**Supporting your child through their GCSEs**

GCSEs offer your child a passport to further education as well as self-confidence and self-worth. With less focus on controlled assessments and course work and examinations being the main form of assessment for GCSEs, being prepared for the examinations is of utmost importance. There are a variety of ways in you can help your child to develop and sustain a positive attitude towards GCSEs. The aim of this information is for St. Joseph’s to offer you tips, advice and guidance about how you can support your child through their GCSE studies.

There are 3 main areas that are recommended by researchers in this field to support your child:

* Providing inspiration
* Offering incentives; and
* Supplying refreshments

**Providing Inspiration**

We all need someone or something to inspire and motivate us to get started. Sources of inspiration are deeply personal and can take many forms, it is therefore important to reflect upon the people and things that inspire and uplift your child. . Maybe there is a particular photograph, piece of music or book that he would really benefit from being given or maybe there is a film or a musical that he would really appreciate going to see. You could also create opportunities for your child to talk to friends and family about the benefits and advantages offered by a good set of GCSE results:

* Ask an older sibling, cousin or friend studying at university talk to them about university life or perhaps visit them at university
* Offer opportunities for him to meet people working in professions that he would like to join and encourage him to talk to them about their job
* Identify and take-up opportunities to informally and openly discuss your own exam results and the extent to which these facilitated or constrained your personal and professional development.

**Offering Incentives-**

Although the promise of access to further and higher education or a good job is enough to keep some students motivated throughout their GCSEs, others require additional incentives. One option is to discuss with your child what sorts of rewards would motivate him to set more ambitious targets and to revise more diligently. You could then promise certain rewards for them working hard. Ensure that you set fairly challenging but realistic targets. A few examples of possible rewards:

* Tickets to a pop concert or festival - A new mobile phone
* Some money for clothes and music - A party soon after his last exam
* Tickets to a football match - A guitar or musical instrument

**Supplying Refreshments**-

The sheer volume of work that GCSE students are expected to complete in the run-up to their exams makes it essential that you provide your child with opportunities not only to study and revise but also to relax. Try to identify ways that you can help him to stay fresh and relaxed. Some possibilities:

* An obvious way that many people wind-down is by spending quality time with their friends. Although you need to ensure that your child doesn’t spend excessive amounts of time socialising during the run-up to his exams, take care to ensure that outside of the school day he gains regular access to friends.
* Encourage your child to find time to focus his attention completely away from sources of anxiety such as revision and exams through active participation in local clubs and sports.
* We all deserve a degree of freedom to find our own ways of resting, relaxing and recouping lost energy. It is therefore worth remembering that an occasional lie-in or the chance to chill-out with friends in front of a good film sometimes does the world of good.

**PROVIDING YOUR CHILD WITH MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT-**

No parent can sit with their child in the examination. Even if you are fully aware of exactly what GCSE success requires, due to the ferociously independent nature of many teenagers, you are also likely to find it very difficult to adopt a directive style of parenting during the run-up to exams. Instead, you need to consider more subtle ways of providing support. This section discusses different forms of material and psychological support that you can offer your child such as:

1. Useful equipment;
2. A positive home environment and
3. Unconditional love.

**Useful Equipment**- At the most basic level, there are various types of equipment that will help your child to prepare for GCSEs and it is therefore a good idea to set-aside a budget to cover the costs of these materials. Be sure to directly involve your child in the process of clarifying what equipment he most needs and try to make purchases as early in his exam year as possible. Some examples of items that he might find useful:

* Pencil Pens Ruler
* Rubber Sharpener Fine-point coloured pens
* Calculator Pin-board Diary or personal organiser
* Notebook Watch /Alarm clock Calendar
* Highlighter-pens Past exam papers Chair and desk
* Revision guides/ Textbooks

In addition, he may benefit from attending extra-curricular revision courses offered at school and it is essential that he attends any intervention sessions scheduled for them Lesson 5.

