

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH THEIR GCSE EXAMS

There is no correct way to parent during exams, pick out a few ideas that you feel could work for you and your child.

The GCSE exam period can be one of the most stressful periods in a person's life. We hope to help you understand how you can support your child in the build-up to this important time.

In school, we will be working on exam preparation, skills, and techniques over the coming months. We will be preparing students for examinations,

teaching them everything they need to know about:

- What they need to know for their exams in each subject
- When to start preparing for the exams
- How to get started in these preparations
- How to produce a revision timetable
- How to revise
- How to manage themselves during the exam period

Our aim is to build upon the skills they have been developing from Year 7. Ultimately this should result in students being more fully equipped with the skills, techniques, and knowledge to manage the exam periods effectively, with the support of the staff here at school and their friends and family. This leaflet has been designed for you as parents and carers to support your child at home.

Success in exams is a team effort which involves you, the school and your child working together:

“The more parents are engaged in the education of their children, the more likely their children are to succeed in the education system. School improvement and school effectiveness research consistently shows that parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement.”

(DFE Research Report 156, September 2011)

The single most effective thing you can do to ensure good exam results for your child is to...

GET YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL EVERY SINGLE DAY, ON TIME

95% is considered good attendance by most people, however, this actually causes your child to be at risk of serious underachievement:

95% attendance = **half a day** of lessons missed every two weeks

95% attendance = **two weeks** of lessons missed per year

This is equivalent to almost a **whole year** of lessons in one GCSE subject!

What are we doing at school?

This year's Y11 Intervention Package includes:

- Morning form time is dedicated to developing key study skills as well as
- Some Core PE and Personal Development lessons have been dropped since March and replaced with additional personalised intervention lessons in English, Maths, Science, Child Development, Music, Computer Science, Business Studies, PE, amongst others.
- There has been a weekly Academic Enrichment Programme for students to attend after school each day in all subject areas.
- Extended Form time in April has meant some additional focus in English and History.
- At February Half Term and Easter break school was open on certain days for revision days led by staff.

What can you do at home?

At home you play many roles: the cheerleader, counsellor, motivator, coach, project manager, supplies manager! But during exam periods this can be as stressful for you and your family, as for your child who is sitting the exam. One of the most important roles is to make home life as calm and supportive as possible. We do not expect you to know the exam system and be a teacher of every subject your child studies, but your input will make a huge difference.

The purpose behind this leaflet is to give you some support and guidance on what you may be able to do at home during this time. Some of the suggestions we offer may not suit you, your family, or your child. Pick out a few ideas that you think might work and give them a go.

How to help motivate your child

One of the most important things you can do to help your child is keeping them motivated.

You can do this by:

Taking an interest:

How is it going? How do you feel? Keep them feeling positive by reminding them what they can do well.

Remind them about why they are doing it:

Personal achievement, future career, college, or apprenticeships...

Incentive and rewards:

A big debate in itself! For some students the above bullet point is enough however, some children respond well to other incentives, and it doesn't have to be financial! Time spent with family or friends.

Discuss target grades with them:

Ensure that their expectations are realistic. You can always discuss this with your child's teachers at school if unsure.

During the exams – survival guide!

Parents, don't worry about the small stuff!

Try to reduce stress levels by considering an amnesty in the build-up to and during the exams. Bedrooms may be messier and chores not done, their behaviour maybe challenging, but pick your battles carefully. There will be time to bring these issues up, just not now!

Make time for your child to exercise.

Physical exercise releases endorphins – the body's natural mood lifter. This helps to clear their mind and take them out of the exam pressure cooker. Parents can play a vital role in encouraging and making exercise possible.

You get out what you put in!

Along with exercise to help keep your child out of an eat-sleep-study-repeat cycle, play your part in terms of maintaining a good diet and chill out time.

What do you expect?

Parents naturally want their children to do well in exams through school and further education. That is completely natural. Most children place enough pressure upon themselves during study and exam preparation to make that outcome a reality. Additional expectations, demands or pressure can end up being more damaging than useful.

