

Macmillan Academy

YEAR 11 PARENTS' GUIDE 2023



Inspiring every student to succeed

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Natasha McGuder
CNN International Journalist



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INTRODUCTION

This is an incredibly important year for our students as they approach their final examinations and prepare for their future beyond school. As the exams draw closer, it is vital that we work together to support your child in their studies and ensure they have all the necessary resources and guidance to succeed. We have a dedicated team of teachers who are committed to providing the highest quality education and support to our students, and we will be working closely with them throughout the year to monitor their progress and identify any areas that need improvement. Subject support will be compulsory if students are booked into sessions. Our mock exam window for core subjects begins November 6th and our full exam mocks begin 22nd January.

This booklet will help you to support your child at this vital stage. The rigours of the new GCSE and BTEC specifications mean the demands on students are greater than ever before and preparing them early is essential. Communication between us, as parents and teachers, is key to ensuring the best possible outcomes for your child. Our ClassCharts app will allow you to track your child's compulsory subject support, behaviour and detentions. We will also be holding two subject teacher consultation evenings, as well as providing progress reports and updates on your child's academic performance. We strongly encourage you to attend these and maintain an open line of communication with us.

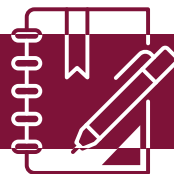
It is crucial that your child takes responsibility for their studies and develops good study habits. This includes setting realistic goals, managing time effectively, and seeking help when needed. Encourage them to make use of the resources available to them and to engage actively in their own education.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation. Together, we can make this a successful year for your child, and I look forward to the exciting opportunities we have this year.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Miss S Parkinson - Head of Year 11
s.parkinson@academy.org.uk



THE YEAR AHEAD

See below for key dates you need to be aware of this year:

Progress updates from teachers

- Progress report 1 - Week beginning 9 October 2023
- Progress report 2 - Week beginning 18 December 2023
- Progress report 3 - Week beginning 4 March 2024

Subject teacher consultation evenings

Due to how important this year is for your child, we will be offering two subject teacher consultation evenings this academic year.

Wednesday 18 October - This will be a good opportunity to discuss how your child has started Year 11 across all of their subjects. Teachers will discuss performance in the mock examinations held at the end of Year 10 and provide some useful targets for getting ready for the next round of mocks in November.

Thursday 14 March - At this stage of the year, teachers will be able to provide specific targets for your child in the final run-in before the summer examinations. Teachers will be able to provide a summary of your child's performance in the January mock examinations. You will also be given details about the Easter revision programme.

Mock Examinations

- Week beginning 13 November (1 week) - English, maths and science
- Week beginning 22 January (2 weeks) - all subjects

YOUR INVOLVEMENT



Your child's success this summer needs everyone pulling in the same direction – it is a real team effort. You know your child better than anyone and your support, working closely with us, will ensure your child reaches their full potential.

Here are a few simple things you can do to help:

Progress updates - Each time you get a progress report, have a talk with your child and make targets about what you would like to see in the next report. Challenge your child to explain any 3s or 4s for attitude and independent study – this year is the time to make every lesson perfect! Targets could be about improving their attitude scores, but also trying to improve the grades that teachers are predicting your child will get in the summer.

Consultation with teachers - We have planned to have two events throughout the year which will give you the opportunity to discuss your child's progress with teachers. Communication with the school should not be limited to these events – if you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Contact information can be found at the back of this booklet.

Working environment - It is important that your child has a tidy, quiet place to study at home. Whilst working on homework or revising, insist they leave their phone in another room – it can be a major distraction.



Homework - Challenge your child to complete all homework. Have regular conversations about what homework has been set and the deadlines for these. Monitor your child's conduct via ClassCharts, looking out for any negative behaviour points for "No Homework".

Attendance - Try your best to minimise any absence from school. In this crucial year, every day is important. If your child has 95% attendance this means they will miss two full weeks of learning throughout an academic year.

Holiday Intervention - Throughout holiday periods in Easter and May there will be intervention sessions to get caught up on coursework and get targeted revision support. Encourage your child to engage with these opportunities as much as possible.

Revision - Try to play an active role in your child's revision. You're not expected to be a subject expert, but you can ask your child to explain topics to you. We encourage all students to create flash cards to aid revision, and you can use these to test your child's knowledge – see the revision strategies section.

