

28 October 2022

Dear Parent/Carer,

Helping your child with their GCSE exams

Our second GCSE mock examination programme starts this week and we know that it can be a worrying prospect for Yr11s and they may feel under pressure with the amount of schoolwork and revision expected over the next six months. In school, staff will be working with students to provide guidance, advice and support about revision as well as delivering the rest of the GCSE courses.

Parental support is eight times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class (TES, 2003). The good news is that you don't need to be an expert in any of the subjects your child studies to make a real difference. Any encouragement and support you can offer at home will be hugely beneficial to your child's success in their exams and this will also help combat any potential negative stress.

To support with independent study and providing quiet space the Academy will remain open until 5:30pm each day for students to have a suitable space. This will be alongside our programme of subject boosters,

The following notes are intended to provide some suggestions about how you and your child might best approach the whole process.

As a parent, please could you

- ❖ Ensure your child attends school regularly and on time – 90% attendance means one in ten days is missed; over the course of a school year this is the equivalent of four weeks and can be worth more than a grade!
- ❖ Talk to your child about what they're learning, any homework/coursework they have to do and deadlines in the remaining six months
- ❖ Contact your child's Advisory tutor if you have any questions or concerns about your child
- ❖ Agree the balance of work and social life and stick to the agreement - flexibility is key - i.e., if a special night arises, agree that they can make up the work another (specified) time.
- ❖ Understand that all students fall behind, feel demotivated or overwhelmed and struggle with a work/life balance. When they do feel like this talk to them about, acknowledge their feelings and adopt a sensible attitude to finding a solution. Threatening behaviour will only have a negative impact.
- ❖ Be flexible and use the 80/20 rule – if your child is sticking to what they are supposed to be doing 80% of the time, they will be doing it right.
- ❖ Support your child when they ask for your support – encourage them to see the difficulties in perspective. Teenagers often take an all or nothing 'catastrophic' approach to difficulties that can be unhealthy e.g. "I've messed up this essay, I might as well give up."

Practical support you can offer

- ❖ Help them plan their work and revision and meet deadlines – "The student room" provide a very good online tool for helping your child plan their revision around their other commitments.
- ❖ Stick key dates in a prominent place e.g., kitchen fridge – these can be found on the Academy website and at the bottom of this letter.

Principal - Mr James Pape

Leeds Road, Sheffield, S9 3TY

Tel: 0114 2200 400 Email: info@oasisdonvalley.org www.oasisacademydonvalley.org

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- ❖ Provide your child with a quiet place to study – preferably a dining room / study where they will not be disturbed and there is a table to work at.
- ❖ Ensure that your child has a range of stationery available to them – this can range from highlighters and colour pens, smaller “flash card” style pieces of paper or card, A3 paper etc.
- ❖ Encourage your child to have a clear goal by the end of their revision period – e.g. ‘At the end of these 2 hours I will be able to label a diagram of the heart and answer a question on how the heart works.’
- ❖ Make sure they take regular breaks – for every twenty to forty minutes of revision students should have a ten-minute break. Students shouldn’t revise for longer than forty-minute sessions
- ❖ Test your child on the work he/she has been revising – this will help them (and you) understand what they know and where they need to focus more attention.
- ❖ Check that your child has found out about any available after school revision/catch up study sessions –these are offered by almost all subjects in the build up to exam time but are not a substitute to timetabled lessons.
- ❖ Ensure that they eat healthy food and drink plenty of water – a balanced diet is just as important now as ever.
- ❖ Ensure your child gets enough sleep – teenagers need between eight & ten hours sleep (Sleep Foundation). Sleep hygiene is really important and avoiding the use of any technology around bedtime can help students (and adults) sleep better.

Revision

Any effective revision must do more than just look at information i.e., re-reading text will not store facts into the long-term memory. In order for the information to ‘stick’, it is necessary to find a technique or a variety of techniques which will trigger recall. Students should then test themselves before they move on to another topic or subject so that they can be confident with their knowledge. A common tactic by many students is to focus on the areas they feel confident at the expense of the areas they don’t. Revision should really begin with your child testing themselves to find out where their weaknesses in different subjects may be and devising a strategy to address these as well as the areas they have greater strength.

To help, below are some example revision techniques. Your child will have some idea about which may or may not work for them based on their experiences from their mock exams, but one particular strategy should not be used in isolation and may have to be done numerous times.

Revision ideas for your child to try

- ❖ Read notes and write summaries, before returning and using a highlighter for key points to use in testing.
- ❖ Work through old exam papers & practice questions – some are available on exam board websites, in revision guides and textbooks or from department staff. Students will know which subject uses which exam board. If not, this should be in their planners or can be found in the curriculum maps in the Key Stage 4 area of the school website.
- ❖ Record notes on an audio device and listen back to them.
- ❖ Put key points onto post-it notes and stick them around a room.
- ❖ Make mind maps to help recall key points in a topic.
- ❖ Create flash cards with questions on one side and the answers on the other – these are good for testing knowledge recall and it’s easy for someone else to help.
- ❖ Use mnemonics to help remember items in a list.

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- ❖ Buy or borrow individual subject revision guides (check with teachers to see which are most suitable).
- ❖ Teach someone else a topic once having revised it themselves.
- ❖ Prepare planned answers to potential exam questions and get these checked by teachers.
- ❖ Write answers to exam questions in full and get these checked by teachers.

At the moment we would expect students to be studying for 1-2 hours every evening and then from 4-6 hours a day following February half-term; some students will inevitably show the desire to begin revising earlier.

If you feel that your child is unduly anxious about their exams, please encourage them to talk to you and please let us know.

You can contact their Advisory tutor or Pastoral Manager by leaving a message on 0114 2200 400 or by emailing the Yr11 ALT link Mr Wainwright.

Yours sincerely



James Pape principal.

Student & Parent Meetings 22-23

Date	Event	Topic
30 th November	Meeting 3	November mock exam results day. Y11 Subject parents evening.
19 th January	Meeting 4	Preparation for Spring mocks. What to expect from Science/Humanities/MFL Supporting your student at home: Revision strategy.
15 th March	Meeting 5	Spring mock exam results day. The upcoming revision residential What to expect from Option subjects.
20 th April	Meeting 6	Supporting your child to prepare. Supporting positive mental health: Managing exam anxiety Supporting your student at home: Revision strategy. Subject focus meetings for specific students.
4 th May	Meeting 7	The final countdown – making the most of the final few weeks.

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Useful websites for you and your child to explore together:

Revision advice:

- ❖ [Grow your Grades 2022-2023 ! - The Student Room](#)

How to Revise:

- ❖ [Grow your Grades 2022-2023 ! - The Student Room](#)
- ❖ [Learning and school help for parents - BBC Parents' Toolkit - BBC Bitesize](#)

General advice for parents/teenagers:

- ❖ [Preparing for exams | Childline](#)
- ❖ [Parenting and Family Support - Family Lives \(Parentline Plus\) | Family Lives](#)
- ❖ [Home - Kooth](#)

Exam boards:

- ❖ **AQA** [AQA – education charity providing GCSEs, A-levels and support](#)
- ❖ **Edexcel** [Pearson qualifications | Edexcel, BTEC, LCCI and EDI | Pearson qualifications](#)
- ❖ **WJEC** [Welcome to the WJEC homepage](#)

Student revision support:

- ❖ [Home - BBC Bitesize](#)
- ❖ [Revision World - Free GCSE & A-Level Revision Resources](#)

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