Helping with revision

As a parent this can be tricky, as often you are told you are nagging, and it can lead to a confrontation you didn't want. A good tip here is to talk with your child and ask them how you can support them and what they might find helpful.

It is always better for your child to have a revision plan/timetable and we will show them at school how to complete this. They are good for helping your child get the balance between revision and leisure time, but also ensure some revision gets done.

Support them by sticking the plan somewhere key, encourage them to stick to it, but be flexible if something special comes along! You should find that their plan should change during term time and then in the holidays. For those of you with a child in Year 11, expect the plan to change weekly as their revision needs change. When studying at home they need a permanent, quiet, well-lit place to study with very few interruptions or distractions - ideally an area with a desk/table.

Revision strategies

We have had many queries over the years about what your child's revision should look like and it is a difficult question to answer. Every child revises differently but the only suggestion we would give is that normally reading over books is not very effective. We will be showing your child lots of revision techniques, all of them you will get a copy of so that you can support them with ideas on how to revise. The key is that revision should be in short bursts depending on the age of your child and should last between 10-30 minutes per topic, then test themselves (5 minutes) and then rest for 5 minutes before starting the process again with another topic in a different subject area. Short breaks are essential to keep their concentration levels high.

"Try and keep things in perspective - your child may not be doing things the way you would do them, or as often as you would like, but they are doing the best they can in the way that works for them."

Provide favourite snacks and water for revision periods.

Tips for those with a reluctant child

Keep an interest in what they are doing: what can you do to help and support them.

Encourage them to attend the extra revision sessions that are put on at school or speak with their teacher about specific topics they maybe finding a challenge.

Offer to help test them at the end of a revision session.

Please contact us at school if you are concerned.



Coping with exam stress in a nutshell!

- Have realistic expectations and don't push them too hard.
- Be constructive and positive.
- Encourage good sleep patterns and eating habits.
- Provide a quiet space for them to study and prepare.
- Teach them the importance of study breaks.
- If you hear a constant 'ping' when they are studying, it's time to intervene.
- TV or no TV? Under no circumstances should a child revise in front of the TV - only exception if they are watching a revision video!
- Encourage them to ask the teacher questions if they're unsure.
- Help them know what to expect on the day of the exam.
- Help them be on time for the exam or arrive early.
- Don't compare with your child's siblings or friends.
- After the exam, listen to their concerns and avoid criticising them.

Useful places for further help or information

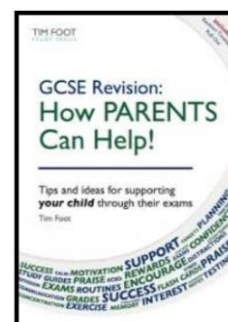
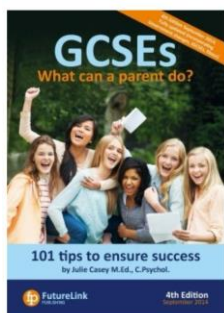
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zckydxs>

<https://getrevising.co.uk/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-exam-stress/>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/exam-stress/>

<https://www.thespark.org.uk/tips-for-parents-during-exams/>



Useful contacts in school

For queries relating to specific lessons, please contact the class teacher in the first instance.

For other queries relating to courses or exams, please contact:

- **Mrs Deakin** Deputy Headteacher, Quality of Education

For queries relating to intervention, please contact:

- **Mr Atkinson** Associate Assistant Headteacher, Curriculum and Intervention

For queries relating to behavioural or safeguarding concerns, please contact:

- **Mr Varey** Deputy Headteacher, Culture and Values
- **Mrs Entwistle** Assistant Headteacher, Behaviour

For any other pastoral concerns, please contact your child's form tutor or Head of House:

- **Miss McKay** Associate Assistant Headteacher (Activation House)
- **Mrs Adams** Associate Assistant Headteacher (Imagination House)
- **Mr Scholes** Associate Assistant Headteacher (Innovation House)
- **Mrs Hesketh** Associate Assistant Headteacher (Communication House)

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ACHIEVE SUCCESS

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