



March 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Practice examinations are an important way of preparing students for their examinations in Year 11 because not only do they allow students to experience the routines of revision and working under pressure in timed conditions.

In Year 8 students will have an opportunity to sit practice examinations to assess their learning over the **past two** school years. The preparation and revision that takes place before each set of examinations will help students to embed the knowledge they learn into their longer term memory as well as find techniques for earning that work for them.

At St Mary's, students formally start their GCSE courses in the final term of Year 9. It is important that they get into good study and revision habits from the start so that they are fully prepared for Year 11 and the pressures that this will bring so that they are knowledgeable and experienced regarding revision techniques and the strategies that work for them.

As parent/carers you play an integral role in this preparation by supporting and encouraging good revision habits, supporting the process of revision and helping them prepare for each set of practice examinations.

Yours faithfully

E Watts

S' Tilbury

Mrs Watts
Deputy Head Teacher

Mr Tilbury
Deputy Head Teacher

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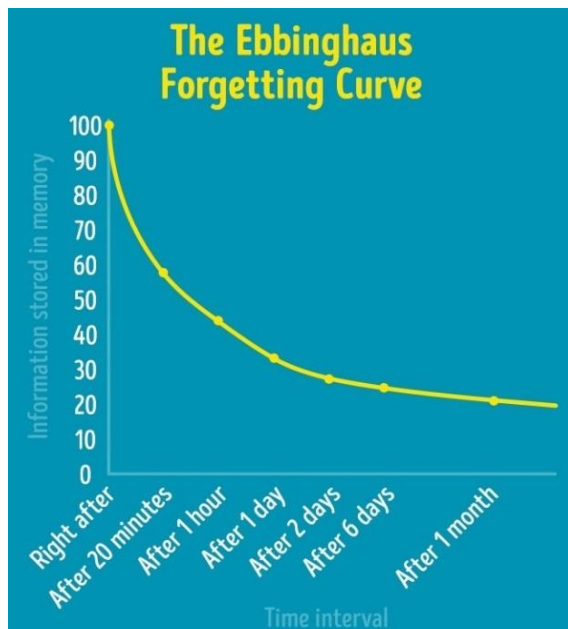
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Headteacher: Mr Nicholas Simms B.Sc. (Hons), NPQH

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The forgetting curve

At GCSE students are required to learn a large amount of knowledge but the brain can forget as much as 97% of information within 30 days, unless it is constantly revisited and relearned. Teachers set tests throughout the course to help embed knowledge into the longer term memory but students are also required to self-test and make revision resources throughout their courses. Practice examinations are a way to support students' experience the examination and familiarise themselves with the systems and pressures of sitting exams whether in the classroom or the examination hall. It serves as a safe environment in which to make mistakes so that these are not made in final public summer examinations. The process of revision also breaks up the course and provides manageable chunks of content to revise throughout their GCSE years so that by the time the Summer examinations commence they are already an expert at revising and they would have revisited the materials at least four times.



Timetable for Year 8 Exams, 28th March – 1st April (Week A)

- Your examinations will take place in the classroom and individual teachers will let you know when your exam is at least two weeks prior to the exam date.
- The exam timetables follow the usual Year 8 timetable, if you are not in an exam you will be in usual lessons.
- You will sit approximately 12 exams; each exam will last approximately 45 -50 minutes and these will assess your knowledge and skills from Year 7 to Year 8.
- There are no examinations in PE, PSHE, Sport or Drama.

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The examination process

Staff will support students through the testing of knowledge throughout the courses students' study and students will be given feedback on the examination skills that they will be assessed.

The most important role as parent/carers is to be supportive. Examinations are important and require effort and time but students also need to develop their own interests and have time for their well-being. Therefore, as parents/carers it is important to ensure there is a good balance between pressuring and motivating and not allowing students to become too complacent.

Academic achievement is important in ensuring stability for the future but your son/daughter's well-being is of great importance too and therefore the support of home and school is imperative. Do not underestimate the amount of stress your son/daughter may be feeling. If things seem to be getting too much, try to encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings and inform the school if you feel there is support that could be put in place to help.

