

St. Sampsons High School



GCSEs - What can a parent do?

Tips to ensure exam success

HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Isn't it the school's job to get them through their exams?

Yes of course the school has an important role to play and can provide the expertise and resources to help your child acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to do their best in each subject. There will be many new expectations of your child in Y11 – expectations which for many children, even the brightest are hard to meet. You don't need to know everything about English, Maths and Drama to help them with these things – you've been doing it all their lives. New demands on your child are likely to include the following:

- Being more self-motivated and taking more responsibility for their own learning
- Asking when they do not understand – this requires confidence and can be difficult at times when friend's opinions hold such sway.
- Developing their abilities to overcome frustrations and strategies for persisting when they are learning material they find challenging
- Organising themselves, notes, handouts and information for different subjects
- Completing more work at home
- Organising and planning their time over longer periods
- Understanding exam structure and the relative importance of each piece of work to their final grade
- Planning and carrying out their revision
- Perfecting 'exam technique'

Perhaps the hardest demand on Year 11 students is that of understanding the long term importance of doing the best they can, and learning to shelve short term fun in the interest of long term benefits. Unfortunately, this is a teenage perspective, interest and effort in education and the long term benefits these can bring often come rather a long way down the priority list, after friendship, shopping, social life, romance and hobbies.

This is where you come in! You are the expert on your own child and have always been his or her most important teacher. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exam years.



So what is my role?

Attendance officer – making sure your child goes to school and lessons and understand the importance of making the most of lessons.

Partner with the school and child – attending parent's evenings, asking questions, finding out how you can best help your child at home.

Provider of the tools for homework and revision – a quiet space, a 'workbox' of pens, paper and other necessities.

Study Buddy – showing an interest in the subject, helping them with coursework, testing them when they ask you.

Sounding Board and Advisor – helping your child to break down tasks so that they are manageable, keeping a subtle eye on progress and celebrating achievements.

Project Manager – agreeing rules for coursework or revision, helping them to make a realistic timetable, and balancing work against the 'fun stuff' and revising plans if necessary.

Go between – for your child and the school when necessary; making sure problems are nipped in the bud and asking questions your child won't or can't ask.

Parent checklist

- ✓ Get your child to school, on time, everyday (by 8.25, form starts at 8.30am).
- ✓ Ensure they attend the extra interventions put on at school.
- ✓ Assist your child in creating a visual revision timetable, they may want to download an app which they can personalise and it alerts them, such as SQA my study plan.
- ✓ Ensure they do 2-3 hours of quiet 'chunked' study at home every evening and weekend. Start little and build up if this is too much.
- ✓ Ensure they have a quiet, distraction free space to work.
- ✓ Provide the tools they need at home – post its, revision cards, pens, pencils, note book, files, calculator etc.
- ✓ Ask your child what they would find helpful from you. Encourage them to use a diary and empty their bag every day.
- ✓ Check that your child has a copy of the correct exam board specification for each subject. Get them to look through each and prioritise what they need to re visit.
- ✓ Help your child to make a realistic timetable that fits in their study and 'the fun stuff'.
- ✓ Talk to your child about your expectations and agree some rules for revising.
- ✓ Contact teachers if you are unsure how to support your child at home and to nip any problems in the bud.

- ✓ Remind your child there are various apps, websites and pods they can be using to assist their revision. Test your child with questions.
- ✓ Talk to your child about how they are coping. Be sensitive to the pressure they will be feeling. Encourage, praise and celebrate their achievements.
- ✓ Provide them with healthy snacks, water and ensure they get a good night's sleep
- ✓ Let them keep doing their favourite hobby or preferred method of leisure/exercise.

Tasks for students:

Set yourself up for revision:

- Buy a set of files especially for your revision – one for each exam you take.
- File handouts and information from lesson in the relevant files.
- Start revision early – the less you have to catch up on, the less stressed will you will get!
- Make a realistic revision timetable.
- Get revision guides.
- Make use of the internet – BBC bitesize, mathswatch, free science, Seneca learning, Primrose Kitten etc.
- Keep everything in one place, pens, pencils etc. so you don't waste time searching for them.

