



**YEAR 11
EXAMINATION GUIDE
FOR PARENTS**

WELCOME

The Deanes Promise#5 recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers to secure the best possible outcomes for our students. The next few months represent a crucial stage of your child's education. GCSE examinations are imminent, and it is key that all parties work together to maximise student success.

In this booklet you will find:

- Advice on creating and sticking to a revision timetable
- Examples and suggestions of revision strategies that students could use
- A detailed breakdown of the revision topics in each of our GCSE courses, including suggested revision sites, specification details and links should you wish to purchase revision guides.

We hope that students and parents/carers will make good use of the advice in this booklet leading up to and during the 2023 examination period.

To support your child, we are offering several after school and lunchtime revision sessions; these are listed at the end of this guide for your information. We are fortunate to have dedicated staff that are willing to give their time to run these sessions and I would strongly advise students to take advantage of these opportunities. Students are also provided with this information separately.

Your support, encouragement and interest at home can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the GCSE examinations. The good news is that you don't need to be an expert in any of the subjects your child chooses to make a real difference.

Success in GCSE examinations is about preparation, starting revision early and hard work from start to finish. The first step is for the student to plan a revision schedule, so they can prioritise what they are going to focus on. Students are provided with their own booklet and revision timetable templates to guide them through this process for their main subjects.

One of the hardest demands on students is that of understanding the importance of doing their best and learning to defer immediate gratification in the interest of long-term benefits (not easy, even for adults). Students will also differ in their levels of maturity, their ability to take responsibility for their learning, organisational skills and levels of motivation.

We hope this guide is useful to you. It is offered with the best intentions to support you and your child. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further support or advice during this important period. I wish your child the best of luck in their examinations and look forward to celebrating their successes on results day!

MISS A CLANCY

ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER/HEAD OF YEAR 11

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S REVISION

1. GETTING THEM IN THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

The prospect of GCSE exams is very stressful for some students. Many with high exam anxiety can't stop worrying about failing or the consequences of failing. For instance, 'If I fail my GCSEs my whole life will be a failure'. These types of beliefs focus on what you can't do rather than what you can. To counteract this, try the following:

- Be unerringly positive: repeatedly focusing on the positive, emphasising belief that the student's will be successful.
- Don't join in the anxiety - even if you feel it! Try to remain calm and positive.
- Breathing slowly and deeply will help you calm down and feel in control.

2. PLANNING REVISION

Students have suggested revision plans for English, Maths, Science, Geography, History and Languages. These are also available on our school website. In addition, we have enclosed details of revision sessions that will be running over the next few months. It is crucial that students start revising early and draw up a revision plan and timetable to make sure they cover all topics in plenty of time, avoiding any last-minute panic.

Blank templates are available for download from the school website under the student tab. Your child's form tutor will help your child complete these templates using the suggested revision plans each week. You can help by asking about these and supporting them in sticking to their plan at home.

3. HOW TO REVISE

Many students fall into the trap of 'revising' by reading through notes while watching TV. To revise effectively, students need a calm, peaceful environment. A little light background music can be conducive for concentration; however, mobile phones, TV and loud music have been shown to have a negative impact.

All students are individuals, and many often find their own preferred style of revision. However, just reading through notes has been shown to be highly ineffective.

Students need to process and interact with the information in order to maximise retention. A quick internet search reveals that there are lots of methods. On the next following pages are details of just a few.

Retrieval



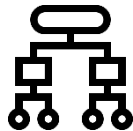
Brain dump

Choose a topic and write down as much as you can remember, without referring to your notes. Check your notes and see what you missed then try to fill the gaps without the notes. Check your notes a third time and add the missing information.



Flash cards

Write flashcards for each topic, in all subjects, then mix them up for the most effective revision. Check out the Leitner System for effective spacing and interleaving. Keep your flashcards simple – one question, one answer per card.



Map it out

Take an essay question or writing question and map out your answer, without writing a full response. Look at the mark scheme and decide if your plan meets the criteria. Do this for a number of questions, then choose one and write the full response.



Past papers

Ask your teacher for practice questions or exam papers. Complete them without notes in exam conditions, then check your answers and identify the gaps in your knowledge, so you can target your revision.



