



Sprowston Community Academy



GCSE Revision Advice for Parents 2017/18



Guide for supporting, preparing
and succeeding in the GCSE
Revision and Examinations



Thankyou for your time in reading this information booklet, designed specifically for parents/carers of Year 11 students about to complete their GCSE revision and final exams. We hope that you find it useful and offers the information and answers to questions you may have.

As parents/carers you are the most important people in the life of your child and can therefore have the biggest influence. It is this reason why we need your support in helping students revise and prepare for their exams. Although exams provide a difficult time for the students, it is a way to measure achievement and progress, allow students to show what they are capable of, and helps them choose their future pathways and careers.

A common message is needed from both home and school that organisation, effort and resilience is required over the next few months, in order for students to meet their full potential. This booklet along with the student version and Study Skills booklet that has been previously shared, will hopefully support the exam process and offer some guidance to ensure success for all.



GCSE REVISION and EXAMINATIONS

• Students will be issued an individual **examination timetable** closer to the summer. They will also be offered revision opportunities at lunchtime and after school as apart of the **revision timetable** (see below) that has already started. We will **email** and **text** you this information weekly. Please support and encourage students to attend these regularly.

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
Form time	Selected students only - Maths		English		
Lunchtime	Health and Social Care WS01 History WS15 Media Studies CM21	Health and Social Care WS01 German FB03 French FB11	Health and Social Care WS01 Art WG12 Photography WG11 Geography WS26 Computer Science CM26 PE theory FB12	Art WG12 Photography WG11 Philosophy and Ethics WS06 Health and Social Care WS01 Media Studies CM21 Spanish FB01	Art WG12 Photography WG11 Health and Social Care WS01 History (aiming for Grade 4 WS15 and WS16) Spanish FB01
After School	Science Faculty	Maths Faculty English Faculty	Art Photography Drama Music Computer Science Business Studies	D&T Faculty Geography Philosophy and Ethics	History (aiming for a Grade 5+ WS14 and WS17)

- Ensure that they know **which examination** they have on **each day** during the exam period. Is it in the morning or the afternoon?
- Check that they know **what equipment** they should have for each examination, as well as where they will be seated (on Exam notice board).

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD PREPARE?

- Show an **interest** and ask what they have been doing or if they need help, on regular occasions.
- Stay calm. Teenagers taking exams can get tunnel vision, and it will be a **stressful time**. Anger can be a cover for fear.
- You can't make them revise, but you can emphasise **why they need to revise**.
- Support the need for a **calm, quiet working area** for the most effective revision.
- Try to **diffuse negative thoughts**, whilst being practical and realistic.
- Ensure your son/daughter gets some **fresh air** and/or **exercise** and is **eating regular healthy meals** and snacks. They will also need to **drink plenty of water** and get a **good amount of sleep**.

SUGGESTED REVISION TIMINGS

- Suggest they put aside a **set period of time to revise** and try to stick to this as a **routine**. A revision calendar or timetable often helps.
- Suggested timings:
30 mins REVISING **10 mins TESTING** **10 mins RESTING**
- This is best at a time during the day before they are too tired, or even first thing in the morning.



WHERE TO START?

Students often say that they don't know where to start or how to revise. Please remind students to use their **Study Skills booklet** which has practical tips on how to revise and possible techniques to try. The students need to find the approach that suits them and their learning style.

There are also ideas on the **school website** under the 'Learning' then 'Revision section'.

Past exam papers are often helpful and can be found on the examination board's own website. Please be careful not to use the wrong exam board. The information for which exam board each subject uses is found on the website also, under the 'Learning' then 'Faculties' area, where each faculty has a separate page.

The school and students use **Doddle**, which is an online software used to set work, but also offers a library of resources – videos, PowerPoints, quizzes, notes – for every subject. This is a useful place for students to re-learn and revise areas of each subject that they perhaps feel less confident about. Student's will have the login details as this is also the way Homework is set and recorded.

Students also have access to **PiXL resources**. This includes Personalised Learning Checklists for both English and Maths, which based on their mock exams outline the exact areas students need to focus their revision and efforts on. All Year 11 also have access to PiXL revision Apps for their phones and/or tablets for a range of subjects including English Literature, Maths, Geography and History. These are very useful electronic revision aids that students have successfully used in the past. All login details are available from class teachers, but have been issued to students already.

Revision Guides are still available to purchase from Miss Stearman for both English and Maths at a cost of £5. These are very useful with exam questions and activities to assess understating along side detailed information about the course content.

Subject teachers will also offer a range of **resources to supplement students notes**, folders and exercise books. Once these resources have been found, printed, collected together, it is time to actually do some revision. This is often the hardest part. Support the students in choosing what they will now do and make a start!



BEING POSITIVE AND RAISING SELF ESTEEM

During times of pressure and the demands of the GCSE exams, the students will at times feel negative and doubt their abilities. Student's self esteem may decline and they could feel inadequate, not as clever or talented as others. This can have a negative impact on the students thinking, behaviour and most importantly their ability to achieve.

Self esteem can be increased by making sure students are reminded that -

- They are unique and different to others, to avoid comparisons being made.
- They are safe and secure
- They are in control of their learning, revision and exam success.
- We will all be proud of them if they work hard and try their best.

