

4th April 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing with information to help you support your child with revision over the holidays. We have given the students this information in various formats already, but we thought it would be useful for you to know exactly what we have been saying in school. We recommend you spending a few minutes reading this letter with them at the start of the holiday, especially the 'top tips' section. You can also see the PowerPoint your child was shown in their assembly this week within the Parent Communication/Year 11 section of the website.

The most important point to bear in mind is that revision over the Easter holidays is essential. Our experience shows that the students who do plenty of regular revision over this two-week holiday are the ones who are successful in the final exams.

It is difficult to be exact about how many hours should be done because all students are different and also the quality of revision is more important than quantity. However, as a guide, we would expect students to be doing around four to five hours of revision per day on most days of the holiday.

We have explained to the students that it is certainly important that they get a good rest and find time to switch off during the holidays. Four or five hours a day of revision still allows plenty of time for this. At the same time, we have encouraged them to remember that they will have the longest summer holiday of their lives once the exams are over and that no student has ever opened the envelope containing their GCSE results and said that they wished they'd spent less time revising at Easter!

The starting point will be to find an effective routine for when revision takes place. For example, some will prefer to spend the morning revising, leaving the rest of the day free to enjoy themselves. Others may prefer to do two sessions: one in the morning and one after dinner. Students have been given blank revision timetables and should be completing these to provide a schedule; it doesn't matter too much how they structure this, provided that they stick to it.

Once a routine and timetable have been decided upon, then it is all about the *quality* of revision and our top tips are as follows:

- Use Personalised Learning Checklists (PLCs) and revision checklists handed out by teachers (PLCs can also be found on the school website under Curriculum/Year 11 Personalised Learning Checklists) to identify which topic you are going to work on. Don't always start at the beginning of the PLC; rather pick out topics you are less confident with, especially major topics. Don't spend long at the beginning of each revision session choosing a topic: just pick one and get on with it!
- As a general rule, it is better to make sure you know something about all topics in a subject before trying to learn every little detail about any one of the topics (i.e. there's no point knowing everything about

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the first few topics and nothing about the rest, because the 'right' topics might not come up in the exam!). Use the PLCs to ensure that you are covering all aspects of subjects. Once you know something about all the topics, then you can go through them in more detail.

- Use the revision packs you have been given. Do not waste time searching for other revision materials online or anywhere else; just get on with it! Knowledge Organisers, which students have in English Literature (and some other subjects) can also be used in this way – they contain all the key content for a topic, and can be helpful with the 'Look-Cover-Write-Check' technique (see below).
- Put all distractions away. It is never a good idea to revise with your phone nearby; be strong enough to turn it off or put it in a different room and only check it during breaks. Decide in advance if you are using your phone for 30-mins on Tassomai or one of the PiXL Apps.
- Repetition is the key to effective revision – our brains are far more likely to remember things if we see them several occasions (especially if these occasions are spread out) than if we just revise them all in one go. For example, you could revise one topic in the morning and ask your parents to test you on that same topic in the early evening or (even better) the next day. Aim to revise all topics three times before the exams.
- Build in regular breaks. Short, sharp sessions with breaks in between are better than long, less intense sessions. A good pattern to follow is 30 minutes of revision, followed by a 10-minute break.
- If in doubt about how to revise, use the simple 'Look-Cover-Write-Check' strategy. This means: **look** over your notes for the topic, then close or **cover** up your revision pack, **write** out the key points (no need for full sentences or beautiful handwriting – just scribble down the key bits you can remember), then **check** your revision packs to see what you have missed and add the extra bits in. Then, throw away your paper and do it again!
- Mindmaps and flashcards are also good strategies, but try not to waste time just making them look pretty and/or just copying out notes from your revision packs – instead use **short bullet points in your own words**. Then make sure you test yourself (or ask someone to test you) so that you are doing the all-important repetition of material.

I hope you find the advice above useful, but please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further help. You will know your own child best and how to get the right balance between ensuring they stay relaxed whilst also putting the necessary time and effort into revising over the holidays. We know it can be a stressful time for parents too and wish you the best of luck.

Yours faithfully



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