Healthy Living - During the mock and real examination windows, try to ensure your child is eating well, getting plenty of fresh air and exercise and is getting to bed early – sleeping well is vitally important during these weeks. We would encourage you to try to ensure a screen-free bedtime routine – see Health & Wellbeing section.

REVISION GUIDES



We have a revision shop on site fully stocked with revision guides for every subject. These are sold at a discounted rate.

If your child has not already purchased these, they are available to order through School Gateway where you will find a full price list.

Please contact the school if you need financial support.



INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITIES

As well as the usual curriculum time, we offer a comprehensive range of targeted intervention sessions across all subjects afterschool. These sessions have far fewer students than a usual class and allow the teacher to provide more targeted one-to-one or small group support. Monday and Tuesday are dedicated to English, maths and science intervention.

If your child has been targeted for support, they will be booked in through ClassCharts. You will be able to see this through the ClassCharts parent app and through email notifications. The notification will show up as a 'detention' as all afterschool activities in ClassCharts are identified this way – underneath this, the title of the session will let you know if it is an intervention support activity and for what subject.

If your child has been booked in, it is compulsory for them to attend – your support with this is appreciated.



GRADES IN THE SUMMER

How will your child's grade look in the summer?

Since 2017 the grading system for GCSEs has changed to a number-based system. Grade 4 is now considered a standard pass and replaces the old grade C.

See below for a breakdown of the new grading system:

Old grades	New grades
A*	9
	8
A	7
	6
B	5 STRONG PASS
	4 STANDARD PASS
C	
D	3
E	2
F	1
G	
U	U



Michael Lojko
Game Engine Developer

REVISION STRATEGIES



THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING A PLAN

Students often lack the discipline and motivation to revise consistently throughout Year 11. Revision shouldn't be something students start just before their exams – it is an ongoing process that should start now.

A study into healthy lifestyles found that a group of participants who were made to create a simple plan detailing the day, time and location of their exercise were far more likely to maintain a healthy exercise regime.

Working with your child to identify the days and times in the week where they can revise is an important first step.

If you are going to be involved in helping your child to draw up a revision timetable, try using these steps:

Step 1 - Get hold of the revision templates that students have been issued during tutor time.

Step 2 - Ask your child to make a list of all of their subjects.

Step 3 - Get them to write in all non-school commitments for that week such as leisure activities, going out, watching TV, general time to relax etc.

Step 4 - Get them to enter when to revise each subject for that week, keeping in mind the following:

- Balance the revision time between all subjects
- Space out the revision for each subject over the week
- Be realistic about the amount of time spent revising. Short chunks of revision around 35-40 minutes followed by quick breaks are recommended.

Step 5 - Pin up the revision timetable in a prominent place at home so that everyone in the house knows what's going on.

Note: Templates such as the one shown below have been provided to students at school – more are available upon request.

Revision Timetable

Week beginning — / — /

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Tutorial							
Lunch							
After-school							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

My Topic focus this week...

Subject	Topic

Revision Timetable

Month

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Tutorial							
Lunch							
After-school							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

My Topic focus this month...

Subject	Topic

Revision Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Tutorial							
Lunch							
After-school							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

My exam dates...

Subject	Date / Time	Subject	Date / Time
Mathematics		Science	



REVISION STRATEGIES

REFLECTING ON AREAS OF WEAKNESS

Students often prefer to revise old content that they find easiest – tackling the difficult concepts is challenging, but essential!

Asking your child to reflect on their areas of weakness is a good starting point. Students should dedicate the most time to the subjects and topics they find most difficult.

Using a simple traffic light system is a good way of organising your child's priorities. Each teacher will be more than happy to provide a list of topics required for each qualification to help with this.

RED

This topic is very difficult. I'm really struggling to understand this topic. We haven't covered it yet, so I need to learn this.

AMBER

I'm comfortable with some of this topic, but other bits are tricky. I have forgotten some of the learning points in this topic so I need to revisit them.

GREEN

I'm comfortable with this topic. I still need to revise it, but I find this topic easy and I can remember all the main learning points.

FLASH CARDS

Flash cards are a simple and excellent revision tool. This is the one technique that we encourage students to do most. All students have been provided with revision card packs to use in tutor time and lesson changeovers.