**Positive Home Environment**: The inevitable pressures on the limited shared resources available in your home make it essential that you find ways of ensuring that the legitimate demands of other family members are balanced against the particular needs of your child in the run-up to his GCSEs. It is especially important that GCSE students are provided with ample space and time to revise. Some related issues to bear in mind:

* Students will need a quiet private space (e.g. a desk in the bedroom) where they can study and revise undisturbed by external influences. You may therefore need to insist that at certain times of day the TV and mobile phones are turned off.
* We are all creatures of habit and tend to be enabled and constrained not only by our own daily routine but also by the daily routines of those closely connected to us such as parents, siblings and friends. Have a think about ways that family members’ habits limit the extent to which your child can prepare for his exams. For example, bringing forward mealtimes may release more time for him to study or beginning the car journey to school earlier may provide him with chances to browse over his revision notes before the school-day starts.

**Unconditional Love** Some of the most fascinating research on successful parenting concludes that the most effective parents provide their children with both challenge and unconditional love. Beyond recognising the need for your child to exhibit the vision, self-discipline and fortitude required to secure a good set of GCSE grades, remember that when preparing for exams he will inevitably be subjected and exposed to a variety of forces that are largely beyond his control and that he is therefore likely, at times, to experience a significant degree of uncertainty and insecurity. Providing your child with the reassurance that, whatever mistakes he makes and whatever misfortunes he encounters, you will always be there to love and support him will enable him to approach exams with greater confidence. Some antidotes to GCSE anxiety:

* Regularly invite your child to talk to you openly and confidentially about how he is feeling and to let you know if there is anything at all that you can do to help. At these times, restrain yourself from trying to ‘solve’ his ‘problems’ by offering immediate ‘solutions’ and continue to affirm instead that you understand how he is feeling or just hear him out. Conclude these conversations by reminding him how much you love and care for him and by reassuring him that you are committed to help him in any way that you can.
* Create opportunities for your child to engage in activities that are completely removed from the world of school, homework, revision and exams. Consider, for example, offering to take him to the cinema or out for a meal.

**KNOWING THE STUDY SKILLS THAT YOUR CHILD REQUIRES TO ACHIEVE EXAM SUCCESS** Support your child in developing their study techniques. Examples of study skills that can lead to success are:

- Time management - Note-taking

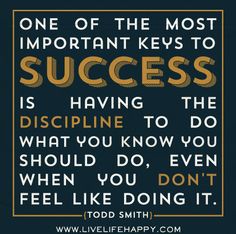
 **Time Management:** One of the main reasons why many young people fail to achieve a good set of GCSE grades relates less to their lack of ability or ambition and more to the fact that they seriously underestimate the amounts of time that they need to set aside for revision. Many students now take 10 or more GCSEs and are therefore required to revise over 200 GCSE topics. On the basis of 1 hour of revision per topic, this means that your child may need to complete a total of over 200 hours of revision. Assuming that he revises for 1-2 hours a day, he will therefore need to start revising at least 3-6 months before his first exam. For those taking exams in June, this means starting to revise in February at the very latest. It is worth running through these figures and dates with your child so that he can begin to see for himself the benefits of starting his revision as soon as possible.

A few secrets of effective time management: Like money, time is a limited resource that should ideally be distributed according to what we value and therefore according to our values. If your child values his GCSE grades then he needs to ensure that, at times, his revision takes priority over other interests and activities.

* Due to the fact that our lives tend to be structured around our routines, one of the most direct and effective ways that your child can release more time for revision is by changing his daily routine. For example, at weekends he could get-up an hour earlier so that he can use this ‘extra’ time for revision.
* In order to provide a clear revision plan and reduce stress levels, it is helpful for your child to create a revision timetable that clarifies what, on any given day, she needs to revise and for how long.

