GCSEs: What can parents do to support their child?

A guide to supporting your child through Year 11 with revision, exam preparation and mental toughness

Introduction

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You are all too aware of how important Year 11 is and the pressure your child and family might be under. You may feel that you are worrying more than they are; you may feel anxious that your child is working too hard; or you may feel they are simply not doing enough.

As a parent you will be eager to help your child but can be unsure about where to begin. Whilst school and teachers provide the expertise and resources to help your child acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to do their best in each subject. Many studies have shown students with parents who take a more active role in their education generally do better in exams than students whose parents are less interested. There will be many expectations of your child and this is where they need *you* to help them:

- Improve their self-motivation and take responsibility for their own learning. They need to be asking if they don't understand class work and making the correct choices about accessing extra intervention sessions when they are offered.
- Developing their ability to overcome frustrations, failures and knock-backs; and strategies for persisting when they are learning material that they find difficult.
- Completing more work at home independently.
- Organising themselves and their revision notes for each subject and topic.
- Planning and carrying out their revision.

Perhaps the hardest thing for students sitting their GCSE exams is that of understanding the long-term importance of doing the best they can in every lesson, every day, and learning to shelve some short-term fun in the interest of long-term benefits. Unfortunately, from a teenager's perspective, interest and effort in education and it's long term benefits often come rather a long way down the priority list and this is where parents and carers come in to support the school at home. You are the expert about your child and your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands that are expected of them. This booklet is designed to give you some practical tips to support your child in preparing for their exams.

Parental support is one of the most important factors in a child's academic success

Year 11 Key Dates
2026-2027

Year 11	
Parents Information Evening (Online)	Thursday 17th September
Academic Progress Review Day	Tuesday 6th October
Sixth Form Information Afternoon	**Thursday 15th October**
Sixth Form Application Opens (On Site)	**Friday 23rd October**
Autumn Term PPEs	Monday 9th November – Friday 20th November
Autumn Term PPE Results Opening	Tuesday 8th December
Autumn Report & Parents Evening	Thursday 10th December
Careers Fair	Thursday 26th November
Sixth Form Applications Close	**Friday 19th December**
Sixth Form Interviews	**Friday 30th January onwards**
Spring Term PPEs	Monday 8th February – Friday 26th February
GCSE Exam Season	Monday 10th May onwards
GCSE Results Day & Sixth Form Enrolment Opens	**Thursday 19th August**
Local College Open Days/Evenings	
Uxbridge College, Uxbridge Campus	7th October 4pm – 8pm
Uxbridge College, Hayes Campus	15th October, 4pm – 7pm
Slough & Langley College	4th November, 4pm – 6:30pm
Windsor College	12th October, 4:30pm – 7:00pm
Berkshire College of Agriculture	3rd October, 14th November, 10:00 – 2:00pm

For more information about Wexham Sixth Form, entry and subject requirements then please visit the Sixth Form section of our school website.

Attendance Matters

A student who ends the school year on ***90%*** attendance will have missed ***four*** complete ***weeks*** of school.	***90%*** over 5 years at secondary school equates to half a school year and the achievement at GCSE will ***be at least one grade lower.***

Attendance Percentage	School Days Missed	Learning Missed
99%	2 days missed per year	12 lessons missed
98%	4 days missed per year	24 lessons missed
97%	6 days missed per year	36 lessons missed
96%	8 days missed per year	48 lessons missed
95%	10 days missed per year	60 lessons missed
94%	12 days missed per year	72 lessons missed
93%	14 days missed per year	84 lessons missed
92%	16 days missed per year	96 lessons missed
91%	18 days missed per year	108 lessons missed
90%	20 days missed per year	120 lessons missed
90% attendance or less is considered by the Government to be 'Persistently Absent' and could result in Fixed Penalty Notices issued for non-attendance.		

95% Target

Punctual and regular attendance is essential for successful learning

Punctual and regular attendance improves life choices

Revision Timetable

Students are supported in creating a revision timetable with their form tutor. There is a blank version of the one they were provided with on the next page.

