

Senior Girls

Merchant Taylors' Schools
Liverpool Road, Crosby, Liverpool L23 5SP
Telephone: 0151 924 3140
Email j.baccino@merchanttaylorsschools.com www.merchanttaylorsschools.com
Headmistress: **Mrs CA Tao MSc BSc(Hons) Grad.IPD**
Headmistress's: PA: **Mrs J Baccino**



**MERCHANT
TAYLORS'
SCHOOLS**

For Boys and Girls
aged 4 to 18 years

28th January 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Y11 GCSE Examination Preparation

Year 11 pupils are working hard in school and I do hope that your daughter has started to undertake regular revision at home for her GCSE examinations. I wanted to write to you in relation to three issues which I feel have the potential to affect your daughter's performance in her examinations.

1. Revision support

I have attached a study guide, which has been produced by Wellington College, entitled 'Five habits of an effective learner'. The guide is derived from the science of learning and aims to help students improve the effectiveness of their revision and, in turn, reduce stress and anxiety. There are three techniques which I have discussed with the year group and it would be great if you could reinforce their importance with your daughter. These are:

- **Retrieval practice** – Many students simply read through their notes or highlight the page as a form of revision. This is not very effective; especially when pupils highlight everything on the page! A more effective way to revise is to make notes on a topic or chapter, perhaps using flash cards, and then try to retrieve this information. The key to success is to do this repeatedly, as this helps pupils to retain more of the information.
- **Spaced practice** – We are all guilty of procrastination, choosing to do something pleasurable and convincing ourselves that we will do the more difficult tasks next. This leads to cramming, however when pupils are doing a large number of GCSE examinations over a short period of time, this approach doesn't work. Thus, a more effective approach is to space out learning; helping ensure that we consolidate our learning and retain information more effectively.
- **Interleaving** – This means mixing it up and not studying all the material at once. For example, instead of studying chemistry on Mondays, biology on Tuesdays etc., it's more effective to break revision into short 45 minute chunks, studying two or three subjects per day, with regular breaks in between. This means that pupils will revisit material multiple times each week, helping them to remember more.

The amount of revision time that pupils will need to undertake will differ from student to student, however it is the quality of revision that is the most important factor. Pupils must also ensure that they set aside downtime for relaxation and the pursuit of other hobbies and interests.

2. Y11 Prom

Whilst we recognise that this is an event which is organised outside of school, I am concerned about the number of students who are getting ready for the prom now by setting weight goals with personal trainers or using apps to count calories. If girls are limiting their eating on this basis, it could affect their physical and mental wellbeing, especially at a time when they are working hard in school and need lots of energy to help them to study effectively. I would be grateful if you could discuss this matter with your daughter in order to ensure that their focus is on their examinations and that they are eating sensibly.

3. Use of mobile phones

From discussions I have been having with the girls, both in group and one-to-one meetings, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the amount of time that students spend on their mobile phones is of concern. Recent research, published in BMC Psychiatry, found that 23% of young people had behaviour that was consistent with an addiction – such as anxiety over not being able to use their phone, not being able to moderate the time spent and using mobile phones so much that it was detrimental to other activities. The study also said that such addictive behaviour could be linked to other problems such as stress, a depressed mood, lack of sleep and reduced achievement in school (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-50593971>). I do think it would be worth having a conversation with your daughter, if this isn't something you have already done, about limiting the amount of time they spend on their phone, switching off the sound so that they are not being disturbed by alerts or switching off notifications. I also feel that it would be helpful if students didn't send each other messages such as "I'm really stressed" or "I'm going to fail my exams", because it creates a cycle of negativity which undermines the confidence of pupils.

Finally, I really appreciate all the support you give to the school and if you have any thoughts about the issues I have raised, I would be grateful for your feedback. Likewise, if you would like to have a meeting or discussion with me on any aspect of the progress your daughter is making then please do not hesitate to contact.

Yours sincerely



Mr Lawell

Director of Pupil Development & Progress/Head of Year 11