



1 April 2019

Dear Year 10 Parents & Carers,

As Year Ten approach a well-deserved rest period after two busy terms adjusting to GCSE courses, we initially share our wish that students relax and enjoy some free time. However, we are also writing to explain why we believe the Year Ten exam period is more than a traditional summer exam period and as such also deserves some time set aside for preparation.

In our minds, the Year Ten exam is not just another summer exam period.

As you will be aware, GCSE courses are, for most subjects, assessed through a number of terminal examinations. This means that content learnt and skills developed in Year Ten must be secure and committed to long term memory, before new content and skills are added in Year 11.

It is our experience that those students who are secure in their Year Ten content, prepare thoroughly and find the burden of revising in Year 11 less daunting. This is because they know their notes are secure, have identified and plugged gaps in knowledge and reduced information down to mind maps, pictures, memory narratives or trigger words. Therefore, the Year Ten exam provides the opportunity to evaluate how well students have managed the volume of content and skills that GCSEs require.

We also view the Year Ten exam as not just another exam period as more and more we informally refer to these as mock exams. The reason being that with so many terminal exams for each subject it is not always possible to sit all papers for a subject in the Year 11 mock period. Therefore, these papers are often spread across the two-year course. Sitting one or two of the papers in Year Ten provides a valuable mock experience for students to test their preparation of key GCSE topics in timed conditions, and provides some key progress indicators (including predicted grades) for students, parents and teachers.

Throughout the year, Year Ten tutor groups have been spending time on a Thursday morning exploring good habits of learning including how to prepare for exams. Active revision such as summarising and reducing through mind maps, flash cards, songs, revision games or even making podcasts are the most effective. Questions should be asked of a student passively reading! We have also covered key generic exam room skills and how to keep themselves healthy and well in the approach to and during the exam period. We hope that the Year Ten exams allow students to try out approaches and work out what works best for them before next year.

In terms of revision advice, we would suggest that students revise for short bursts of thirty minutes, with a good ten-minute break between sessions where they get up, move and get fresh air. Ideally, during school weeks we would suggest 2-3 hours a weekday evening (including homework) and 4 on a weekend. This may form a useful guide to some expectations of holiday time management. We also advise drinking plenty of water and being active to oxygenate brains. Ensuring a good night's sleep can be helped by avoiding revising late in the evening.

Please rest assured that we do hold a Year 11 parent information evening at the start of Year 11 where we run through exam preparation with you all in more detail.

So while we do advocate a period of rest, relaxation, family, friends and fun, we also advise that some time spent preparing for this important exam period would be hugely beneficial to overall GCSE success in Year 11.

We wish you a very happy Easter period,

Mr C Armstrong
Assistant Head Teacher

Mrs S Gray
Academic Head of Year 10