How to make:

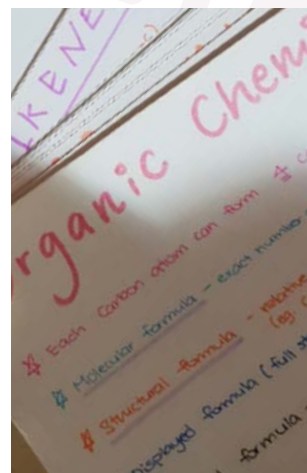
- Write a topic title large on one side of the card.
- Summarise all the key points on the other side.
- Your child should be encouraged to build these up as they move through Year 11.

How to use:

- Pick out a card and look at the topic title. Try to remember and write down everything you need to know.
- Check how much you have remembered by looking at the back of the card.
- Try testing your child using the flashcards and give them time to digest the question before answering. If they get the answer right, don't discard the card – they need to keep repeating it again and over time.
- The 'Leitner system' is an effective way of using Flash cards. Watch the video to see how it works.



SCAN ME





REVISION STRATEGIES

THE CHUNKING TECHNIQUE TO REVISIT INFORMATION

Chunking is a technique which can improve the memory. Chunking is the process of taking individual pieces of information (chunks) and grouping them into larger units.

Research shows that chunking is useful because it can help students' memory system become far more efficient as they are able to retain information better. They will then be able to recall relevant information in their exams.

The chunking process encourages students to break down larger amounts of information into smaller units, identify similarities or patterns, organise information and group information into manageable units. Studies have shown that students have gone from remembering seven pieces of information to over 80 by using the chunking technique.

How you can help:

- Support your child to challenge themselves to remember lists of things, whether it's vocabulary words or important topics they are learning about.
- Help your child to separate their revision into relevant sections as this will help them digest everything and remember the information more easily. Encourage them to create links between different bits of information and put them into meaningful categories because it can help them remember them better.
- Chunking works well if work is organised and neat so help your child to use headings and titles for different sections, use tables to summarise data, bullet points to summarise key points and also combine illustrations with text to create visual associations.

THE INTERLEAVING TECHNIQUE TO HELP REVISIT INFORMATION

Interleaving is a method used to help students revise and remember more for the exam. It is about what students do with their time when they revise. With the interleaving technique learning is spread over time, in smaller chunks rather than dedicating a whole day for one subject or topic.

Research says 'Mixing it up boosts learning' when compared to more traditional methods of block learning where students master one topic before moving on to the next in preparation for exams. Studies have highlighted that students who use interleaving perform better on the examination if the examination was more than one day away.

Evidence highlights that interleaving strengthens memory recall because by revisiting material from each topic several times, in short bursts, students can increase the amount they remember in exams.

How you can help:

- Watch this video with your child to understand more about how interleaving works



SCAN ME

- Help your child to decide on the key topics they need to learn for each subject. Work with your child to create a revision timetable which spaces their topics out across a good period of time.
- Short bursts of revision are more effective than long sessions so encourage your child to mix topics up and do little and often as quality is better than quantity. Encourage them to take regular breaks in their revision and not to focus on the same topic for a whole day!



REVISION STRATEGIES

SPACING AND TIMING OF REVISION TO REVISIT INFORMATION

Spacing is a revision technique which is all about spacing revision so students don't get swamped and overwhelmed. It means introducing time intervals into their revision sessions as well as spacing out the days on which they revise for topics.

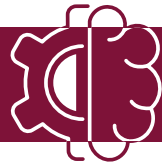
Research shows that doing something little and often is better than doing it at once, or cramming. For example, revising for eight hours in one day is not as effective as doing one hour of revision for eight days. This is because the time in between revising allows students to forget and re-learn the information, which cements it in their long-term memory.

How you can help:

- Help your child create a revision plan which maps out what they are going to revise and when. Help them to choose a mixture of subject topics to focus on each day to make sure they are spacing them out.
- Encourage them to review information using different revision techniques to help them carry out some 5-10-minute reviews of topics such as reading through notes, highlighting information or making post-it notes. Students can also transform their learning by doing 30-minute activities, such as writing summary sheets, flash cards or mind maps for topics.
- Work with your child to practise testing them on different topics and to help them complete exam questions. Remind your child that, five hours of time, spent in smaller chunks and spaced periodically, is a far more effective way to learn something than five hours spent the night before.



