

Reading School



KS4

Top Tips for Parents

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How to support your son in achieving at the highest level

Following the Expectations Evening, delivered in October to parents of boys in Year 10, the following has been compiled by each Head of Department as a guide to parents to assist with learning at home. The students will of course be set specific tasks for homework but to ensure success we support the notion of 'going above and beyond'. The suggestions here are not compulsory, but may be helpful in signalling extension work in any given subject, as well as reiterating the things we encourage at school. We hope you will find this useful.

Miss J. M. Capon

Head of KS4

Art

- Allow plenty of time and space in your home.
- Provide all required materials.
- Appreciate and understand the level of your son's artistic ability. Know their limitations and support them.
- Encourage visits to museums, galleries and exhibitions.
- Always carry a camera or notepad and keep notes on work and artists they find stimulating for future inspiration, especially whilst on holiday or unusual places
- Encourage them to make notes of ideas they have for work they could produce on an accessible device or notebook, they should keep this handy at all times even by their bed.
- Help them to become aware of the visual world around them. This includes advertisements, architecture, natural world, games etc. Regularly look through art books and subscribe to free design websites and magazines.
- Encourage working with their peers and discussing topics they are working on.
- Cultivate independence and thinking skills.
- Remember Art is a labour intensive subject and not for the weak willed.

Biology

- Download a copy of the specification from the OCR website or from SharePoint and encourage your sons to find the key points to learn and to check that they have covered the whole topic. They will need to use the topic number guide to find the sections to look in. They need to underline what they know and revise what they do not know. They should do this at the end of every topic.
- Encourage sons to make key word lists for a topic, check that they know what they mean and write sentences using them.

- Ensure that they fully understand and have learnt the topics covered at KS3 so they can build on them.
- Support them in making diagrams that link basic ideas to their applications – keep building on these as they discover new links.
- Remind them that when they write answers to use the key words and try to write 'bullet point' statements matching the number of statements to the value of the question.
- Help them to learn by applying knowledge and not by rote learning.
- Don't encourage them to learn ahead as this can prevent them from working things out from fundamental principles – they should learn and consolidate what they have been taught.
- Read the Gateway book at the end of a topic and make sure that their notes have covered everything in it.
- Buy a traditional Biology textbook (or borrow one from school) and read topics holistically to confirm that they have a full understanding.
- Avoid the use of revision books until the very end of the course.
- In the spring term your sons should begin to use the past papers and mark schemes on SharePoint and the OCR website. They should keep the latest papers until last. (Paper copies are also available.)
- If they need help - Biology clinic is run every Friday lunchtime in B3. Alternatively they should ask their teacher.

Chemistry

- Boys should join Chemnet. This is a very useful student membership of the Royal Society of Chemistry.
- Visits to The Science Museum in London can be useful as inspiration.
- Encourage your sons to become familiar with the Periodic Table (to calcium). This information is easily found on the internet.
- Encourage them to download past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports from the relevant exam board web sites and use these for revision.

- Ensure they have key vocabulary lists and know how to use these words in context.
- Encourage them to keep up to date with their notes and class work, catching up if they are absent, and keeping all sheets in the relevant places in their exercise books.
- Tell them to ask for help if they do not understand a topic, or talk to them about what they are confused about – verbalising issues often helps students to resolve any misunderstanding.
- Encourage them to set up a study group with their friends, or make flash cards for key topics that they can test each other with.

Computer Science

- Read more than one text book.
- Complete past papers and look on the exam board web site for mark schemes and examiners' reports.
- Read the specification and highlight what they don't understand.
- Encourage your sons to ask their friends for support, in addition to teachers and parents.
- Encourage your sons to hand in their work and seek feedback.
- Encourage them to be motivated and have ambition.
- Encourage them to ask themselves - Do they really understand this? If the answer is no then they need to take action.

Drama

- Read your son's essays through. Do they make sense and can you visualise what is written? If so, it is a good essay, if it is confusing it needs refining.
- See as much live theatre as possible.
- Research the period or genre of the practical work undertaken to help understand the characters and the situation.
- Help your son learn his lines by reading the extract aloud with him.
- Look at the mark schemes with your son to familiarise yourself with the demands of the examination.
- Encourage wider reading around the subject, for example looking at 'Stanislawski and the Actor' by Jean Benedetti.

Economics

- Promote resilience; students will need to develop an increasing ability to recover from setbacks. Encourage them to review their own work in the light of feedback given so they can improve.
- Promote regular revision, using their folders and textbooks; our very top performers do not 'end-load' revision into the last few weeks of study before the exams.
- Encourage bespoke learning, by making sure they make best use of their time to produce exceptional notes; they should see their folders as their main revision resource and not rely on commercially produced resources to support learning. Get them to show you the resources that are available on SharePoint and encourage them to post questions on the discussion boards coming up to exams.
- Do not rely solely on off-the-shelf products to support learning.
- Promote independent enquiry and research; do not do homework for him.
- Encourage regular discussion about what they are learning in Economics. Ask about class discussions - their thoughts and contributions.
- Encourage an interest in current affairs and develop increasing financial awareness.

