

Year 10 information night

Good evening and welcome. This is it, the start of GCSE studies. They've come a long way in the last 10 years to get here and done so well but the next five terms are tough and they've got a lot to do. We are far enough into term now that they know, and you too I expect, that the expectations have gone up but don't worry; tonight we want to tell you all about that and explain how you can help your children.

This might be your first child through GCSE, some of you might have done it a couple of times.

Collectively as a staff team we've guided tens of thousands of students through. This is my 23rd year seeing another GCSE cohort through- that's about 4500 Y10s I've worked with. Please listen to our advice- they do it once, we do it every year.

Everyone wants the same thing- the best outcomes for your children in their GCSEs to give them the qualifications to maximise their choices in life. We want them to not be prevented from living their dreams by not having the qualifications to open the right doors in life. We want them to have calm, happy and successful year 10 and 11 and manage the pressure well. This will develop their character too- which they'll need in life, coping with things that are tough is more important than learning

I hope you've seen the work we've been doing on aspirations- your child should soon have a piece of writing in the back of their planner about where they want to go in life. I hope they discussed this with you over the summer. Do remind them what they are working towards when it gets hard please.

2 Key messages from me:

1) Your child can't learn if they aren't here.

It is shocking but true: as children move up through the school attendance drops- when arguably it matters the most. Ensure your child is here every day.

Do not take term time holidays- it does terrible damage at any age but in GCSE years it can't be recovered from.

Let me tell you the story of one of last year's Y11. Like too many boys he was bright but a bit lazy and through Y10 he kept promising us he'd work when it mattered. His timing was cutting it fine but by the autumn of year 11 he was on course to get the grades for sixth form and he had the confidence and personality to get into university and go on to a management career and be able to support a family of his own with a good career.

But then his family took him away to visit family in term time for most of November. He missed the grades for sixth form by just one grade in each subject. That trip at just the wrong time certainly made the difference.

I hope he still does well in life but it's going to be a lot harder now and he's starting a college course on much lower level qualifications than he should be- it will take him two years at least to get back to where he could have been now had he not taken that 3 week trip.

- 2) **My second point is time management at home must be good.** Have a grown up conversation with your child about getting the study done before other things. Time spent staring at a phone or playing video games can be rest and relaxation but it very quickly soaks up too much time and social media causes so much angst and argument. One year 10 told us the other day he sits down to do homework but his friends keep texting and he goes out to meet them. Please take the phone off them for an hour until homework is done- getting it back will spur them on.

Using phones and tablets before bed is really bad news- especially when they read gossip than 'must be replied to!' As you know my son is Y10 and every night we make sure he plugs his phone in to charge in the kitchen- and when he does he always sees messages that I know he'd be answering in bed if we didn't enforce this.

Sleep must be good quality and minimum 8 hours a night so no phone in their room pinging chat updates all night.

If they argue it's their alarm clock buy them a real one. When you ensure the phone charger is in the kitchen they get up much more quickly to

come and see what the messages waiting for them downstairs. They may well admit to you, in time, life is better not being a slave to it. If you need to compromise on this one get them to agree to set 'do not disturb' times on the phone.

But do be aware they are cunning. Lights off and the house goes quiet and then many with phone in their room switch back on when you have gone to carry on. If that's your child please unplug the wifi router and take it to bed with you at night. Remind them who pays for the phone and internet!

I'll stop there and hand over to the experts, we've much more to tell you but attendance, sleep and phones are three simple things you can do to improve the life chances of your child.