**Note-taking**: Many students ‘revise’ by copying-out their class-notes or pages of school textbooks. This is not only a dull and slow way of studying but also highly ineffective – it is possible to copy-out a whole book and still know little or nothing about what you have written. Instead, GCSE students need to find ways of taking notes that require them to analyse and actively think about topics that they are revising. There are very few hard and fast rules about effective note- taking. The key is to encourage your child to develop a repertoire of note taking techniques through experimenting with the different options available. Some general principles for your child to bear in mind when taking revision notes:

* It is helpful for him to work towards developing a revision file that is divided into subject areas and that contains a single ‘summary’ page for each topic that he is studying (e.g. if there are 30 topics in his History syllabus then the History section should contain 30 pages).
* There is no need for GCSE students to take notes by using sentences. Instead, encourage him to use key words from the text that he is studying and to enhance his revision notes by recording information as symbols (e.g. a crown to represent the king or a mask to represent the theatre etc) and by using several colours (highlighter-pens and a pack of good quality fine-point coloured pens come-in very handy here).
* Encourage him to take revision notes on plain paper and to experiment with different ways of organising information on the page. For example, if in a particular topic there are eight key points that he needs to remember and understand then he could: draw a large circle on the page; divide-up this circle into eight parts; and then write in each of the eight parts of the circle key words or symbols that remind him of each of the eight points that he is trying to revise.

****This information has offered a range of hints and tips that you can use to help your child to prepare for GCSEs. The first section focussed on ways of raising your child’s aspirations and helping him to develop and sustain a positive attitude towards his GCSEs. The second section examined some of the different forms of material and psychological support that you can offer your child when she is preparing for exams. The final section unpicked some core study skills that your child will need to practice and apply if he is to achieve exam success. A good set of GCSE grades will certainly provide your child with a passport to further and higher education. It may also provide him with a profound sense of self-worth and accomplishment. Above all else, try to help your son not only to develop a clear vision and focus but also to remain open and relaxed throughout.

**Good luck!**

Mathematics

**Edexcel New GCSE Mathematics 9-1 Linear (1MA1)**

GCSE Mathematics parent’s information

* GCSE Overview
* Awards and other examinations offered
* Websites
* Revision Guides
* Equipment

GCSE Overview

The Department of Education have changed the specification for Maths GCSE starting with the current year 11 students (first exam June 2017). The new specification now includes a greater amount of content compared to the old 1MA0 specification and has a new assessment criteria. All new GCSEs will be graded 1-9, 1 representing the lowest grade and 9 the highest. The government issued the following statement to explain the grading criteria in terms of its equivalence to the old style A\* to G system:

“Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as used to achieve a grade C and above and broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 or above as used to achieve a grade A or above. The top 2 % of all students will achieve a grade 9 to highlight the very highest performers. The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G. The pass grade will be a grade 5 in order to raise standards although initially students will only need to resit in year 12 if they achieve grades 1, 2 or 3 at the end of year 11 - although this is subject to change.”

A more detailed explanation can be found using the link below:

[www.gov.uk/government/news/setting-standards-for-new-gcses-in-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/setting-standards-for-new-gcses-in-2017)

The Maths department have produced a conversion table to try and explain this a bit clearer.



This new GCSE is still divided into two tiers – higher and foundation. The Higher tier covers grades 4-9 and the foundation tier covers 1 – 5.

We follow the Edexcel Linear GCSE (Code 1MA1)

The students will sit three exams each worth 80 marks and lasting 1 hour 30 minutes each. They will all sit the exams at the end of year 1.

**PAPER 1** **PAPER 2** **PAPER 3**

33.3% of final mark 33.3% of final mark 33.3% of final mark

Non Calculator Calculator Calculator

The total of all three papers will give the final overall grade.

Awards and other Examinations

**Edexcel Awards.**

During the 3 year GCSE course all students will have the opportunity to achieve three award certificates in some of the GCSE content. They are excellent skill tests and prepare the students well for taking real examinations and revising thoroughly in mathematical techniques. There are two levels of entry – Level 1 and Level 2. The higher the level the more demanding the course. Your son will sit the level of exam that he is more likely to be successful in, based on his work and assessments throughout the year.