English

- Ensure your sons have read the entire texts they are being examined on.
- Buy good quality study guides to support their revision.
- Warn them against web sites that give essay answers – these can be very variable in quality and encourage plagiarism.
- Read some poetry with them and then discuss it to help with their unseen poetry analysis.
- Correct sloppy speech – they should be speaking like writers.
- Encourage them to write letters to friends and family in a formal style rather than just text messages or emails.
- Comment on language use or tone / atmosphere in TV or films you watch together.
- Ask them to give evidence and explain – HOW? or WHY? when they are discussing topics/issues.
- Encourage your sons to read a hard copy of a newspaper, magazine, or subscribe to an online newspaper (Times, Guardian), on at least a weekly basis.
- Research, reading and experiences around the curriculum will help them engage: take them to theatre productions of plays they are studying; go to exhibitions related to the topic (for example the current British Library Gothic exhibition); watch film adaptations of texts for study and by the same author.
- Read the examined texts yourself so you can discuss themes and characters.
- Know when controlled assessment and unit exam dates are, and support your son's plans working towards those dates.
- Don't let them stay up until the early hours playing computer games and using Facebook.
- Be the audience when your son rehearses his speaking and listening assessment and offer helpful advice.
- Know the specification yourself and how to access the exam board website and mark schemes to do practice with your son.

French and Spanish

- Encourage your sons to learn vocabulary on a regular basis (essential for a two year course for the listening and reading papers at the end of Y11)
- Help them to be organised. Anything given to your son by the teacher has a purpose when it comes to the preparation of controlled assessments.
- Check that your son can reuse sentences, vocab and structures seen in class to extend their work.
- Encourage them to make good use of the preparation time given in class for Controlled Assessments and encourage them to make use of the lunch time clinics available to prepare for speaking tests.
- Be resourceful: Encourage your son to ask their friends, look in the dictionary, look at French websites, look at French films.
- Tell them to always dedicate time to check through work (homework as well as work produced in class should be checked) it will boost their accuracy.
- Tell them to act upon the feedback given by the teacher for homework tasks and after every formal assessment. Tell them not to make the same mistakes again.
- Ensure your son plans his work (writing especially).
- Ensure regular practice, both in class and alone, for speaking assessments.
- Encourage them to strive to extend work using grammar and complex structures and avoid repetition.

Geography

- Know that all lessons are on SharePoint and that if a student misses a lesson for any reason they must catch up using SharePoint (this is assumed by the department), there are usually questions in the end of unit test on each of the lessons.
- Ask the boys at which level they are currently working at in Geography and, based on their feedback in preps, what they need to do even better if they are to move up a grade.

- Ensure your son follows the mark scheme closely for any extended preps set, as this is what will be used to mark homework.
- Talk to your son about what they are doing in Geography and engage in a conversation with them, play devil's advocate to help extend the learning of your son.
- Discuss current affairs and how these things can impact people in differing parts of the world.

German

- Grammar revision with BBC Bitesize, languages online, revision guides and the “GCSE German – Grammar Workbook” – ISBN 978 019013891 3
- Help them build their vocabulary: use Quizlet (type: IGCSE – German + topic). There are many good lists there.
- Encourage them to look at the vocabulary in their text book and/or Core Vocabulary lists on SharePoint (IGCSE – Vocab).
- There are many resources on SharePoint including various tips about different skills.
- Look at IGCSE (exam board cie, code 5025) exam papers. Encourage them to complete reading and writing practice papers. When they do them, they should write out all of the vocabulary they didn't know and learn it.
- Tell them to complete practice writing tests and hand in to their teacher to be assessed. Sample writing tasks are on SharePoint. Even looking at the tasks and understanding the prompts would be helpful.
- Remind them that before a writing paper: SharePoint – Writing – Last day revision sheets. They made a huge difference last year – know 10 verbs in different tenses.
- Make sure they have a list of adverbs and opinion phrases ready for use. They will be good for speaking and writing.
- Remind them of the range of grammar they can use for a top quality piece of writing.

History

- Read through your son's exam-style answers to check for coherence, grammar and evidence.
- Read around the subject - the library has a wide range of appropriate magazines that will massively widen your son's knowledge.
- Look out for TV programmes on the topics we study, to help students visualise the history they learn about.
- Download and play podcasts on the topics we study to play in the car or in the house.
- Visit museums, like the Imperial War Museum, that will cover lots of areas we study.
- Regularly type key events/people into 'Google News' to see what new and interesting evidence and interpretations are appearing, or how the modern media relates their events and people to contemporary issues.
- When your son tackles an exam-style question, ask them to focus on one aspect that they can show you is better than their last effort.
- Borrow another textbook, that isn't completely based on our curriculum, to cross-reference.

