



19 November 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

Year 9 Exam Week 9 -17 December 2019

At the Year 9 Parent Information Evening I talked to parents about the Year 9 Exam Week that will take place in December. As discussed at the Information Evening, from this week all homework will focus on preparation for the exams. We have responded to feedback from parents last year, and teachers have been asked to divide the revision up over three weeks instead of setting all the revision with a deadline of three weeks from now. You will therefore see revision homework appearing each week on Show My Homework.

The expectation is that students do one hour of revision per subject per week. Exams will be sat in English, Maths, Science, Design and Technology, History, Geography, French and Computer Science. In Art, Music and Drama assessments will be of a practical nature and will take place in lesson time. No preparation will be needed at home. In EPiC, students have experienced outside speakers this term while exploring the key issues of prejudice and discrimination. Their written assessment will therefore take place in January. There will be no exam in Life Education.

The aim of the Year 9 Exam Week is to give students the opportunity to develop the organisational and revision skills they will need for their GCSE examinations. It is also an opportunity for us to conduct formal assessments that will inform us about your child's progress.

All the exams will take place in classrooms during lessons and will not last longer than one hour, so your child will be following their normal timetable for the week. This means that students go to their normal timetabled room. If they do not have an exam scheduled at that time, then the lesson will proceed as normal. I am in the process of finalising the exam timetable and your child will bring home a copy of this next week. You will also be able to access a copy on the Year 9 parent section of the school website. The timetable will show you which exams your child has each day. This will help you to guide your child as to what subjects they should be revising each night of the exam period, in preparation for the following day. We had hoped to give students an experience of sitting an exam in the sports hall but this will now happen in the summer term when students will sit one of their regular end-of-module assessments in the sports hall.

Please do not underestimate the impact that your support will have on your child. Remember that this is their revision and their exam and you do not need to be an expert in all the subjects they study. The biggest support you can give will be in helping your child to organise their time. It will be best to revise in blocks of 20 to 30 minutes and to swap between subjects at the end of each block. I have included some more information about supporting with revision on the next page.

If you have any questions about the preparation that is needed, please contact individual subject teachers. I am happy to forward your emails to teachers if you specify the name of the teacher you wish to contact. The name of each teacher will be shown on your child's timetable.

Yours sincerely

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DIRECTOR OF LEARNING FOR YEARS 7-9

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Year 9 exam revision – some basic things to consider

Talk to your child about the exams to ensure that they know the purpose of the exams. There needs to be a balance between taking the exam preparation seriously although not thinking that the rest of your school career depends on the Year 9 exams.

All parents will struggle to find the time to give their child as much support with revision as they would like, but any time you can give will make a difference. Revising for exams can be a cause of stress in the home and your child may not initially appreciate that you are on their side and all you want to do is support them, but don't give up. Be patient and try to establish routines and rules that will support good learning at home. Showing an interest in what they are doing and helping them to plan when they are going to do their work will have an impact.

Ask your child to explain what they are learning to you. The process your child will go through to explain something will make them think in depth about the topic OR it will highlight for them that they do not understand as well as they thought and still have learning to do.

Work out where your son / daughter works best

For some students this will be a quiet study area in their bedroom but for others it could be the kitchen or dining room table. Some children will work better if they are not isolated from the rest of the family, but are somewhere where you can keep an eye on them and ensure that they are progressing through the work and are on hand to answer any questions or give advice. If the use of a computer or laptop is required for revision and other family members also need to use this, ensure that time is allocated fairly to avoid any additional stress. Students can use the computers in the school library after school and this is an option if you do not have computer access at home.

Avoid distractions such as the television and mobile phones

Encourage other family members to be quiet, especially youngsters. Ensure that your child's mobile phone is in a different room to their revision place. Although your child can respond to a message faster than you can blink, the constant distraction will only result in it taking longer to revise a topic. It is really important to establish some rules at home that will form the basis of effective revision in Years 10 and 11. Students will be told that they must not have their phone with them when revising, so this will not come as a shock to them.

Help your child on the route towards independence

One potential reason for a poor performance in an exam is lack of preparation stemming from a lack of organisation. All the revision instructions and resources will be on SMHW. A little time invested in ensuring that your child has fully understood the instructions and knows how to tackle the revision will help them to settle quickly. This will stop your child becoming stressed about the task and wasting time just deciding how to get started. Check on your child's progress with the task after 10 minutes. It is unlikely that you can always be home when your child is revising and it is therefore important to establish an agreed time when revision will be done. Help your child to make a revision timetable for each week on which they commit to which subjects they will revise each day. It is better to revise subjects in small chunks rather than for an hour at a time. For most students 25 minutes will be enough before a break is needed. It is best to revise little and often and to spread the revision for each subject out over a week. Aim for one hour revision per night covering two subjects.