Doing the revision:

- Attend all lessons and make them work for you – you are working for YOU! You should be in after school revision sessions or lunch time intervention if required.
- Find out about revision techniques and use the ones that work for you – not all of them will.
- Match the revision notes to the sort of questions you might get asked in an exam.
- Have clear goals for each revision period, e.g. "at the end of this revision slot I will be able to label a diagram of the heart"
- Get into the routine of revising, if you really don't feel like it, tell yourself you will do 15 minutes and then decide whether to carry on. Try add on another 5 minutes the next day.
- Ignore the impulse to suddenly clean you room for the first time in 3 years! - Don't put it off.
- Clear your head before you start.
- Take a break – you cannot revise for a solid 2 hours, take a break every 25 minutes.
- Don't be influenced by your friends who talk about how little work they are doing – your results don't matter to them. They are probably doing more than they let on!

4 systems they must have in place:

1. Checklists/specifications/resources at home
2. Class notes/content - organised
3. Exam questions and mark schemes
4. A revision timetable

Practice

Practice is a 3 step process

1. Learn content
2. Develop skills
3. Apply the knowledge and get feedback

Practical ideas

Students have looked at the 6 concepts proven to work best by Learning Scientists research

Retrieval practice – Without any material see how much you can remember and get down on paper

Spaced practice – Spread revision out, needs to be chunked (20-30min maximum)

Dual coding – Link information with images

Interleaving – Switch between ideas/subjects

Concrete examples – Collect examples

Elaboration – asking questions about ‘how’ and ‘why’ something works

Preparation (Systems)	Learn the facts and apply the knowledge (Practice)		Feedback
Revision timetable	Flash cards	Have a debate/elaborate	Practice papers/Mark scheme
List of priorities	Mind maps	Talk it over	Get someone to test you
Prepare resources/materials	Mnemonics	Look, say, cover, write, check	Compare model answers or with a friend
Spaced practice	Post it notes	Podcasts/Record yourself on your phone	Timed answers/exam conditions
25min sessions	Create images	Create a song/poem	Teacher feedback
Prioritise based on weaknesses and next exams	Colour code/highlight	Role play/drama	
Quiet study space	Watch GCSEPod, Mathswatch or other websites	Answer exam questions	

Students should be as active as possible:

- Work with friends if they're social
- Drawing pictures if they're artistic
- Use colours if visual
- Using crazy ideas or images if you're imaginative
- Give them rewards for successful revision
- Practice, practice, practice

Attitude

DEVELOPING A **GROWTH MINDSET**



INSTEAD OF.....	TRY THINKING....
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
This is too hard	This may take some time
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me to learn
I just can't do this	I am going to train my brain
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
Plan A didn't work	There's always Plan B
My friend can do it	I will learn from them

3 types of attention - Successful people identify how they feel and can still get work done in all three states.

- **Proactive attention** (in the zone, fully focused) *complete more challenging tasks*
- **Active attention** (ticking along nicely)
- **Inactive** (flagging, tired) *choose easier recall and retrieval practices*

Ideas

- Tell them not to give up, but instead to change task
- Get them to commit to just 10 mins initially
- Don't break the chain- consistency & routine. Visually mark it off on the calendar
- Praise the positives
- Help them find a solution
- Remind them of the interventions on offer in school
- Reward them, let them rest the night before an exam
- They will be nervous, eliminate any unwanted stress

Positive conversations

Instead of saying "I'm no good at this" or "I hated this at school too!"

Try:

"This is interesting, tell me more..."

"I found this tough, show me what it means..."

"I remember this from school, remind me how to do it again..."

"What is this about?"

"Don't worry about not getting that bit yet, how did you find a solution for this one earlier?"

"You did that really well, let's try just one more"

Let us know your concerns

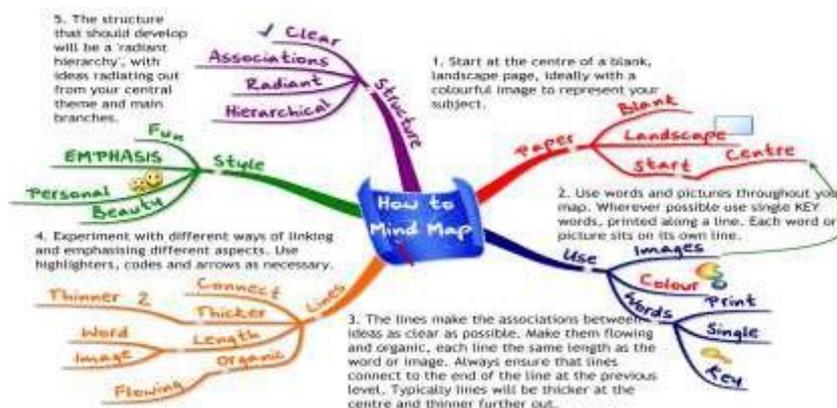
Have a look at the learning scientist's website if you want to know more about the excellent research backed revision techniques that your child will get to practice during the revision conference in school. <https://www.learningscientists.org/> . There are also some detailed explanation posters on the school website.



