

Dear Parent & Student,



Welcome back to the new term. We have had a positive start and I am delighted to share that when members of our Local Governing Board visited us on Wednesday they were hugely impressed with our young people, what they were doing, their engagement in school and their positivity. They visited students in lessons and also met with Student Council representatives and members of staff. We are most fortunate to have such supportive Governors and they certainly felt that they gained a very good insight into a typical working day here in our school.

In addition to this positive experience, we also enjoyed the positive experience of the final Year 11 Reporting Evening. This was an invaluable opportunity for students to get advice that must be acted upon in the final push to enjoy GCSE success. Within this context, but beneficial for all students in all year groups, please see below some key revision and study advice.

Three Stages to Exam Success

There are THREE basic stages to success:

1. Learning in lessons

Attending every day of school prepared and ready to learn will make a huge difference. Learning is hard work and research clearly shows that a healthy breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast Club is in the ALC every morning from 08.15-08.45 am.

Equally, getting exercise and a good night's sleep helps the body rest and recover, so that students are refreshed and ready to learn. It is also important that students 'understand' what they are taught rather than be a passenger in the process. It is vital that they approach teachers now to ask for further support if they do not truly understand a topic.

2. Revising appropriately

It is really important that students use their revision time effectively. This is one of the most common mistakes students make. Some of the better techniques will be discussed in the 'Revision Tips' section. However, it is important that revision is done in a regular time slot in a quiet area, free from distraction.

3. Doing the exam

Being prepared for 'the big day' is vital but it is not good enough just to turn up. As with learning in general, it is important that a student eats well, sleeps well and is calm before taking an exam – which means getting to school with plenty of time to spare.

Cramming is certainly not an answer and should be avoided through the early creation of a revision timetable (also covered in the 'Revision Tips' section). It is also important that students practise plenty of past papers before the big day to make sure they time themselves properly. Running out of time or spending the wrong amount of time on any one question is usually a recipe for disaster.

Study Tips

Set up a perfect space

You need somewhere to do your best work quickly and efficiently. Make sure it is well lit, quiet enough for you to work and with enough space for all your necessary materials.

If necessary have your computer/laptop nearby, but turn off all other distractions – like your mobile phone or table. You need to focus!

BE RESPECTFUL
BE RESPECTED
BE ADMIRED
BE CONNECTED
BE THE CHEERY FACE OF WELCOME
BE THE FRIEND YOU CAN DEPEND ON
BE DYNAMIC
BE INSPIRED
BE EXCITED
BE ADMIRED
BE THE PERSON YOU ASPIRE TO BE
BE AN ACADEMIC SUCCESS STORY
BE A HERO
BE A LEADER
BE A WINNER
BE A DREAMER
BE A CREDIT TO THE SCHOOL
BE THE ONE WHO'S EXCEPTIONAL
BE DEMANDING
BE COURAGEOUS
BE THE IDEA THAT'S CONTAGIOUS
BE YOURSELF
BE SET FREE

BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE

Make a revision time table

Start by picking the best time for you to work. Plan your revision around the same time every day.

Spend the most time on the biggest and most difficult topics/concepts. It may be easier and more fun to start with the easier and smaller elements. Unfortunately you will not be doing yourself any favours. You will feel more confident and relaxed once you have mastered the elements you are most worried about.

Display your timetable in a place where everyone can see e.g. on the fridge. This way no one will bother you OR can remind you to stick to it!

Take regular breaks

It is possible to work too hard. Your brain needs to rest to help it process information.

Include regular rest breaks in your revision timetable. This can include time to play sport, go for a walk/exercise; visit friends and family etc. You need to be at your best to achieve the best.

Use past papers

Past exam papers give you an insight into the format of the paper, the command words used and the allocation of marks. This information is crucial to enhancing exam technique and ensuring you answer the questions in the way expected.

By practicing past papers, you can identify gaps in your knowledge and areas where further work is needed. Furthermore, past papers help to give you more confidence and familiarity with the exam process. Testing yourself in the comfort of your own home helps to create an image of calm that can be used when in the exam itself.

Eat healthy

Good nutrition *should be* part of your study plan because it's going to help you with your study, revision and success. The better the fuel your brain gets, the better you'll study.