When students create their revision timetable, we ask students to start with: planning which school interventions they are attending; commitments they already have; breaks and rewards (for wellbeing) and to leave gaps each week to allow for flexibility & catch-up when the timetable has not gone to plan.

From there, we ask students to start plotting which subjects they will study and when. We recommend students work backwards from their exams. Once they have plotted the subjects across the days, students then need to assign what (topics) they will focus on whilst revising that subject.

Evening revision sessions should only be for 30 minutes with breaks in between whereas revision sessions during school holidays may be longer and more intensive.

Before their final GCSE exams in the summer, your child will have sat three PPEs in June of Year 10, November and March or Year 11 and therefore should have followed three revision timetables. After each PPE period has finished, help your child recognise what was and wasn't successful about the revision timetable they created. This way they can tweak their revision timetable so that they are able to create a revision timetable that truly works for them before their real exams.

Top Tip!

If your child says: "I'm doing Maths for 40 minutes and then half an hour of French", alarm bells should go off in your head. It means your child has not broken the subject down into key areas to tackle their work in an organised manner; e.g. "I'm revising algebra for Maths and then irregular verbs for French" would most likely lead to better focus and gains in memory.

Parent Checklist:

- Have I seen their revision timetable?
- Is their revision timetable realistic?
- Is there a variety of and an even spread of subjects?
- Do I help them review what they have (or have not) achieved each day?
- Do I quiz them on what they have revised or learnt in school?

	Date	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								

Items for Success

Once a revision timetable has been produced, students can still waste time organising themselves or putting off taking action to actually start revision. It is important that they maximise their time for actual revision.

What do they need to revise?

Revision timetable
Revision lists
Access to Classcharts to view their homework
Class notes and class exercise books (including their resources from Year 10)
Any revision materials handed out by subject areas

Equipment	Environment
• Notepad / lined paper • Calculator • Highlighters • Coloured pens • Flash cards • Post-it notes • Digital device (only if they are disciplined to use wisely)	• Not in front of the TV • Phone kept separate with an adult • At a table (where they can ideally leave all their revision resources so time is not lost packing up and unpacking • Minimal noise and distraction • Good lighting • Comfortable chair

What equipment do they need for the exams?

Clear (see-through) pencil case
Equipment (black ink biro pens only)
Scientific Calculator
Screw-top clear plastic water bottle (label removed)

Revision Top Tips

Spaced Practice

Start planning early for exams and set aside a little bit of time every day. Five hours spread out over two weeks is better than five hours all at once. This is **spaced practice** & it is regarded as one of the most effective revision strategies.

- Divide up your revision into short manageable chunks of time . When revising aim for 20 - 30 minutes per session.
- Mass practice or 'cramming' is not effective & can be stressful.
- You need to plan your time carefully to ensure all subjects & topics are covered in shorter chunks over a longer period of time.
- Dividing up your revision into smaller, manageable sections will benefit you in the long term - the revision you do for PPEs will stick for the final exams!

Interleaving Practice

Interleaving is a process where students mix and combine multiple subjects and topics while they study in order to improve their learning. Blocked practice on the other hand, involves studying one topic very thoroughly before moving to another. Interleaving has been shown to be more effective than blocked practice leading to better long-term retention.

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
Algebra	Ratio	Statistics	Ratio	Algebra
Geometry	Statistics	Algebra	Geometry	Statistics

Retrieval Practice

Retrieval practice is a learning strategy where we focus on getting information out of our long-term memory. Through the act of retrieval, or recalling information to working memory again, our memory for that information is strengthened and forgetting is less likely to occur. Retrieval practice is a powerful tool for improving learning.

- Use your class notes and textbooks to make a list of the important information and content that you need to know across different subjects.
- Then close your books and test yourself. You can create quizzes, use flashcards or complete past exam papers. Make sure you don't use your notes!
- Retrieve as much information as you can, then check your answers. It's important to know what you know and what you don't know…yet!
- Use your answers to inform the next stage of your revision, focus on the areas that you struggled to recall from memory.

Revision Top Tips

Dual coding

Dual coding is the process of combining written materials with visual materials. There are many ways to visually represent materials, such as with mindmaps, timelines, cartoon/comic strips, diagrams and graphic organisers.

