Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child’s motivation and ability to cope with the demands of their GCSE exams.

The next few months are crucial as Year 11 prepare to sit their GCSEs this summer. We all know that these are important exams as the grades achieved will determine what he or she does next in life. You will want your child to achieve the best grades that they can, and this can be made possible when there is a good partnership between the student, the school and parents.

This booklet aims to tell you more about what is required for GCSE exams and how you can help in the revision process.

Your role may include some, or all of the following:

Attendance officer: Making sure your child attends school on time every day and understands the importance of making the most of lesson times. Government statistics show that there is a link between attendance, punctuality and results at GCSEs. Every day lost in attendance reduces your child’s chance of achieving their best.

Partner with school and child: Going to parents’ evenings, asking questions and finding out how you can best help your child at home.

Provider of the tools for homework and revision: A quiet space for study, pens, paper and other necessities.

Banker: Paying for the tools, files and revision guides they need.

Study buddy: Showing an interest in the subjects, helping with the homework (but not doing it for them), testing them when they ask you.

Adviser: Helping your child to break tasks down so that they are manageable, keeping a subtle eye on progress and celebrating achievements. Seeing a positive way forward when things go wrong.

Project manager: Agreeing the rules for homework or revision, helping them to make a realistic timetable, balancing work time against recreation time and reviewing the plans as necessary.

Go-between: For your child and the school when necessary, making sure problems are addressed quickly.

Information provider: Finding copies of old exam papers, searching websites, finding out about the subject, exam structures and content.

What can parent/carers do to help? Help your son or daughter to start preparing for their GCSE exams now. If homework and revision are left to the last minute, this will limit your child’s chance of doing their best.

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●Ensure that your child attends school and is always on time. Every day lost in attendance reduces their chance of achieving their best at GCSE.

●Encourage your son or daughter to persevere and to begin working hard now in preparation for the exams. Check that they are keeping up with homework and attending the after-school sunset revision sessions on offer.

●Encourage your child to begin revising now.

Revision tips for parents

Help your child to make a study/revision timetable which includes the dates and times of the mock and summer examinations, as well as dates of any controlled assessments.

● The timetable should be used to plan revision sessions. These should be spread out evenly so that your son/daughter is not planning to do too much all at once.

● Have the timetable displayed in their room and help them to stick to the plan.

● Ask to see your son/daughter’s revision notes and make sure that they speak to their teachers if they are missing any.

● Encourage your son/daughter to ask for help at school on any work that they do not understand.

● Encourage your child to attend all revision sessions (sunset/sunrise) offered by the school.

● Make sure that they have all the books needed to hand to avoid wasted time.

● You can buy revision guides to help with study.

● Make sure that your child knows which exam board and syllabus have been followed for each subject.

● Make sure that the study area is quiet and well-lit.

● Check how they are doing by asking them to explain to you something that they have just revised.

Revision tips for students

You can support your son/daughter by helping them to follow these tips and techniques:

● Do not revise for more than one hour without taking a 5-10 minute break. Have a glass of water or something similar to drink.

● Stay focused. Hours can be easily wasted on social networks and mobile phones.

● In the evenings after school, plan to revise one or two subjects for one to two hours. Leave some time for relaxation.

● Plan to revise specific topics in each subject, not everything at once.

● Ensure that each revision session starts by tackling the most difficult topics first.

● Plan to cover each topic several times and revisit each one nearer to the exams.

● Revising or studying with the TV or radio on or with loud music is not a good idea. Quiet background music may help some students.

● Reading is not enough. Making brief notes in either words or pictures will help students to remember.

● Answering questions from past papers, sometimes under exam conditions is a good way to test learning.

● Don’t leave revision to the last minute.

How you approach the next few months can have a real impact on your child’s future. Studies show that high parental interest is linked with better exam results than for children whose parents show no interest. What will you do to give your child the best chance of achieving success?

What else can you do as a parent/carer?

● Recognise the importance of GCSE exams and the preparation time needed to do as well as possible

● Reward your child’s efforts to revise

● Reduce the number of chores that they have to do when exams start

● Make sure that the whole family respects the importance of keeping disturbances to a minimum

● Be sensitive to the pressure and stress that your teenager may be experiencing. Encourage them to speak to you about it

● Make sure that time is built in for exercise and recreation

● Respect their growing independence. Ask them how you can best support them

● Help them to keep things in perspective

Below are the current GAA sunset (after school) revision sessions that are running. Please support your child by encouraging attendance.



Effective revision habits & strategies: A guide for parents and students

Reading text over and over until you remember it may not be very effective unless it is supported by other techniques.

Visual

● Write notes on post-its and stick on walls ● Make notes on key ideas ● Summarise notes on card ● Highlight/circle key information ● Draw picture diagrams, mind maps, graphs ● Display key words around your room ● Create a picture in your mind of what you have studied.