You may feel like you deserve a treat, or that you don't have time to eat properly, but what you eat can really have an impact on energy levels and focus, so keep away from junk food. Keep your body and brain well-fuelled by choosing [nutritious foods](#) that have been proven to aid concentration and memory, such as fish, nuts, seeds, yogurt and blueberries. The same applies on exam day - eat a good meal before the test, based on foods that will provide a slow release of energy throughout. Sugar may seem appealing, but your energy levels will crash an hour later.

Drink plenty of water

As a final tip, remember that being well hydrated is essential for your brain to work at its best. Make sure you keep drinking plenty of water throughout your revision, and especially on exam days.

Revision Tips

Start NOW!

Ideally you should have started your revision early. However, if you haven't, now is the time to start!

Know what you need to know!

Know the exam board, content and importantly the exam date and time for each of your subjects. Print off a copy of the syllabus so you know what you are going to be examined on. Don't waste time revising topics that are not on the syllabus.

Create a revision timetable and STICK TO IT!

Create a timetable, setting realistic targets for each day. You won't manage to learn the entire English Literature syllabus in one day.

Your timetable doesn't have to be set in stone – you might even prefer to write up a weekly 'to-do' list for each subject. However, creating a revision timetable is a waste of time if you don't stick to it. Don't spend longer learning a section than you have scheduled – move on. The purpose of following a timetable is to avoid spending weeks learning the earlier topics and then frantically rushing through the later ones.

After you've covered a section, tick it off on your timetable. Visually tracking your progress will help to keep you motivated.

Revise actively

Simply reading page after page from a textbook is not enough to achieve top grades. Try a mixture of revision methods for best results.

For example:

- Posters
If you have difficulty revising, using posters on your wall is a good starting point. Going over the information is beneficial and if you put the poster up on your wall and recite it, it will pay off.
- Mind maps
When struggling to revise making mind maps will help. Using images, symbols and key words help to prompt your thinking. Mind maps also help to break down key themes and ideas of difficult concepts and theories.
- Different coloured paper/ink
Using different colours to revise help to access different parts of your brain. However, the colour are not to be used to 'beautify' your notes. Like Mind maps the different colours help to prompt your thinking and break down difficult concepts and topics.
- Using mnemonics
This is a great way to remember names or lists of things.
- Revision/Flash cards
Revision cards are based on your detailed class notes, only shorter! They should have key words or phrases/subject specific terminology in bullet form. Again the words or phrases should prompt you to explain further in detail.
- Recording audio notes
An alternative to reading your notes over and over again. Listen to your audio notes as you walk to/from school, complete jobs around the house etc. Take them with you - when you walk the dog and learn a sentence off by heart. Every little helps!
- Revising with your friends
If you're confident your friends won't distract you, have regular revision sessions. This way it is more fun and you can help each other out on topics you're unfamiliar on.

Practice makes perfect

Once you've covered every topic, don't just go over your flash cards thousands of times; you need to apply the information you've learned. GCSEs are not simply memory tests.

Attempt as many past paper and practice questions as possible. Do them in silence, and in timed conditions. By doing this, you'll become more familiar with how questions are worded and you'll learn how much time to allocate to answering each question. In the exam, you need to be able to recall only the information that is relevant to the question, and get it written down in the time given – this requires practice!

Once you have finished a practice paper, go over it with the mark scheme. Make a note of what you did right, and what you could have done better. Look at model answers given on the mark scheme. This is the best way to improve your exam technique. The more past papers and practice questions you attempt, the more comfortable and confident you'll feel in the real exam.

Don't revise 24/7

It isn't effective. Take regular breaks whilst you're revising, and return to your work with fresh eyes. You'll be able to concentrate much better if you take regular breaks. It's a waste of time trying to learn new information with an over-tired brain.

Keep your body and mind happy; exercise regularly, eat well, and socialise. You don't have to give up the things you enjoy during the revision period.

Most importantly – sleep! Staying up all night and drinking gallons of caffeine are not good ideas. Sleeping actually improves memory.