- Dual coding involves the learner drawing images, graphs, diagrams or timelines to support your revision notes.
- When you are revising using your class materials find or create visuals that link with the information. Compare and combine the visuals with the words.
- Don't worry if you don't consider yourself an artist - it isn't about the quality of your illustrations, the focus is to improve and deepen your understanding.
- Make sure your images and diagrams are relevant. Be careful though as too many images can detract from the main points.

Exam Vocabulary – Command Words

These are subject specific key terms that you need to learn for each subject.

Here are a range of command words that could be used in your exams. Do you understand what the exam question is asking you?

Command words can vary slightly across different subjects so it is important you understand the command words in the exam question.

- **Analyse** - Explain something in detail and compare and contrast.
- **Annotate** - Add to a diagram, image or piece of text to illustrate or describe features rather than just identify them which is labelling.
- **Assess** - Consider different options/arguments/factors and weigh them up to reach a conclusion about their effectiveness or validity.
- **Calculate** - Work out the value of something.
- **Compare** - Give a point by point identification of similarities and differences.
- **Define** - This means what is meant by … give the precise meaning of a term or concept.
- **Describe** - Provide a detailed account of an event/individual/concept.
- **Discuss** - Set out both sides of an argument and reach a conclusion, including detailed evidence on both hands or sides of the argument.
- **Evaluate** - Consider different options or factors and reach a conclusion about their importance, impact, value or worth.
- **Examine** - Consider carefully and provide a detailed account of a topic.
- **Explain -** Provide a detailed description or interpretation of a term or concept.
- **Identify** - Point out and name a number of possibilities.
- **Illustrate** - Refer to a specific case study or example (not illustrate as in draw).
- **Label** - Point out specific features on a diagram, image or piece of text.
- **Justify** - Explain why your selected choice or judgement is better than other options.
- **Summarise** - Sum up the main points or an argument; this can be similar to outline.

4 Methods of Retrieval Practice

@ImpactWales

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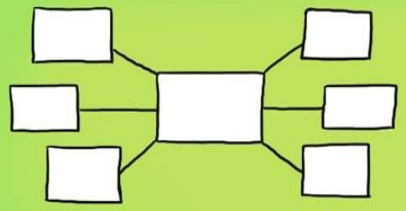
Before you start put away all your books & classroom materials.

Retrieval Practice Examples

- Exit Tickets
- Starter quizzes
- Multiple choice quizzes
- Short answer tests
- Free write
- Think, pair, share
- Ranking & sorting
- Challenge grids

BRAIN DUMP

Write, draw a picture, create a mind-map on everything you know about a topic.



Give yourself a time limit, say 3 minutes, then have a look at your books & add a few things you forgot.

QUIZZING

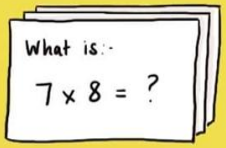
Create practice questions on a topic. Swap your questions with a partner & answer.

Question - What is a metaphor?

- ☐ A comparison using 'like, as, than'.
- ☐ A comparison where one thing is another.
- ☐ A comparison with a human attribute.

FLASHCARDS

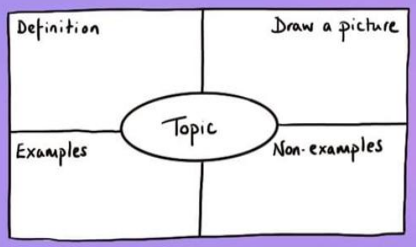
Create your own flashcards, question on one side answer on the other. Can you make links between the cards?



You need to repeat the Q&A process for flashcards you fail on more frequently & less frequently for those you answer correctly.

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISERS

Complete a knowledge organiser template for key information about a topic.



You can use knowledge organisers to learn new vocab & make links in between subjects or ideas.