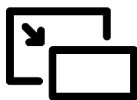
Quizzes

Write a set of questions and answers and ask someone else to test you. It's important to either write or say your answers aloud. Reading through quizzes in your head can give you a false sense of security.



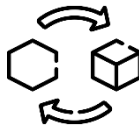
Practise introductions

For essay subjects, take a past exam question and practise writing effective introductions and conclusions. Look back at your notes and remind yourself of the important things to remember. Practise for different topics, texts and papers.



Thinking hard: reduce

Read a section of your notes then put them aside and reduce what you read to 3 bullet points, each one no more than 10 words. Look back at the notes and decide if you missed anything important. Hide the notes and write a fourth bullet point.



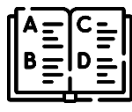
Thinking hard: transform

Read a paragraph from your notes or a text book and transform it into a diagram, chart or sketch – no words allowed. Look at a diagram in Science, for example, and transform it into a paragraph of explanation.



Thinking hard: connect

For each subject, consider the exam papers and group together questions that require the same technique to answer. Write down the requirements of each type. Find a previous example you've completed and identify where you've met



Key vocabulary

For a particular topic, make a list of key vocabulary, then do the following: define each word; use each term in a sentence; create a question where the key word is the answer; identify other words which connect to each of the words in your

5 Step Study Plan

It's never too late to plan your revision!

This simple plan from @KateJones_teach & @Inner_Drive is a great place to start. 



Make a list

What do you need to know? Break it down into topics and units. When you can retrieve it without effort, cross it off the list. It might help with motivation and organisation to have a 'to do' and 'have done' list.



Timetable a spaced schedule

Look back at the notes about spacing and interleaving. Study each topic little and often and mix up subjects and topics so you are revising a mixture each day. Be sure to leave yourself enough time to cover everything.



Use effective study strategies

That's what this booklet is all about. Keep re-reading and highlighting to a minimum. Highlight what you need to learn – but that won't make you learn it. Test yourself, using retrieval strategies. Think twice before loading up your favourite playlist!



Identify the gaps in your knowledge

Having used the retrieval strategies, where are the gaps? What are you confident with? What do you need to go back to? What do you need to study more? Be honest with yourself – don't just focus on what you *do* know.



Close the gaps

Repeat the third and fourth steps of the plan until you are confident with everything. Some parts will be difficult, but don't give up. The harder you have to think, the more likely you are to remember in the end. 'Memory is the residue of thought.' (*Dan Willingham*)

4. MAKE SURE THEY GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Young people need between 8 – 9 hours sleep per night. Help your child create a relaxing evening routine by making sure they don't eat too late and ensuring they avoid caffeine or sugary drinks late at night. Make sure they don't work or revise too late before going to bed and encourage them to switch off from social media / technology at least an hour before bedtime.

5. EAT HEALTHILY

A common mistake many make during this crucial period is to eat poorly and unhealthily. Junk food, lots of chocolate, energy drinks and crisps are often eaten in place of normal meals to "keep energy levels up". However, this is not only harmful to long-term health, but can also negatively affect exam performance.

Eating the right food and drink will provide appropriate energy, improve alertness and sustain your child through the long exams. Here are some tips:

- Plan your family meals for the week – breakfast, snacks, lunches and evening meals
- Carry out a weekly food shop and make sure you write a list
- Avoid high sugary and fatty foods or drinks
- Aim to eat clean, fresh and healthy foods
- Have a couple of 'treat' meals / or meals out per week
- Encourage your child to eat breakfast everyday
- Hydration is key to brain functioning so make sure your child carries a bottle of water with them.

6. BELIEVE IN YOUR CHILD

Always give your child positive reinforcement. It is important to boost their confidence daily.

Celebrate any successes and reward them e.g. if they have achieved their mini-goals. Our children will not want to disappoint us, so do not set your expectations too high, but show them how proud you are of them. Highlight things to make them feel good and give them the belief in themselves to help them achieve.

At this stressful time be a good listener and be approachable. Encourage your child to take breaks in between revision and show some understanding of what they are going through. Help them deal with their emotions and feelings. The most important thing you can do is to be there for them!

COMMON STUDENT STATEMENTS – TRUE OR FALSE

“I have no work to do” – False – There is plenty of revision to be getting on with for each subject. If in doubt, check the suggested revision schedule at the end of this booklet.

