

St Matthew Academy

St Joseph's Vale, Blackheath, London SE3 0XX
Head of School: Ms Miranda Baldwin



30 April 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to you in the final weeks before the GCSE written exam season starts to ask for your support in ensuring your child is ready and prepared to *"let their light shine"* during this important time. We had hoped that Year 11 would have returned from the Easter two week break revitalised, full of energy and ready for the challenges ahead. However we are concerned that many pupils are struggling with tiredness and lack of sleep and this is particularly evident in the morning sessions. As you know during exam seasons most exams are scheduled to start at 9am which means pupils must be in school by 8.30am. They need to arrive alert, focused and ready to concentrate for over 2 hours. They should be aiming to get at least 9 hours of uninterrupted sleep each night. As parents and carers you monitor your child's sleeping habits and I urge you to ensure your child does not have access to a mobile phone or tablet during the night and to also turn off the Wi-Fi. At the end of this letter I have included the recently published advice on screen time from the UK Government's Chief Medical Officer.

A number of staff have also commented on some pupils not being correctly equipped for learning. Can you please ensure that your child has a clear pencil case that meets exam regulations and at a minimum 2 black pens, 2 sharp pencils, 30cm ruler, calculator, protractor and a pair of compasses.

The run up to exams can be extremely stressful and tiring for your child. It's important that they have the right frame of mind during this period, to help them be as successful as possible. Here are some fail-safe tips to help you boost your child's health and wellbeing during revision season.

1. Engage with their school life

Ask your children what they did at school, what they have learnt and what's going on in their life. Show interest and participate in continuous dialogue with them. Make sure it's a conversation, not an interrogation! In doing so you will be more likely to notice if they are struggling, upset or overworked.

2. Help them to relax

As important as it is to engage with their studies, it is also essential to make sure you give them a break from conversation related to revision. Enjoy your family time together and make sure they are also socialising and spending time with their friends. Social skills are as important as academic skills and will give them time to decompress and switch off. Balance is essential!

3. Sleep is key

Plenty of restful sleep is essential for your child to maintain good health. By avoiding sleep deprivation they will feel less stressed, more engaged and energetic. It will also give them the best chance to learn and retain information. Encourage them to put down all technology 30 minutes before bed as the blue light emitted can significantly interfere with sleep patterns. Suggest they read a book or listen to some relaxing, ambient music instead.

4. Healthy eating

A healthy diet with lots of vitamins is so important whilst your children are studying, the better fuel they get the better they'll study. Iron and Vitamin B are great for keeping their energy levels up! Make sure they are staying hydrated and drinking plenty of water. It will help prevent headaches, aid concentration and is a much better choice than caffeine or sugary drinks which cause sugar highs and crashes. If they've got a sweet tooth make smoothies from frozen fruit like blueberries or raspberries. The natural sugars are a better source of energy than refined sugars.

5. Exams aren't the be-all and end-all

Yes, great academic results can benefit your child's development but there are a lot of options available. Your child may already be worrying about failing or not getting their predicted grades. Think about how you can build their confidence and self-esteem so they have a positive mind-set. It's just as important that they look after their mental health as well as physical health. Exams are a gateway, not an end in themselves. Health shouldn't suffer because of them.

Useful websites with further advice

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/exam-stress/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-exam-time/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-exam-time/>

Important dates for the coming months.

Date	Activity	Notes
Fri 10 th May lesson 5	Exam service with year 10 and year 6 pupils	
Sat 11 th May	Revision sessions for targeted pupils	Look out for further details via email and text
Mon 13 th May	Week 1 of exams RE exam on Monday afternoon for all pupils	
Sat 18 th May	Revision sessions for targeted pupils	Look out for further details via email and text
Mon 20 th May	Week 2 of exams	
Mon 27 th May	Half term week Revision sessions take place all week for targeted pupils	Look out for further details via email and text
Mon 3 rd June	Week 3 of exams	
Sat 8 th June	Revision sessions for targeted pupils	Look out for further details via email and text
Mon 10 th June	Week 4 of exams Long summer holiday begins for pupils after their final exam	Please consult your child's exam timetable for date of their last exam.
Thu 20 th June	Year 11 prom – tickets available for £15	Further information is available on ParentPay
Tue 25 th June: 5 to 7pm	Art & DT faculty GCSE exhibition	
Thu 22 nd Aug	Results day – 10am	

Can I take this opportunity to thank all parents and carers for their continued support. We are very proud of the commitment and hard work our year 11 pupils have shown this year and we look forward to them all being able to pursue their dreams at colleges and 6th forms next year satisfied that they have given their very best.

If you have any questions regarding the arrangements for the next few weeks or you would like to talk to someone about your child's progress then please do not hesitate to contact their form tutor.

Yours faithfully,



Ms M Baldwin

Head of School

UK Chief Medical Officers' advice for parents and carers on Children and Young People's screen and social media use

Technology can be a wonderful thing but too much time sitting down or using mobile devices can get in the way of important, healthy activities. Here are some tips for balancing screen use with healthy living.

Sleep matters

Getting enough, good quality sleep is very important. Leave phones outside the bedroom when it is bedtime.



Sharing sensibly

Talk about sharing photos and information online and how photos and words are sometimes manipulated. Parents and carers should never assume that children are happy for their photos to be shared. For everyone – when in doubt, don't upload!



Education matters

Make sure you and your children are aware of, and abide by, their school's policy on screen time.



Keep moving!

Everyone should take a break after a couple of hours sitting or lying down using a screen. It's good to get up and move about a bit. #sitlessmovemore



Safety when out and about

Advise children to put their screens away while crossing the road or doing an activity that needs their full attention.



Talking helps

Talk with children about using screens and what they are watching. A change in behaviour can be a sign they are distressed – make sure they know they can always speak to you or another responsible adult if they feel uncomfortable with screen or social media use.



Family time together

Screen-free meal times are a good idea – you can enjoy face-to-face conversation, with adults giving their full attention to children.



Use helpful phone features

Some devices and platforms have special features – try using these features to keep track of how much time you (and with their permission, your children) spend looking at screens or on social media.