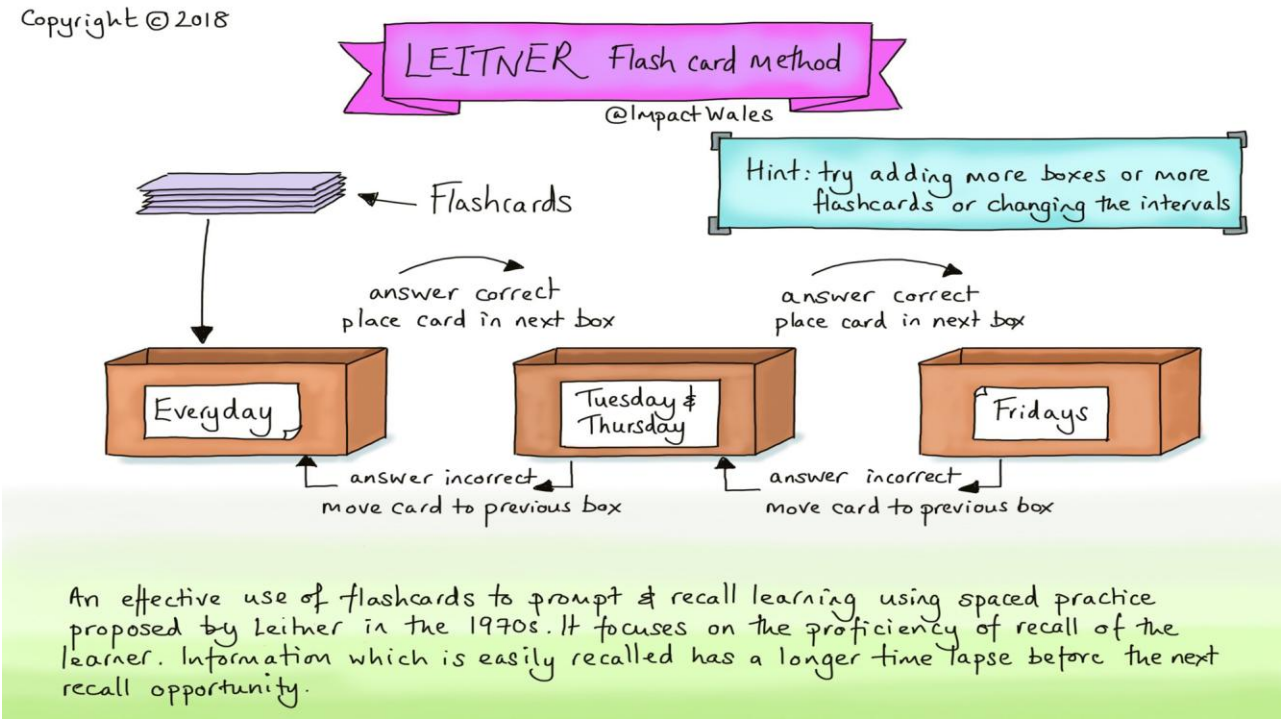
After you have retrieved as much as you can go back to your books & check what you've missed. Next time focus on that missing information

