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18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am just writing on behalf of the Y9 team to update you about forthcoming events to support you and your child with making decisions about which GCSE subjects to study. Students were given an outline of all this information in assembly this morning.

Firstly, from 23<sup>rd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> February, Year 9 students will have a series of formal assessments in most of their subjects which will take place in the sports hall under exam conditions. This is to give students early and non-pressured experience of taking exams this way so that when it comes to the GCSE exams, it will feel familiar and less stressful. Not all subjects are assessed this way; Art for example, will assess using the series of projects students have undertaken this year, which reflects their GCSE assessment process. Music assessments will also be in lessons. Also, some students will be taking their assessments in a smaller setting, if they need additional support. All these assessment marks will be reported home to you before the Easter holiday.

Please can you support us by checking that they have the correct equipment in their pencil cases for assessments: a pen, pencil, compass, protractor, ruler and a rubber will be required. A calculator can be used for Science.

Secondly, coming up after these assessments will be the **GCSE Options Fair**. The results from these assessments will give you and your child an indication of how they are getting on. There is no requirement to reach a certain mark to take a GCSE, but inevitably students would want to know where they are being most successful and factor that into their choices. Choices should be made primarily on what they like doing and their career ambitions.

When we send you the assessment results, we will also send you all the information about the Options Fair, but you might like to make a note of the date now. It will be in school on **18<sup>th</sup> April from 4.30-6.30pm**. You will have a chance to talk to staff about all the different GCSE courses on offer and talk to current students taking those courses as well. The Options Form will open on that day for two weeks for you and your child to make your choices.

Tutors will be supporting students through the assessments and the options process. In addition, they will be giving out the useful information below about good study techniques to start developing now. Preparation is also a good way to avoid stress, so we are encouraging students to do some revision for these assessments, again in order to practice the skills they will need for their GCSEs and to get into good habits. Students should be doing no more than an hour a night on this revision so encouraging them to do short stints of good quality thinking is far more important and effective than hours of re-reading their notes. Below are some tips to help you support them in this revision.



## Supporting your child at home – five top tips

### 1. Your child's study space

Depending on the space available in your home, you could consider creating a special area where your child can focus on their studies in peace and quiet. If this isn't an option, investigate accessing this at a local library.

If you want to make their bedroom into this quiet space, make sure it is rid of the many distractions that may be in there. Experts have found that an untidy workspace can be detrimental to the study process, so it's a great excuse to keep the area neat. But don't be too harsh on your teen if it gets a little messy as that won't help with any exam stress.

### 2. Pomodoro technique

[The Pomodoro Technique](#) is one of the most popular and effective time management methods out there, and many people use it every day to make sure that they manage their time well when they are working or [studying](#).

The Pomodoro Technique focuses on organizing your time into intervals. It involves using a timer to structure a study session. The aim is for your child to work for 25 minutes before taking a short break of around 5 minutes. They then work for another 25 minutes before taking another break.

### 3. Using flash cards

[Flashcards](#) are small, double-sided cards that emphasise key information. They usually mention the topic/question on one side and important details, keywords, mnemonics, etc., on the other. This helps the brain make better connections between those two pieces of information.

Most children who use flashcards try to fit in too much information on them. A revision card is supposed to be a bite-sized factoid that your child's brain can digest and remember with ease.

Once your child has made their flash cards, see if they will let you test them.

### 4. Making a timetable

Please encourage your child to make an assessment timetable.

As well as the assessment dates themselves, students should work out how much time should be spent studying their subjects. Some subjects may need more study time than others. It's helpful if the timetable is broken down into 25-minute Pomodoros.

Any timetable worth its salt will include breaks and treats! Brains and bodies need a rest - this will actually help to absorb all that information and rewards are a great way to create targets to work to.

### 5. Useful websites

[BBC Bitesize](#) is one of the best revision sites. It has hundreds of resources, including numerous online revision guides, lessons, and interactive platforms.

[Quizlet](#) uses AI features. This website allows you to [make flashcards](#) to help students learn difficult concepts in the most efficient and memorable way possible, it's one of the best revision resources available.

Hopefully all this information is useful in planning the coming weeks. We will be in touch again shortly with more detailed information about the Options Process and the Assessment Timetable.

Best wishes



Emma White  
Deputy Head