RAF Sgt - Gemma
Aircraft Avionics Engineer
The Royal Air Force



HANDLING THE PRESSURE OF EXTERNAL EXAMS

Survey research has identified that exams are a significant source of stress and worry for pupils in secondary school. In particular, failing important examinations, and the consequences of failing these examinations, are rated as more important than a range of other personal and social worries (Optimus Education).

The NHS highlights that children and young people who experience stress may:

- worry a lot
- feel tense
- get lots of headaches and stomach pains
- not sleep well
- be irritable
- lose interest in food, or eat more than normal
- not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed
- seem negative and low in their mood
- seem hopeless about the future

Exam stress can be really challenging, not only for children but for those that live with them. Research shows that having someone to talk to about their work can help. Support from a parent, teacher or friend can help young people share their worries and keep things in perspective.



Kieran Bolko

Strategic Sales lead - Public Sector, Fujitsu

How you can help:

- Watch out for signs of stress and encourage your child to talk to a member of school staff or someone whom they feel is supportive. If you feel your child isn't coping, it may also be helpful for you to talk to their teachers at school – see the contact information at the end of the booklet.
- Encourage and support your child to build and maintain healthy habits before and during the exam period, such as eating a healthy balanced diet, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep, doing exercise, and having time to relax and to socialise with friends.
- Remind your child that feeling nervous and anxious is normal. Support them to be organised, have a routine and build a revision timetable. Try not to add to their pressure by being flexible with them. Talk to them about how they feel, remind them of their goals in life and motivate them to stay focused. Staying calm will help them remain calm - and exams don't last forever.



HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP GOOD HABITS

Healthy habits are essential to living a long and happy life, and they are important to instil in children from a young age. If you help them form these habits now, you will be giving them the tools to navigate any obstacles they may face as they grow into adulthood.

Research highlights that the late teenage years have been identified as the peak age for exposure to health risks with lifelong implications. The report, by the Association for Young People's Health (AYPH), revealed teenagers eat eight times the recommended sugar allowance and almost half have tooth decay. This worrying research also found out that most smokers start by the age of 25.

Research reveals that there is a strong link between healthy habits and pupil achievement. Poor health habits add up to poor grades, and research suggests that healthy habits and good health-related decisions can lead to improved academic performance. For instance, research has shown that students who eat breakfast exhibit improved concentration when compared to their peers who skip it.

How you can help:

- Cultivate healthy habits by being a role model to your child. Try to exhibit good habits, offer health advice and build enjoyable healthy activities into your family life. Examples include being active as a family, having evening and sleep routines, providing a water bottle to encourage hydration, or making family meals together.
- Good nutrition can help improve concentration, so pay attention to the food you buy for your family. Provide a healthy balanced diet of meals which include fresh vegetables, fruit, proteins, good fats and whole grains. Encourage your child to snack on low sugar foods and drinks, which you could make together.
- Help and encourage your child to get enough sleep, live a physically active life and feel good about themselves. Work with them to map out their week to include healthy habits such as exercise, relaxation and seeing friends. Set some healthy lifestyle goals together, and keep each other motivated to stay on track.

SCREEN TIME

Battles over screen time and devices have become a depressing part of family life. Recent research has revealed that it's not so much the length, but the nature of the screen time that matters. What is important is that whatever young people are watching, playing and reading is high-quality, age-appropriate and safe.

The University of Oxford examined 120,000 UK 15-year-olds in 2017 and found that among those teenagers who were the lightest tech-users, it was found that increasing the time spent using technology was linked to improved wellbeing - possibly because it was important for keeping up friendships. In contrast, among the heaviest users of technology, any increase in time was linked to lower levels of wellbeing.

Further research has shown that more than two hours of smartphone use on a weekday, and more than four hours on a weekend day, was linked to lower wellbeing. Several other studies suggest that higher levels of screen use in children and adolescents is associated with reduced physical activity, increased risk of depression, and lower wellbeing.

How you can help:

- The British Psychological Society recommends that parents and carers use technology alongside children and engage them in discussions about media use. Help your child get into a screen-free bedtime routine. Screen time in the evening is especially bad for sleep patterns.
- Set limits like no screens during meal times or no screens after a certain time. Suggest having one day a week with no screen time like Screen-Free Sundays. If they have a smartphone, encourage them to turn off as many notifications as possible and to turn on flight mode when they're with friends and family.
- Encourage your child to do new physical activities instead of screen-based inactivity. This could be new hobbies, going for a walk, playing sport, being creative or joining a youth group. Role-model good behaviour by being mindful of your own screen time.