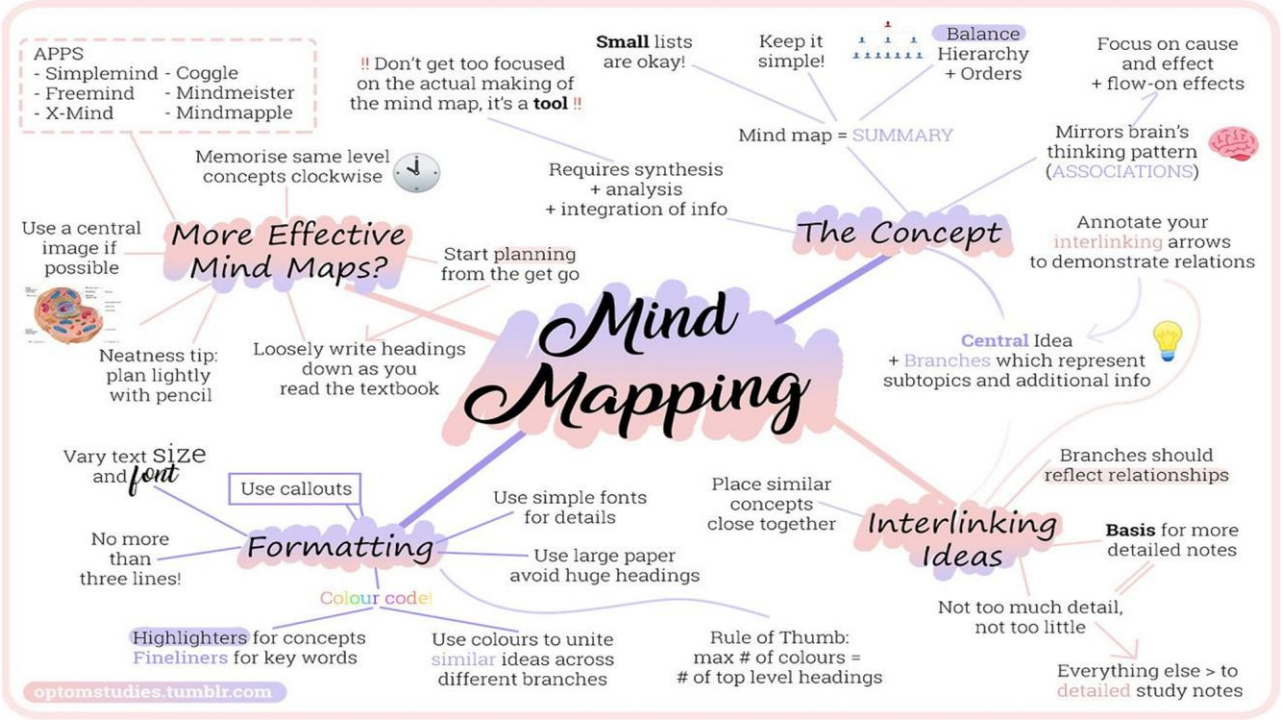
WEXHAM SCHOOL SPORTS COLLEGE

OPPORTUNITY INSPIRATION SUCCESS

Revision Top Tips

Revision Top Tips





A Parents' guide to: GCSE English Language

What are they being examined on?	
Exam board: AQA	
Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing – 50% of overall grade Section A: 4 questions based on an unseen extract (25%) Section B: 1 extended writing task (narrative or descriptive – 25%)	Paper 2: Writer's Viewpoints & Perspectives – 50% of overall grade Section A: 4 questions based on two unseen extracts, including comparison skills (25%) Section B: extended writing task: Transactional writing (persuasive or argumentative – 25%)
NEA: Compulsory Spoken Language Endorsement	

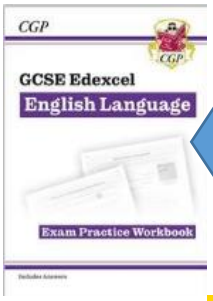
As a parent, what can I do?

- Encourage your child to read their AR book from the school library, for 30 minutes everyday.
- Listen to your child read aloud
- Check your child's writing for spelling, punctuation and grammar (Did you know this is worth 20% of their overall GCSE English Language grade?)
- Be your child's audience as they practice delivering their speech for the Spoken Language Endorsement

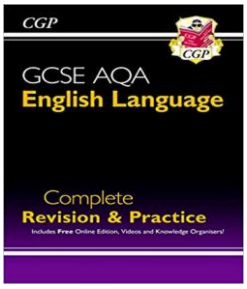
Where can I find extra help?

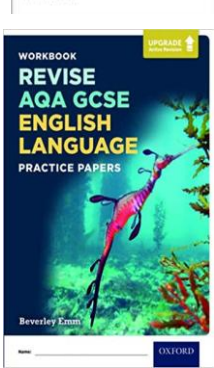
https://www.teachwire.net/news/5-of-the-best-last-minute-gcse-english-language-revision-resources/

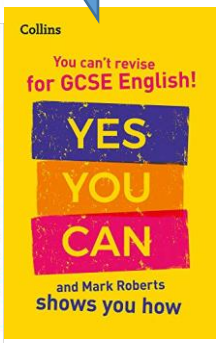
https://www.youtube.com/@mrbruff

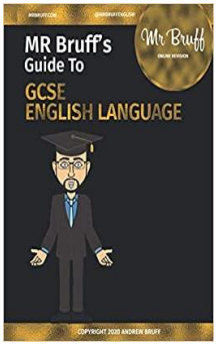


Given in school and used for HW









What can I do when they say they have no revision?

