

10th November 2010

Parent/Guardian

As your son's GCSE studies progress into the second half of autumn term, it would seem valuable to inform you of one or two matters that relate to the Year 10 curriculum as well as to introduce myself as the School's new Deputy Headmaster (Academic).

As you may have read, course work in its conventional form has been replaced at GCSE by Controlled Assessment. In essence, this means that students are not allowed to take assessed work outside of School and all material for assessment should be completed under supervision in class. This has some impact on the homework that may be set. No longer will there be the expectation in some subjects, notably essay-writing subjects like English and History, that ongoing course work writing tasks worth, in some cases, as much as 30% of the GCSE award, should be drafted and then edited at home. However, much of the research and preparation for Controlled Assessment is expected to be done by candidates privately, and in any case, homework for examined units is still a necessity.

The School has copies of the JCQ guidelines for the management of Controlled Assessment and we have a policy which ensures that access arrangements are in place for those entitled to additional time. Heads of Department will have further information about levels of control and supervision in their particular subject areas.

As we look ahead to the June 2011 examination series, many Year 10 students will be taking externally assessed modules for the first time. This can appear very daunting, of course, but evidence suggests that boys, in particular, gain much from the emphasis on targeted revision and 'bite sized' chunks of learning that derive from modularity. However, I am also keen to ensure that boys are not over-burdened in the first year of their GCSE course and in January, I shall publish a full list of external papers to be sat by Year 10 pupils.

It remains our intention, as last year, not to grant Study Leave for Year 10 students in May and June of 2010. Should boys have an examination in the afternoon, they will be expected to be in lessons until break time, at which point arrangements for revision will be made for them. In some cases, they will be able to take advantage of revision sessions run by Heads of Department and other experienced members of staff with examining experience, thereby providing a tangible focus for this vital period before the examination itself.

There will be an academic Parents' Evening for Year 10 on February 22nd, affording you an opportunity to discuss your son's progress with the teaching staff. In the interim, I am more than happy to address any concerns or queries you may have, and I wish your son well in his studies.

Yours truly

R A Simpson
Deputy Headmaster (Academic)