Maths

- For GCSE and Add Mathematics the best tip for parents is to ask them to ensure that their son is completing preps set. There will be two preps a week, and as the course progresses they are likely to take the form of past papers. If parents can help boys to be organised and plan when they do these, ensure they are handed in on time, the boys will then get the feedback from us that will help sort out any difficulties.
- Maths clinics are available if your son needs any further support.

Physics

- Encourage your sons to look up the exam specification and print off past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- Ensure they have up to date notes on all topics and are checking their understanding of each, before they move on.
- If they don't understand something they should ask for help from their teacher before going on line, or buying support materials.
- High quality revision guides can be used to support revision.
- Talk to your son about their learning – if they can explain it clearly to you then they should understand it – if they can't explain it then they need to go over the topic again.
- Ensure they have key vocabulary lists and understand what these words mean in context.
- Take them to The Science Museum, or to relevant scientific events to inspire them.
- Ensure that preps are completed on time and that they have been given feedback on how to improve.
- Keep all sheets and resources in their exercise books, clearly labelled and stuck in to help them when they come to revise.

Physical Education

- Promote a healthy and active lifestyle -You can help your son to meet the overall objective of the Physical Education department by encouraging them to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. This can come in many forms, such as ensuring that they eat a well-balanced diet, take part in regular exercise and maintain good personal hygiene.
- Encourage your son to find a physical activity they enjoy - Whilst we do our utmost at the school to provide a broad range of activities for your son to experience, there are many we cannot simply offer. Find out if your son has any particular interest, maybe take them to see a sporting event or attend a local club to take part in recreational physical activities.

- Take part in extra-curricular sporting activities - Encourage your son to take part in at least one school sporting extra-curricular club or house competition. This will have a dramatic impact on their curriculum performance, help ensure they are leading a healthy lifestyle and provide a recreational outlet for the stresses and strains that full time education entails. It is essential for GCSE PE that you son is involved in competitive sport outside of school time to ensure the best possible practical grade.
- Get involved yourself - As a parent there are many ways that you can encourage your son to gain a positive experience through sport. One such way is for you to become involved in the sporting establishment. Many parents at school help out on fixture day by organising the post-match teas, fundraising for charity or even just attending the fixture as a supporter can help your son to be more involved in school or club sport.
- Support your local club -If your son enjoys playing a sport for the school, then they would probably enjoy representing their local club as well. This would add to their performance level by allowing them a greater opportunity to play and train in that sport as well as make new friends outside of school.
- Plan a day trip to a sporting institute - Gaining a clearer idea of how physical activity and sport is managed at an elite level can help support the theoretical and practical side of both Core and GCSE PE. A day trip to Bisham Abbey, Bath University Sports Science, St. George's Park or an international stadium can add a depth to the knowledge they are gaining within lessons.
- Observing and analysing the game - Sit down and watch a sporting event on TV together or go and see one live. After watching the game try to analyse the performance specifically talking about the technical, tactical, physical and psychological factors that may of influenced the game. Try to use www.ebi (what went well and even better if) with regards to a team or players performance. This will dramatically help to improve his understanding within core and GCSE PE.
- Encourage to read beyond the syllabus -Reading newspapers, magazine articles and books especially autobiographies that look at health, activity, sports and the role of sports science in developing performance will help your son have a better understanding of both the practical and theoretical sides to PE. If you come across any interesting articles then share them with your son and engage him in discussion about them over dinner or in the car. Talking regular about the subject well help your son solidify his knowledge and help him form opinions.
- Keep a Glossary of Terms and Definitions - Encourage your son to keep a glossary of terms and definitions. Success in theory side of GCSE PE

requires knowledge of these terms and conditions. A glossary will allow your son to easily find them from his notes, and help in his revision.

- Recap notes via testing - It has been shown that regular reading of class notes is not an effective method of long term learning. The theory side of GCSE PE has a lot of knowledge; the best way to place this knowledge in the long term memory is through regular testing. 10 to 15 minutes a day of testing knowledge will have a huge impact on your son's performance during examinations. Try to find fun and regular ways to test his knowledge at home.

Religious Studies

- The key to getting an A* is the quality of argument on extended answers. Your sons should practice justifying their point of view and "playing devil's advocate." The best marks are given to candidates who can articulate both sides of each argument.
- Arguments without facts are useless, so they need to use a combination of www.rsvle.com and the textbook when revising. This will help develop a depth of precise and focused knowledge.
- They need to remember key quotes from philosophers for each Philosophy unit, and key Bible quotes and Church perspectives for each Ethics unit. These are the details which help make the best answers stand out from the crowd.
- There is a wealth of practice "six mark" questions in each text book and all past questions (and mark schemes) will be available from February at www.rsvle.com. Boys should try to answer the most difficult of these as a standard revision tactic. One per week from March will ensure that there are no surprises for them in the exam.
- Read the examiner's comments at the front of the Year 11 Revision Guide (www.rsvle.com). These tell you precisely how candidates in previous years could've improved.

Notes