Auditory

● Make up rhymes, mnemonics (e.g. Never Eat Shredded Wheat - North, East, South, West) ● Test yourself or your friends ● Get someone to test you ● Teach someone what you have revised ● Read your notes out loud or record them and play them over and over

Kinaesthetic

● Create revision cards ● Act topics out ● Use gestures to demonstrate concepts

What are the top effective revision strategies? Some myths about your brain.

Revising using only one particular “learning style” has no evidence of success (e.g. VAK).

You need to use a range of techniques

●Reading something over and over again won’t help you learn it on its own – Use highlighting and underlining

●“Cramming” has very short term benefits but is not a sustainable way to revise

●You have very little ability to judge how well you know something without testing yourself

● Use tests/past papers to identify areas of weakness

● Regular self - testing stops students from forgetting

● Avoids the “illusion of knowing”

● End to cramming for the tests and revising huge chunks of content

● Every time you work hard to recall a memory you strengthen it



● With exam revision repetition is our friend

● Practise skills, knowledge and timing

● Crafting and drafting exam papers is vital

● Mastery of content should bring happiness!

“Retrieval practice is a learning strategy where we focus on getting information out. Through the act of retrieval, or calling information to mind, our memory for that information is strengthened and forgetting is less likely to occur. Retrieval practice is a powerful tool for improving learning.”

* Use your class notes & textbooks to make a list of the important information & content that you need to know across different subjects.
* Then close your books & test yourself. You can create quizzes, use flashcards or complete past exam papers. Make sure you don’t use your notes!
* Retrieve as much information as you can then check your answers. It’s important to know what you know and what you don’t know … yet!
* Use your answers to inform the next stage of your revision, focus on the areas that you struggled to recall from memory.

“Start planning early for exams and set aside a little bit of time everyday. Five hours spread out over two weeks is better than the same five hours all at once.” This is spaced practice & it is regarded as one of the most effective revision strategies.

* Divide up your revision into short manageable chunks of time . When revising aim for 20 - 30 minutes per session.
* Mass practice or cramming is not effective & can be stressful. This is when you study for a very intense period of time just before the exam.
* You need to plan your time carefully to ensure all subjects & topics are covered in shorter chunks over a longer period of time.
* Dividing up your revision into smaller, manageable sections will benefit you in the long term - the revision you do for mocks will stick for the final exams!

“The term elaboration can be used to mean a lot of different things. However, when we are talking about studying using elaboration, it involves explaining and describing ideas with many details. Elaboration also involves making connections among ideas you are trying to learn.” Elaboration involves asking further questions & making links to help you connect new information with what you already know.

* Ask yourself questions about a topic to delve deeper. The more information you have about a specific topic the stronger your grasp & ability to recall.
* When you learn about the causes of WW1 you could ask which causes are linked together? Which causes are short or long term? What was the major cause?
* Another way to elaborate is to take two ideas or concepts & think about the various ways they are similar & how they are different.

“Interleaving is a process where students mix & combine multiple subjects & topics while they study in order to improve their learning. Blocked practice on the other hand, involves studying one topic very thoroughly before moving to another. Interleaving has been shown to be more effective than blocked practice leading to better long-term retention.”

“Dual coding is the process of combining verbal materials with visual materials. There are many ways to visually represent materials, such as with infographics, timelines, cartoon/comic strips, diagrams and graphic organisers.”

* Dual coding involves you the learner drawing images, graphs, diagrams or timelines to support your revision notes.
* When you are revising using your class materials find or create visuals that link with the information. Compare & combine the visuals with the words.
* Don’t worry if you don’t consider yourself an artist - it isn’t about the quality of your illustrations, the focus is to improve and deepen your understanding.
* Make sure your images/diagrams are relevant. Be careful when using photos as too many background images can detract from the main points

There will be subject specific key terms that you need to learn for each subject. There will be a range of command words that could be used in your exams. Do you understand what the exam question is asking you? Command words can vary slightly across different subjects so it is important you understand the command words in the exam question & in the correct context.

The exam period can be stressful that is why it’s very important that you revise & prepare as this can help to reduce exam anxiety. In addition to revising there are other strategies you can do to look after your mental & physical health.

* Eat. Diet is important so don’t neglect it during the exam period. Don’t skip meals, stay consistent with a healthy balance of meals & stay hydrated.
* Sleep. Staying up late to revise is a bad idea! Sleep deprivation can have a very negative impact on concentration, performance & memory
* Exercise. Take regular breaks from revision with exercise. Take part in a sport you enjoy, go for a walk or any activity that is active & part of your daily routine. Relax.
* Relax during the exam period? Yes! It is essential that you do make time to switch off & have a break. Watch Netflix, read or talk to friends

The Year 11 Pastoral team are on hand to support you further and can be contacted on the email below.

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