KEEPING ACTIVE DURING REVISION

Research shows that physically active students have more active brains. Even walking for just 20 minutes can significantly increase activity in the brain. This means that it is really important for students to take regular breaks in their learning.

Exercise triggers the release of various hormones and chemical compounds in the body and has many benefits to learning:

- It improves cognitive brain function.
- It improves students' ability to focus for longer periods of time.
- It can reduce stress levels.
- It can improve memory retention.

Studies have shown that exercise helps to oxygenate the brain and release tension, helping students to keep calm, mentally relax and study more efficiently. Productive people often work smarter rather than harder and exercise has a huge part to play in this.

How you can help:

- Support your child to take regular breaks so they are less likely to get distracted whilst revising. It's much better to spend 60 minutes revising well and 10 minutes on a break than for your child to spend longer half revising and half playing with their phone! Suggest to your child that they take breaks every 60-90 minutes when revising.
- Encourage your child to do something active with their break, such as getting some fresh air, playing sport, going for a walk or a run, or doing housework. Remind them that exercise doesn't have to last for hours to count.
- Work with your child to help them work efficiently and find a routine that works for them. They need to be flexible to work around their timetables and could do some exercise early in the morning, at lunchtimes or early evenings. Alongside exercising help your child to take care of themselves by eating well, sleeping well, relaxing, socialising and having some down time.

SLEEP

The Sleep Council highlights how quality sleep is essential for growth and development and that your child needs between 8-10 hours sleep every night. Teens' body clocks naturally shift to make them feel tired later in the evening, but early school starts do not enable them to sleep in the mornings. Chronic sleep deprivation can have a huge effect on a teenager's life and mental wellbeing.

Teens need more sleep than adults. Research shows that the brain's ability to process information declines with lack of sleep. Our emotional responses, empathy towards others and tendency to do silly things all goes up with lack of sleep. Long term sleep deprivation can suppress the immune system, lead to forms of cancer, heart disease and metabolic abnormalities.

Further research shows that there is a link between getting enough sleep, sleep awareness and student performance. Numerous studies have shown that not getting enough sleep can negatively affect school performance and impair cognitive function.

How you can help:

- Help your child establish a good sleep routine. Encourage them to limit screen time before bed and to read a book or magazine instead. Get them to keep a sleep diary over a two-week period to see how much sleep they are getting and how they can improve it. Have a conversation with your child about their sleep.
- Eating late at night is not good for digestion or aiding a better night's sleep. Make sure your child avoids sugary and heavy foods late at night and doesn't drink caffeine or energy drinks from lunchtime onwards. Healthy habits such as warm milk or camomile tea, daily exercise, relaxing in the evening and having a calming bedroom environment, can all help your child get a better night's sleep.
- Try to get your child to go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning – even on a weekend. A consistent sleep-wake cycle is really important for them to function well. Know the signs of sleep deprivation and work with your child to find a routine that works for them.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

RELAXATION

An important part of teenage life should be relaxation. It is an essential part of maintaining health and wellbeing and being able to calmly deal with stress and pressure which, as we know, can be quite intense during the school years and especially in adolescence.

Research shows that young people face many different kinds of stress, worry, and anxiety, and can feel overwhelmed for various reasons. Relaxation has been defined as a 'state of being free from tension and anxiety'. We often forget to switch off as adults but it is important that we do that in order to help children learn important skills.

Many studies highlight the benefits of relaxation and here are a few:

- Slows the heart and breathing rate
- Improves concentration and mood
- Reduces anger and frustration
- Reduces the activity of stress hormones
- Improves digestion
- Increases blood flow to the muscles
- Relaxes the muscles
- Improves sleep quality

How you can help:

- One of the simplest relaxation techniques is to practise breathing. Teach your child to take deep, slow breaths when they are feeling anxious. Just a few deep breaths can provide an instant calming effect that can help reduce stress. Look out for mindfulness apps or video resources on YouTube that offer examples of breathing exercises, such as Headspace or Calm.
- Learning to relax is something that you can do together as a family. Try having a go at yoga or a relaxing activity together. Yoga will improve flexibility and posture and will give you and your child a sense of inner calm. Encourage your child to go to a local class or follow a simple yoga session on YouTube. Other helpful things could be having quiet time to read, going for a walk, listening to music or watching a feel-good film.



CONTACT INFORMATION



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