Some traditional recommended methods:

How to revise using mind maps....

1. Pick a topic from your revision.
2. Break it down into ONE key area and write that in the middle of your page.
3. Layer 1 – is basic information e.g. key words
4. Layer 2 – A description of the information e.g. definitions of key terms
5. Layer 3 – The final layer of information to represent A grade information e.g. evaluation, analysis points, how it links to another topic or key examples...



How to revise using flashcards:



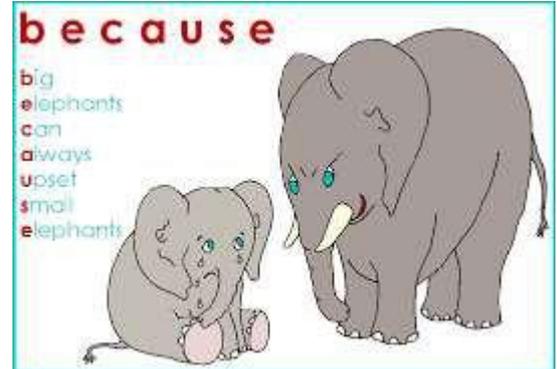
- Step 1:** Break your class notes down into key bullet points of information.
- Step 2:** Write the title of the content on one side of the flashcards and the key bullet points on the other.
- Step 3:** Put the flashcards face down on the floor so you can see the title side.
- Step 4:** Pick up a card and try to say all of the bullet points on the other side.
- Step 5:** If you can remember all of the points turn the card over and place it on the floor, title side down. If you can't remember it, place it back down on the floor, title side up.
- Step 6:** Repeat the process with another card. Keep going until all cards are title side down.

Post its

Some students like to stick up posters or post-it notes of information around the house. E.g. on mirrors, in the bathroom, kitchen, by the TV etc.

How to revise using Mnemonics:

Use of mnemonics: these are various word games which can act as memory aids and which allow personalisation and creativity. Think of stalactites (come down from the ceiling) and stalagmites (go up from the ground); the colours of the rainbow - **Roy G. Biv** ('Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain' to remember red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet); the seven characteristics of living organisms - **Mr. Grief** (**M**ovement, **R**eproduction, **G**rowth, **R**espiration, **I**rritability, **E**xcretion, **F**eeding). You can devise many more of these to aid your personalised recall of items in your subjects.



Look, cover, write, check.

This is an old and trusted technique that still works for many people:

- Revise a section of work
- Cover it up or put it aside
- Write down or record as much as you can remember
- Check against the original
- Highlight anything you got wrong or forgot
- Prioritise these areas for future revision

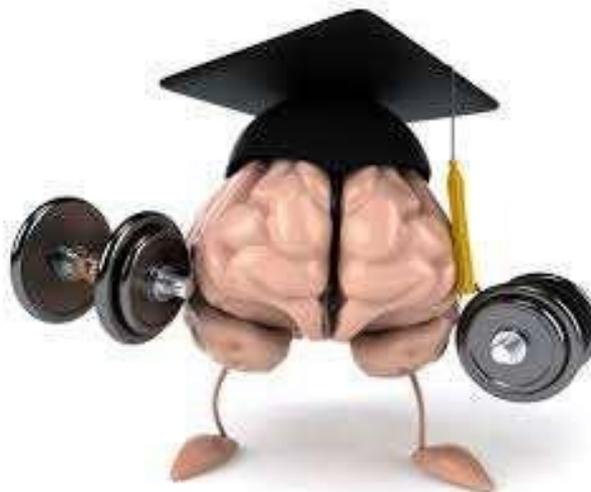


How to improve memory...

'Chunking': as the average person can only hold seven 'items' in short-term memory, grouping items together into 'chunks' can increase capacity. This is generally used for remembering numbers (think of how you remember phone numbers by grouping the seven digits into 2 or 3 chunks) but can be applied to other listings in various subjects.

Repetition: Studies indicate that 66% of material is forgotten within seven days if it is not reviewed or recited again by the student, and 88% is gone after six weeks. Don't make life harder for yourself - build in a brief daily and weekly review of material covered. It will save you having to re-learn material from scratch!

