

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Dear Year 11 Parents and Carers

With a half term complete, less than 24 teaching weeks remain until your children start their external examinations and less than four teaching weeks until the December mock exams. With this limited amount of time, I would like to reinforce a few expectations.

You will have seen in the Oaklands News the headline figures from this years' exam results and we are delighted that Oaklands continues to be a school in which students achieve well at both GCSE and A Level. However, this success does not come easily. The best outcomes are achieved when home and school have worked in tandem to support students during what will almost certainly be their most challenging year in school yet.

The DfE have removed all the adaptations in place for GCSE as a result of the impact of COVID. There is some debate about the fairness of this as the current Year 11 have not had a normal experience going through secondary education. Despite this, students will need to be prepared for an exam season that is close to normal and so I therefore want to highlight some key points to help us navigate through the remaining weeks together in order that your sons and daughters achieve their potential in the Summer 2024 exams.

1. Communication

As the year moves towards the GCSE, many students feel stressed and anxious. This is normal as exams **are** stressful but much of this anxiety can be eased by encouraging good eating and sleeping habits, along with lots of moral and practical support from home. If there are any serious concerns, please encourage your child to talk to someone in school (their Form Tutor is a good first port of call) or contact us yourselves. Do not wait – the earlier we become aware of an issue, the more likely we are to be able to work together to resolve it. Please contact Mrs Mitchell Head of Year 11, or Mrs Bonnington, Deputy Head to discuss any such concerns.

2. Teaching, Learning and Exam Support

Whilst good teaching remains a key component of your child's success, as they approach their exams it is the effectiveness of learning that will determine the outcome. There are a whole range of factors that can help or hinder students' learning. They include factors within each youngster - such as motivation and preferred learning styles - as well as external factors - such as the opportunities that exist to learn and the other demands that life makes on their time.

At this point, we would expect students to be engaged in a minimum of 35 hours of teaching and learning a week. In school students complete approximately 25 hours, this leaves a further 10 hours for homework and independent learning/revision.

After October half term, in the run up to the mock examinations, this needs to increase. By the Spring, in preparation for the final exams, we would expect a minimum of 40 hours teaching and learning a week.

We have already initiated additional support for many students and during the second half of this term we will continue to target groups of students who need support to reach their potential. Our intervention will include after school sessions, tutoring and mentoring.

To assist students and parents with their planning and preparation, we are producing a booklet showing each subject's topic and assessment overview for the remainder of the year. The booklet will also contain useful information on independent study techniques and wider reading. The booklet will be sent to students and parents after half term.

Mr Bamford will also be writing to you separately after half term to provide information about the Year 11 mock exams.

3. **Planning for Post-16**

Whilst your sons and daughters have access to Careers Education and our advisors give guidance regarding post-16 options, it is important that you as parents/carers accompany your child to open events and help them to make appropriate plans for the future which are commensurate with their academic ability, aspirations and interests. We find that students who have decided on a post-16 course by Christmas, be it A levels, T Levels, BTECs, apprenticeships etc, are then really motivated in their studies because they have a clear idea of what grades they need to achieve to be accepted on the course.

It was wonderful to see so many of you at our recent Sixth Form Open Evening. The application form for those wishing to join the Sixth Form for 2023-2024 can be accessed via this link:

[September 2024 Application to Oaklands Catholic Sixth Form College](#)

These application forms should be submitted by 15th December 2023, please. Further information about our Sixth Form College can also be found on the school website by following this link: [Sixth Form - Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College](#).

4. **Attendance and Punctuality**

Good attendance at school is critical for exam success, as is punctuality to both school and lessons. The vast majority of students are punctual and have very good attendance. If this is not the case for your child, we are happy to work with you to improve the position. Holidays during Year 11 will not be authorised.

5. **Standards**

I continue to have the highest expectations for our students around behaviour, standards and uniform. By this stage, the vast majority of our students are self-regulating their behaviour with minimal intervention from school, as should be the case at 15 and 16 years old. For those who still require intervention and support there is still an expectation that they too will move towards improving their behaviour. What will not be tolerated is disruption to the learning of others and students who persist in behaving in this way will be managed in a robust way, as befitting their age and stage in school. Staff need to be able to teach and support students towards their exams rather than spend valuable time unpicking issues which have invariably started outside of school, but which impact on the smooth running of the school.

6. Written Reports

Parents and carers will receive written reports about the progress of their child these will go home around 9th November. This might seem early for a report, but you will receive mock exam grades in January and there will be a Parents' Evening early in the spring term.

At the end of Year 11, we have a number of Oaklands traditions which enable our students to celebrate their time in school. There are plans for a Leavers' Mass and farewell celebrations just before the May holiday, a final celebration assembly and of course the Year 11 Prom. All of these events are an important part of what we are about as a community and therefore **I do need to be clear that attendance at any of these events is at the discretion of the school and is entirely dependent on a students' positive attendance, effort and behaviour throughout the year.**

Finally, I wish all of you, parents, carers and students, the very best of luck for the next eight months and do not underestimate the challenge ahead. I firmly believe that this year group has the talent and ability to outperform last year's cohort. By working together, we can help our students achieve their potential as well as ensuring they enjoy their 'final' year at school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Quinn', written in a cursive style.

Mr Matthew Quinn
Headteacher