

Dear Parents/Carers

As we finish for February half term, I wanted to write to you to update you on the advice we have given to your son/daughter on revision strategies and using their time wisely over February half term to prepare for the summer exams. All students have been given feedback from their teachers about what they need to revise and how to revise. I have attached a copy of the information that was sent to you and given to students before the mock exams, it contains ideas and guidance for effective revision. At Balshaw's we are committed to supporting all our students in achieving their full potential during the upcoming exams. We understand that this can be a stressful time for both students and parents, and we want to assure you that we are here to help every step of the way.

The points below are a summary of our top tips to help you support your child to prepare for their summer exams. We encourage you to explore this information with your child and to discuss the different revision materials that are available to them.

- Help your child create a realistic and achievable revision timetable that they can stick to. You will find further guidance how to do this at the end of this letter and in the attached booklet.
- Provide a quiet and distraction-free study space, this will help your child focus on their studies and avoid interruptions.
- Encourage regular breaks. It is important for students to take regular breaks to avoid burnout. Encourage them to get up and move around every 30-60 minutes. The benefits of exercise on revision are well documented – improved memory, clear heads and lots of endorphins released to increase energy. Make sure they are giving their brains a rest and space to breathe. Encourage your child to use their breaks to exercise and get some fresh air.
- Offer support and encouragement. Let your child know that you are there for them and that you believe in them. Your positive support can make a big difference to their motivation and confidence.
- Communicate with your child's teachers. If you have any concerns about your child's progress, please do not hesitate to contact their teachers. They are always happy to provide additional support and guidance when in school.
- Make sure that they are hydrated and have healthy snacks available. Help and encourage them to choose healthy foods to eat during study breaks. The quality of what they eat will dictate their output.
- Encourage them to talk to you about what they have revised and help them by asking to test them on what they have revised.
- Ensure they have a balanced routine. As well as planning and starting their revision over February half term, do make sure they get some downtime and take part in social and leisure activities to avoid an overload of revision.
- Support them to establish and keep a strong routine of sleep with at least of eight hours a night. Sleep is a powerful tool for committing what they have learnt in the day to memory. It also helps improve cognitive memory. Following a good night's sleep students will feel more motivated.

Students have been asked to prepare their own revision timetable which will help them to organise their time over February half term and in the second half of spring term. You can help your son/daughter to do this using the tips below:

1. Family and friend time - what are your 'can't move' social commitments over the holiday? Blank these out, be realistic do they take an entire day? If you are going out for the day, could you take a revision book to read in the car or on the train?
2. Now slot into your timetable breaks, lunch, evening meals and other commitments such as training and music lessons; identify **WHEN** you will revise. Be realistic.

3. Make a list of the work you have been set to complete for home learning that you **MUST** get done. Give each piece a time allocation. Slot this into your timetable first; try to schedule as much as possible early on, so you have a feeling of achievement.
4. List all your GCSE subjects. Use the topic checklists given to you by your teachers to highlight areas that you find more difficult and will need to spend more time revising. Prioritise!! Which topics are you struggling with the most? These are your top priority; you will need to spend more time on these areas. Now write all the subjects on your timetable when you plan to revise them.
5. Make sure you give yourself rest breaks after each hour slot; you are freshest in the morning so can you squeeze in a revision block first thing? Try to re-test yourself on an evening.
6. On your topic lists write how you plan to revise them, e.g., Seneca, GCSEPod, revision book, Dr Frost/Century Tech, 1 hour on a topic with worked examples, completing exam paper questions, poems 20 minutes each morning on a poem etc. Consider your mock exam feedback - revise the content you could not remember in the mock exams, redraft the answers you got wrong. You learn more effectively when you are revising actively - reducing notes, attempting questions, testing yourself, quizzing with flash cards, recalling information in mind maps etc. Different revision strategies are described in the attached booklet.
7. Peer revision – teach each other. Which topics would you benefit revising with a friend? Can you book them in to help you? Add these times to your timetable.
8. Reward yourself! After the first hour of work in a morning, have a snack. Once you have done a couple of hours watch some television or go for a walk.
9. Tick off work on your topic lists as you revise it. You could RAG rate it (Red = needs more revision, Amber = needs a little more revision, Green = very confident). This gives you a sense of achievement and will help to persuade family that you are on track! Keep a running list of questions you need to ask your teachers for help with.
10. Finally, work out **WHERE** you will revise – bedroom at a desk, dining room or kitchen table. Ideally somewhere away from your mobile phone and distractions, make sure you have room to spread out, and lots of paper. Make sure your family know when you are revising; stick your chart up on the fridge and encourage others to test you! Explain to them what you have been learning – this helps you to understand topics too.

There is a booklet on our website <https://www.balshaws.org.uk/parents-portal/revision-resources-and-support> where you will find blank templates for your child to use to create their revision timetable.

We believe that by working together, we can help our Year 11 students achieve their exam goals. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

Mrs S Thomasson

Assistant Headteacher