Application and association: The best way to channel material to long-term memory is to organise it into meaningful associations. Link it to existing information and topics and create vivid personal examples which act as 'mental hooks' or 'cues' for recalling material in the future. Thus, new items are put in context. If you learn a new formula / verb / rule, try to put it into practice immediately with a relevant example.



**Remember reading something is NOT enough,
they must make notes, draw pictures, talk it
through....whatever helps them to remember it!**



Tips for parents:

- Talk to your child on how you can support and help them
- The simplest things often get in the way of starting revision – weeks can be lost while students are ‘going to get a folder soon...’ Get around these by simply providing files, dividers, wall charts etc.
- Encourage your child to empty their bag and file handouts from lessons at the end of each day
- Support your child in choosing one good revision guide for each subject
- Help your child to plan a revision timetable
- Support your child in sticking with the revision plan and keeping to the start and finishing times
- Provide favourite snacks (if they deserve it)
- Be flexible – if they want to go to a party, agree when they will make the time up
- Be sensitive to the pressure your child is feeling – let them know if they are really not up to it that day it is not the end of the world - remind them of the good work they have done!
- Check-in regularly to ask if they are on schedule with their revision.

‘The value of parental interest and involvement even when they are all grown up is incalculable. Exam results depend more on preparation than just good teaching and lucky questions on the day – success results equally from motivation, persistence, good organisation, careful planning of revision and ‘exam technique’ – all of which parents can influence’

‘Parental involvement in a child’s education can mean the difference between an 9 and a 5.’ (TES)

‘You don’t have to be an expert in any of the subjects your child is studying to make a real difference, and you don’t have to be a ‘super parent’ giving up your own life and responsibilities – you just need to know how best to spend the time you do have, at each stage of the process. The aim of this booklet is to enable you to do this – providing you with the practical information you will need to help your child to meet the demands of KS4, in partnership with your child and the Academy’.



THE MOMENT OF TRUTH THE EXAM!

Tasks for students:

Before the exam:

- Know your exam timetable
- Know where and when you need to be on the day of your exam
- Allow time for your brain to wake up. – have a shower and eat breakfast
- Make sure you know the structure and marking of the exam, e.g. 2 essay questions, one from section A and one from B
- Make sure you have all your equipment and spares
- Go to the toilet
- Take water in the exam – your retention will be 70% better if you are hydrated

Exam Checklist

- Black Pen x 2
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Sharpener
- Eraser
- Clear Pencil Case
- Coloured pencils
- Calculator

During the exam:

- Be positive
- If your mind goes blank don't panic. Turn the page over and take some deep breaths; there will be some of the paper you can do.
- Do not leave any answer unanswered – guess – it is better than nothing!
- If appropriate, spend the first 5 minutes at the beginning of the exam writing down key formulae, facts or quotes that you are going to need
- In papers, where there are several questions, work on those you are most confident with
- Keep an eye on the time, the questions with the most marks are usually at the end of the paper
- Always check your paper, if you have plenty of time at the end then you need to go back and check you have answered the questions to your full ability – exams are not meant to be finished early!

Tips for parents:

- Encourage your child to keep positive
- Ensure that your child is prepared for the exam – they get up on time, eat breakfast, leave the house with enough time to get to the exam on time and have enough pens, pencils etc...
- Keep routines the same
- After an exam, ask how it went but don't insist on a post mortem

School contacts

Examinations Officer: Mr Harris

Deputy Head teacher – Curriculum & assessment: Mr King

Assistant Head teacher KS4: Mrs Ingram-Dodd

Head of Year: Miss Powell



School telephone number is: 01481 224411

Mock exams November 30th – 2 weeks

See the individual mock checklists saved on the website for exact details of what to study and where to find the most useful resources. Your child should be directed to Teams where teachers have saved lots of resources to aid their study.

Some useful websites...

All subjects

www.GCSEPod.com

www.BBCbitesize.com

www.bbc.co.uk/education/revision

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/> -

<http://www.sparknotes.com/> -

SQA my study plan app – will help students build a revision timetable (apple or android)



Maths

www.mathswatch.co.uk - maths online programme where work is set by maths staff specifically for each student. The site has video tutorials and maths problems.

www.drfrostmaths.com

English

Stacey Raey/Mr Bruff YouTube

<https://www.shmoop.com/> - *Shmoop*

Science

Primrose Kitten

Youtube website: 'MyGCSEScience'

www.freesciencelessons.co.uk

www.Senecalearning.com



Languages

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/spanish/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/>