“I need regular breaks” – True – Revision is much more effective when done in intense bursts with short breaks in between.

“No one else has started revising yet” – False – Some students started their exam preparation before Christmas.

“I need time away from studies to relax” – True – Students need to stay relaxed in order to be receptive to revision. Some time spent doing sports and hobbies can be helpful.

“I can revise and watch TV” – False – Studies have shown that trying to revise while following a TV programme is very unsuccessful. Quiet background music can be helpful, but loud music and screens make revision ineffective.

“Revision is just reading over your notes” – False – Just reading notes is an ineffective way to revise. To make the information stick the mind needs to process the information and make links.

“It’s too early to start revising” – False – It’s never too early. Starting early will allow you to get through all the material in plenty of time avoiding last minute panic!

WHAT CAN PARENTS/CARERS DO TO HELP?

- Help your child to get in the right frame of mind
- Be ready for stress – stay calm and help them deal with it
- Help your child plan revision
- Agree a reasonable revision programme and help them stick to it
- Provide a quiet calm environment for them to revise in
- Provide plenty of food and drink, treats and rewards
- Provide resources – revision guides / stationery / past exam papers and mark schemes (students have already been provided with a study pack which included revision cards, a pad and highlighter, their teachers will also provide a variety of resources to support their revision)
- Be overwhelmingly positive

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO TO HELP THEMSELVES?

- Maximise their attendance
- If in doubt over illness – get to school
- Be punctual - late arrivals miss key lesson starters
- Attend as many revision sessions as possible - exam tips from teachers can make all the difference
- Revise at home
- Make a reasonable revision programme and stick to it
- Take responsibility for their own success

KEY TASKS

ON THE DAY BEFORE THE EXAM – FOR STUDENTS

- Make sure you know your timetable
- Get there early – don't leave it too late and rush – catch the earlier bus
- Allow time for your brain to wake up – have a shower, eat breakfast – take a banana with you
- Do a final check of the subjects you will be doing that day – know the structure and how many sections there are
- Make sure you have EVERYTHING you need and take spares – do not get into the stress of asking teachers for things you should already have with you
- Take a pen you enjoy writing with – take 2 just in case

DURING THE EXAM

- Don't forget that it is natural to be nervous. It actually gives your brain the extra adrenalin it needs to make the final effort
- If your mind goes blank, don't worry. Look at the question again, write down some notes – it will get your brain ticking over again
- Don't start writing until you know what the instructions are and you are ready to write clearly
- Make and keep to a time scale for each question depending on the number of marks (you will have done this in revision classes – stick to it). If you only have 3 minutes left for a question, write the answer in note form – the examiner will give you marks for it
- Allow a little bit of time at the end to check through your work to see if any changes need to be made. Examiners have said that this can make the difference between a higher and lower grade

ON THE NIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM – FOR PARENTS / CARERS

- Avoid adding to their stress levels by 'rising to the bait' when your child pushes the boundaries. Shelve the battles that do not need winning just yet.
- Help prepare your child for the exam – talk with them about when it starts, how long it lasts for, what are the main topics that might come up. Make sure they have the resources they need prepared to bring with them.

USEFUL WEBSITES

GENERAL SUPPORT FOR TEENAGERS

- www.childline.org.uk/explore/Pages/Explore.aspx
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- <https://www.annafreud.org/>
- <https://www.kooth.com/index.html>

GENERAL PARENT SUPPORT

- www.parentlineplus.org.uk - Confidential helpline for parents on 0808 800 2222
- www.projecteducation.co.uk
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- <https://www.annafreud.org/>

EXAM BOARDS

- <https://www.aqa.org.uk/> - The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
- <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html> - Edexcel
- <https://www.ocr.org.uk/> - Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)
- <https://www.educas.co.uk/> - The Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)

COURSEWORK AND REVISION

- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize
- <https://www.senecalearning.com>
- <https://s-cool.co.uk/gcse>
- <https://www.gcsepod.com/free-gcse-revision-resources/>

CAREERS

At the Deanes, the pathway students take after they leave school is just as important as the education outcome they gained with us. Every student in Year 11 has the opportunity to meet with our Careers Adviser. Please visit of careers section on our website for lots of links that may be of use - <http://www.thedeanes.academy/imatter/imatter-as/>.