Helpful hints to support your son/daughter:

- Encourage without pressure
- Take an interest without being concerned about everyone else in the class – your child's targets are your bench mark
- Speak to teachers if you have any concerns about your child's progress and well-being
- Familiarise yourself with Google Classroom as it will contain revision tasks and assessment information
- Encourage students to attend revision lessons and speak to their teachers if they are stuck
- Help to plan revision using revision timetables
- Structure time on electronic devices so that your child has an academic and personal balance of time
- Test your son/daughter on the knowledge they have to learn – this is one of the most effective methods of revision
- Time them when completing exam questions and be the stopwatch
- Familiarise yourself with their revision programme so that you know the order of examinations and can help them prepare
- Check students are well equipped with equipment from black pens, to rulers and calculators
- Try to remain calm and remember they may be stressed

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1. **Revision space:** Give your child a quiet place to work without social media and other distractions

2. Know when each examination starts and ends – make **examination timetables visual**

3. Support your child creating a **revision timetable**, especially in the lead up to preparation and the summer examinations

4. Encourage **short breaks** between revising

5. **Provide brain food and encourage exercise – even just going for walk**

6. **Do not allow your child to go to bed late** before an exam: last minute revision is not proven to support good memory retention and can in fact hinder the retention of information

7. Encourage your child to use a variety of **revision techniques**:

- Flash cards
- Mind maps
- Testing
- Create posters
- Diagrams and charts

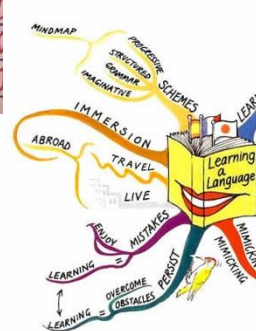
8. **Test** your child and time them when practicing exam questions

9. Build in **rewards and treats** so that your child has something to look forward to – this could be as simple as walking the dog together, watching a film or making a nice cup of hot chocolate

REVISION

* = none of possible
== = no revision/less

TIME	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
8:30-4:30	school	school	school	school	school	*	*
4:30-5:00	media	chemistry	media	maths	english	maths*	==
5:00-5:30	english	chemistry	media	maths	english	maths*	==
5:30-6:00	==	==	maths	english	media	==	==
6:00-6:30	english	english	==	==	==	==	==
6:30-7:00	maths	english	==	==	chemistry	==	==
7:00-7:30	==	==	english	chemistry	==	*	biology
7:30-8:00	==	==	physics	chemistry	==	*	media
8:00-8:30	maths	biology	==	==	chemistry	english	==
8:30-9:00	==	==	==	==	==	english	==
9:00-9:30	==	==	==	==	==	==	==
9:30-10:00	==	==	==	==	==	==	==
10:00-10:30	==	==	==	==	==	==	==



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Helping your Child to manage exam stress

Students must know that it is normal to be stressed during this period of time and most importantly they must know how to manage their exam stress so that they can perform to the best of their ability.

As parent/carers you can help students by:

- Making healthy but tasty food
- Recognising that your son/daughter may be short tempered and irritable and fight the urge to retaliate when they snap at you – it is not personal
- Let some things go such as chores or tidying their bedroom as they have a lot on their minds
- When your son/daughter is on a break, make that break count and gauge their mood as to whether they want to talk about their work or whether discussing something neutral is better



Helpful websites:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-exam-stress/>
<http://www.studentminds.org.uk/examstress.html>
<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/exam-stress/>

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After the exam

After each exam, give students the opportunity to talk about how they have done and allow them to do the talking while you listen. Encourage them not to dwell on mistakes they may have felt they have made. They may want some space to compare notes with other friends. You may want to share your experiences of exams as this may reassure them.

Plan an event to mark the results, whatever they are and have some fun with your child. Make it clear that you love and value your child for who they are, and not for what happened in an exam.

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