The awards cover 3 separate areas and 1 exam is taken each year as follows:

Year 9: Statistical Methods (AST10/20)

Year 10: Number and Measure (ANM10/20)

Year 11: Algebra (AAL20)

**AQA Level 2 Certificate in Further Maths (Code 8360)**

This exam contains Level 8 and 9 GCSE topics and A level Maths content and has the same points score as a GCSE exam and is aimed at the top performing students in GCSE. It is a very demanding course and requires a lot of extra preparation but helps the top students achieve the higher GCSE grades of 8 and 9.

The Exam board is AQA and the exam consists of two papers

**PAPER 1** **PAPER 2**

40% of final mark 60% of final mark

Non Calculator Calculator

70 Marks 105 Marks

1 Hour 30 Minutes 2 Hours

Websites, Intervention and Revision Opportunities

**In School**

Students have a lot of assessments throughout the three years and all results and analysis are available in their booklets found in their exercise books. Students also do lots of exam practice in lessons in the months leading up to every exam, this then enables us to see which topics the class needs to cover. It also gives students an idea of what grade they are currently working at and what topics and type of question they need to improve on. Those student’s not making enough progress will be guided on what areas to improve on and may be asked to attend intervention classes.

**Websites (All details in the student’s booklets)**

**Mathswatch-** [**www.mathswatchvle.co.uk**](http://www.mathswatchvle.co.uk)

One of the most effective ways of revising was to use the **Mathswatch** website. We have subscribed to this and so it is free for our students, they have been given a user name and password. There are also worksheets that the students can print out using their school printing budget or at home.

**Other Websites**

**www.mymaths.co.uk** all students have a login for this site where students can do lessons, activities, games and test themselves. There are also handy booster packs that the students need to pick the right level for them. Particularly useful for Foundation students are the D to C boosters.

**Kesh Maths-** www.keshmaths.com extremely useful for graded worksheets and guided video lessons for each topic to support pupils at home.

**PIXL Maths app –** Excellent pre-exam practice available for free on all platforms.

**Revision Guides**

If your child prefers to learn from a book Revision Guides are available from WHSmiths, Amazon etc. Make sure you have the correct level and exam board. We recommend the following

***Higher GCSE exam***

CGP GCSE Maths Edexcel Revision Guide ISBN # 978 1 84146 544 9

CGP GCSE Maths Edexcel Exam Practice Workbook ISBN # 978 1 84762 973 9

***Foundation GCSE exam***

CGP GCSE Maths Edexcel Revision Guide ISBN # 978 1 84146 545 6

CGP GCSE Maths Edexcel Exam Practice Workbook ISBN # 978 1 84762 978 4

**There are also Edexcel practice books available for the award exams**

Number and Measure Level 1: ISBN 9781446903278

Number and Measure Level 2: ISBN 9781446903285

Statistical Methods Level 1: ISBN 9781446903292

Statistical Methods Level 2: ISBN 9781446903308

Algebra Level 2: ISBN 9781446903223

***AQA Level 2 Further Maths exam***

Further Maths Practice book: ISBN-9780008158620

CGP Level 2 AQA Further Maths Revision Guide ISBN # 978 1 78294 179 8

CGP Level 2 AQA Further Maths Practice Workbook ISBN # 978 1 78294 180 4

**Calculators**

For the calculator paper students need a scientific calculator. Every brand of calculator works differently so it is essential students are using a calculator they are familiar with in the exam. We recommend students should have a Casio FX-83GTPLUS calculator which can be purchased from any retailer like Sainsburys, Tesco, WHSmith etc.

**Equipment**

As well as the calculator your son must bring in a black pen, pencil, ruler and rubber to every maths lesson.

**Last of All**

The students who perform best are those who enter the exam room confident, relaxed, healthy and rested. Revising is important but looking after themselves is the best possible preparation.