Some students may feel worried about the exams following their mocks in December. These were designed to monitor students progress, highlight where students need extra support and also to offer an experience of the intensity of a number of exams within an exam period. For many this will be the first time they will have experienced something like this and we must reflect on the mocks and make positive changes for the final exams in the summer. What went well, what do we need to repeat and what needs to change for the summer?

Telling the students we believe in them and that we are proud of their efforts makes a real difference. Help students reflect on the future but also what they can do now, in the short term. We will all support them, but we do also expect them to be pro-active, meet basic standards (attendance, attitude etc) and embrace the challenges ahead.

MOTIVATION

This can be one of the major barriers to success, often fluctuating across the period of revision and exams. It is a cliché, but this period of student's school life really is a marathon, not a sprint and that is why we are encouraging little and often for revision, building up to the final exams. The more students put in now the more they will get out. However there are many factors that impact on motivation from distractions and their social lives to dealing with the pressure of exams and high expectations.

To keep motivated and positive we recommend –

1. Setting achievable goals for a certain subject or evenings revision. This then offers the chance to experience success and the positive feeling of having met a target.
2. Being organised and having all materials ready to revise from. This removes the barriers. Revision timetables organise students time well .
3. Decide what small rewards are available once revision and work is complete.

Poor motivation can become a habit or a defence mechanism to avoid failing. Experiencing failure in the past can demotivate and requires a change of mind set, with positive thoughts and a 'can do' attitude.



Revision Preparation

A revision timetable, either paper or electronic is crucial to organise the students time, spreading out subjects and making decisions that will in the long term save time. It is also important that these are realistic and offer time away from revision and exams, doing the other type of activities that they enjoy. The timetable should offer a guide to what subject and even topic is being studied for how long.

As time passes the amount of work and revision should increase, but starting now offers plenty of time to build up their knowledge and skills in preparation and to avoid any last minute cramming or panic. Students will be offered workshops at school to produce revision timetables.

Short revision sessions of around 30 minutes are recommended, but some are able to work for longer periods. Students have to find what works best for them. Breaks in between are crucial to rest the mind and offer a chance for physical exercise, social activities, a snack and drink etc. The revision has to be active revision and not just reading information and glazing over.

We recommend students find a suitable, quiet space to revise in where it is easy to concentrate. It should be away from distractions such as TV or electronic devices and in a well lit area.

Revision itself should reflect the students preference for learning, however variety is important to keep motivation and interest up. Revision techniques that could be used include –

- Flash cards, post its for small pieces of information and facts.
- Using revision guides
- Doodle for re-learning information and using the self marking quizzes
- PiXL Maths, English Literature, Geography or History Apps that are available on mobile devices.
- Mind maps and posters for specific topics.
- Taking notes, rewriting points
- Past exam papers
- Using pictures, poems or stories to help memorise points
- Shared learning with friends, teaching or testing each other

One of the main barriers to success is often attendance. This means lessons and after school sessions are missed. Also, the feeling of being stressed and anxious, although inevitable and a natural response, will need supporting and unpicking, top persevere with how work can be managed and completed, one piece at a time. Students should not compare themselves to others or friends as this creates more pressure and anxiety. Some sacrifices will need to be made such as dealing with the demands on their time from jobs or clubs.



“There is so much to learn”

- Have a revision timetable to organise subjects.
- Divide the day into sessions (morning, afternoon and/or evening).
- Write on the exams and key dates.
- Focus on subject topics. Chunk subjects into manageable sections.
- Have variety in subjects and activities.

“I can’t concentrate”

- Concentration levels do vary for each individual. How long is possible?
- Begin working for short periods. Turn off and remove potential distractions.
- Introduce the idea of rewards and short term goals.

“This is so boring.....”

- Revision is not fun, however it is necessary and can be managed.
- Get actively involved with the materials.
- Use a range of techniques.
- Have variety and specific, achievable goals.

“I like studying in bed”

- Have a quiet place without distractions.
- Insist on no TV, mobile phone, or computer games and no phone calls when revising.
- Ensure a quiet and tidy place, at a table or desk.
- Ensure the room is well lit. Natural light is better than artificial light.
- Quiet music in the background can be useful for some students.

“I can’t remember anything”

- This is a panic cry. We need to encourage a positive attitude and reassure.
- Try to recall information after a revision session with them.
- Use strategies such as charts to jog memories, post-it notes of key terms.

“I don’t understand how to revise”

- Use a range of resources including textbook, revision guides, internet, Apps and notes.
- Examination Boards have guidance and past papers.
- Contact the subject teacher or visit the school website.

TIPS FROM PARENTS



“As a parent, it is never good to get caught up in **arguing about revision**, however frustrated you may get. Try to remain calm and be open to negotiation when it comes to free time/rewards”.

“Don’t try to make your child sit at a table **for hours revising**. It doesn’t work. Encourage short timed sessions of revision. A little and often”

“Encourage them **to talk to you about what they have been doing**. It is good for them to know that you are interested”.

“Help them to **stay calm**. It is always about them trying to do their best, and come away knowing that they have tried their hardest”.

“If you find yourself getting stressed out, **step back**. Ask for support from a family member. Share the worry”.

“Plan a **‘guilt-free’ me time** for them. This will reward revision. Let them enjoy playing on the computer game, watching TV etc.”

“**Organisation. Organisation. Organisation!**”

“Make sure they have a dedicated **study area**. Try to organise work by subjects. Stick the revision timetable up somewhere”.

“Keep in touch with them. **Encourage them every day**.....don’t nag.”