there are two trial exam points in the year before the year 11s leave to sit their final GCSE examinations. In addition, our 6th form students act as subject mentors and meet with students to revise and to share their subject knowledge. Many of the mentors sign up because they benefited from the same support.

6th Form at Durham Johnston

We take great pride in the fact that the majority of our Year 11 students stay with us for their A Levels. The 6th Form offers excellent pastoral care and has a track record of academic excellence. In addition to the 6th Form Open Evening on 7th October 2019, students will have the opportunity to visit the 6th form area, to meet with current 6th form students and can seek advice and guidance at any time from the 6th Form team. Students will also be informed about applications opportunities and open evenings for other education and training providers in when those times are published.

Pastoral Programme in Year 11

As in previous years, form tutors will deliver a programme of activities in form time (8.20-8.45 a.m.), which helps to prepare students for each day as well as to encourage thinking and activity around important themes. Although form tutor time is a short period, it is an essential part of the school day. Notices are given and key information is passed on. This period also helps students to consider personal health issues that are crucial elements in enabling them to

continued overleaf



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Deputy Head: R McFadden MEng
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flourish during their GCSE preparation. Careers work will add to the range of activities that prepares them for post-16 experience and we make sure that students get the advice, support and sense of perspective that they need.

How can I help my child get the most out of year 11?

There are many things that parents and carers can do to make this a smooth and successful year for their children.

- 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.
- 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 6th form application deadlines. It is also important that students are punctual, as we offer significant help during the daily form period. If students are late they are less prepared for success.
- 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's 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 pupils overcome barriers.
- That said, please help your child keep to a good routine at home, in order to manage workload. Encourage them to complete homework in good time and not let things build up. Learning is best when tackled incrementally and planned carefully. We will share more information about how you can help as a parent or carer in spring 2020.
- It's 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.

Having led the year group from the start of Year 7, with the additional privilege of welcoming several pupils who transferred to us later in their school careers, I am very excited about taking these young people to the thresholds of their futures during the next academic year. Let us work together as partners in ensuring that they get the best possible opportunity to make great progress.

Yours faithfully,



Mike Simpson
Head of Year 11

Key dates 2019-20

Week beginning or date	Year 11 Support and Exam Preparation
07/10/2019	DJCS 6 th Form open Evening and an opportunity to visit the 6 th Form area and to meet with the 6 th form team.
07/10/2019 (2 weeks)	First trial exams, based upon Y10 study, with one exam per subject.
05/11/2020	Deadline for 6 th Form applications. If your child is unsure about whether or not to apply, they should seek support and advice from the 6 th form team.
11/11/2019	Results assembly followed by support and guidance. Subject teachers will offer feedback and guidance on how to improve in lessons during this review week. Reports will be issued.
18/11/2019	Parents' evening to identify any issues that might impact upon exam success and what students need to do in each specific subject.
19/12/2020	Tutor intervention identifying how to be successful in the final months of Y11.
10/02/2020	Parent guidance and support meeting. An opportunity to meet with senior teachers to ask about how best to support your child and to answer any questions related to exam preparation.
Late February/early March 2020 (TBC)	Second trial exams and feedback. Courses will be completed, and revision will begin in school.
30/03/2020	Y11 reports issued. Advice given regarding revision techniques and Form Tutor support for establishing a revision timetable.
27/04/2020	Language speaking exams begin.
05/2020 (TBC)	External exams begin.

GCSE Trial Exam Timetable October 2019

DATE	8.30 – 10.30	11.00 – 1.00	1.35 – 2.35
THUR 10 TH OCT	COMB SCIENCE BIOLOGY 70 MINS FRENCH H - 1 ¼ HRS HALL	TRIPLE SCIENCE BIOLOGY 1 ¾ HRS HALL	FRENCH F – 1 HOUR HALL
FRI 11 TH OCT	ENGLISH LITERATURE 2 ¼ HRS HALL & MA2	COMPUTING – 1 ½ HRS PE – 1 ¼ HRS HALL	DRAMA - 1 HR
MON 14 TH OCT	COMB SCIENCE CHEM 70 MINS GERMAN H - 1 ¼ HRS HALL	TRIPLE SCIENCE CHEMISTRY 1 ¾ HRS ENGINEERING (v) 1 ½ HRS HALL	REL STUDIES - 1 HOUR HALL & MA2
TUES 15 TH OCT	MATHS - 2 HRS HALL & MA2	B STUDIES – 1 ½ HRS HALL	HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE 1 HOUR HALL
WED 16 TH OCT	HISTORY - 2 HRS HALL	D & T - 2 HOURS ENGINEERING – 2 HOURS D&T FOOD – 1 ¾ HRS HALL	MUSIC – 1 HOUR MU2
THUR 17 TH OCT	ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1 ¾ HRS HALL & MA2	GEOGRAPHY 2 HRS LATIN 1 - 1 ½ HRS CHINESE H – 1 ¼ HRS HALL	SPANISH F – 1 HOUR HALL
FRI 18 TH OCT	COMB SCIENCE PHYSICS 70 MINS SPANISH H – 1 ¼ HRS HALL	TRIPLE SCIENCE PHYSICS 1 ¾ HRS HALL	GERMAN F – 1 HOUR HALL