Be patient with yourself

If you can't understand something, don't drive yourself crazy. Make a note of where you're stuck, and come back to it later. Look for a new source of information, and don't be afraid to ask your teacher for help. You may not understand everything immediately – be patient with yourself.

We all have days when our brain seems to take absolutely nothing in. If you're having one of these days, go for a walk, get some fresh air, and try again.



What can I do as a Parent?

Every child is different and there is no one rule fits all here. However, there are some basics that are true for most, if not all, students:

- **Attendance and Punctuality**

Getting your child to school on time and every day is probably the most important thing you can do. 90% attendance effectively means your child has missed half a day of lessons every week for the year.

- **Take an interest**

Research suggest that parental support is eight times more important in determining a child's academic success than social class. You don't have to know all the answers, just be there to offer support, encouragement and interest.

Please feel free to contact the school and ask any questions your child does not want to. Don't forget to reward them when they do well!

- **Help**

Provide a suitable environment at home. These may include clear structures, regular meals, a quiet environment to work, good time-keeping and a tidy learning space.

So many positives to report but something less positive relates to adaptations to school uniform seen this week as the weather got warmer. This relates particularly to our girls and their skirts. It is absolutely unacceptable for girls to wear short, lycra, stretch skirts or indeed any length lycra stretch skirts. Uniform requirements must be adhered to and parents are asked to address this and ensure students attend in correct uniform this forthcoming week.

Thank you for your support with this.

Key dates for your diaries:

- Health & Social Care Visit - Years 9 to 13 afternoon of Monday 23rd April
- Maths Challenge - Years 10 & 11 on Thursday 26th April
- Sixth Form Parents' Reporting Evening on Thursday 26th April from 4.00 to 6.00 pm
- Year 11 GCSE Art Exam on Thursday 26th April and Friday 27th April
- Health & Social Care Visit - Years 9 to 13 morning of Friday 27th April
- Year 12 BTEC Art exam on Friday 4th May
- The May Day holiday is on Monday 7th May.
- Year 13 Photography exam from Wednesday 9th to Friday 11th May
- Year 12 Photography exam from Thursday 10th to Friday 11th May
- The Public Examinations commence on Monday 14th May. Students should have their timetables and therefore should be planning their revision in light of this.
- Year 13 BTEC Art exam on Thursday 17th May
- The May Half-Term Holiday is from 28th May to 1st June.



Kathleen M. Higgins
Executive Headteacher

Students donate Origami Peace Cranes to Hiroshima Children's Peace Park, Japan

The following Form Tutors and students contributed 350 Origami Peace Cranes to Japan:

11KRA

10BFE

8ZHI

9EPE

7CHO

Eco Prefects

Students who came along to the ALC in their own time at break and lunch

During the Easter Holidays Ms Joy, Advanced Learning Centre Manager, travelled to Hiroshima Children's Peace Park to deliver 2353 Origami Peace Cranes as part of a global peace and education project. The story of why origami peace cranes are folded and donated is in the story of Sadako Sasaki.....

Sadako Sasaki was a Japanese girl living in Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan (August 6, 1945), ending the 2nd war and killing 90,000–146,000 people. At age 11, Sadako was diagnosed with leukaemia, a type of cancer caused by the atomic bomb. Sadako, a sports enthusiast, wished herself well enough to take part in sports day using a Japanese tradition of folding 1000 origami cranes grants a wish. Unfortunately Sadako died after an 8 month battle and at 644 cranes. Her class mates completed the 1000 cranes and laid them at her graveside. Sadako became a symbol of hope and determination for a world where no child or person has to endure the disastrous effects of war. People, faith groups and school children from all around the world fold cranes for Hiroshima Children's Peace Park monument where a statue of Sadako holding a crane resides.



It is so important that our young people think globally about issues that affect us all and have the opportunity to debate and consider key issues as they develop into young adults.

Eco Prefects Committee

Year 7 & 8 Eco prefects have taken responsibility to ensure Beechwood's lovely Cherry Blossom Tree is taken care of. The tree was planted by year 7 students last year to celebrate their journey and growth through Beechwood. The cherry blossoms have begun to bud and will bloom over the coming weeks.

Ms R Joy

Advanced Learning Resource Centre Manager