Reading

1. List 4 things you learn from an article in your own words. Use inference to pick out meanings not stated in an obvious way. Find a quote for each one OR summarise the article and embed your quotes.
2. Read one chapter of your choice from an autobiography (pick from a range of sports/celebrities/actors/travellers etc.) OR an extract from the opening of a novel and explain how the writer has used language/structure techniques.
3. Learn a range of different language techniques and practise identifying and commenting on how they are used in a range of texts. See if you can spot similarities or differences between two texts.
4. Listen to your favourite song lyrics, spot the language techniques used, why did the writer use them, what is the effect?

Writing

1. Select a picture/photo (from a book, magazine or your own selection) and write a description of it using adjectives, the 5 senses, emotive verbs, emotions/thoughts. Use a range of interesting vocabulary.
2. Select a topical issue from the website address below and argue one side of the opinion using persuasive techniques. Then write the other side of the opinion https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree
3. Using the title of a film as inspiration, write a short story where you try to develop a dramatic scene/a mysterious character/an unusual setting or an interesting structure

A Parents' guide to: GCSE English Literature

What are they being examined on?

Exam board: AQA

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th Century Novel. (40% of final grade)

Section A: 1 question on *Macbeth.*
Section B: 1 question on *A Christmas Carol*

There are a number of other texts named on the paper but it is essential that students respond only to the questions on the texts they have studied:

- **Macbeth - Shakespeare**
- **A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens**

Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry (60%) of final grade

Section A: a choice between two questions on the modern text: Either An Inspector Calls – Priestley or DNA - Kelly
Section B: one question on the Power and Conflict poetry cluster.

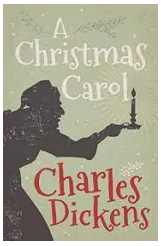
Section C: unseen poetry question (2 questions in response to two unseen poems).

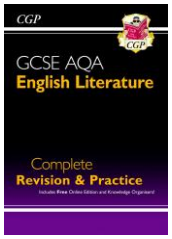
As a parent, what can I do?

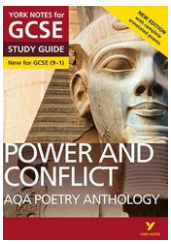
- Encourage your child to re-read their set texts, or if they would prefer, to listen to them as an unabridged audiobook, often available on YouTube
- Your child will need to learn quotations from memory, you can support them with this by testing them on the quotations they have learnt.
- Encourage your child to discuss the texts with you, for example, ask them why they think certain characters or moments in the text are important.

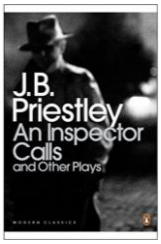
Where can I find extra help?

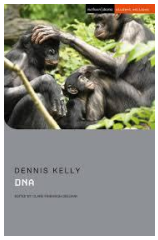
- 8 of the best revision resources for GCSE English literature – Updated for 2022 – Teachwire
- MCA Revision – YouTube
- The Project Gutenberg eBook of A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens
- Macbeth Original Text: Act 1, Scene 1 (nosweatshakespeare.com)
- Mr Bruff - YouTube











What can I do when they say they have no revision?

1. Encourage your child to test themselves on their key quotations.
2. They could spend some time exploring the social and historical context of the texts they have studied, for example:

The origins of A Christmas Carol | The British Library (bl.uk)
Macbeth by William Shakespeare | The British Library (bl.uk)

3. Look at previous exam questions and encourage your child to write detailed plans (rather than writing full answers). They must plan to include a line of argument so challenge them on this, encourage them to justify the ideas they have chosen.

4. Ask them to consider the main characters (protagonists) and the way they change throughout a text. (For example, they could plot the key moments in A Christmas Carol that show Scrooge gradually changing.)

5. Certain online resources can be very useful. If your child is unsure, they should ask us to check the clip for them. Some we recommend are:

'A Christmas Carol': Context – YouTube
The 10 Most Important Quotes in Macbeth – YouTube
Mr Bruff - YouTube

A Parents' guide to: GCSE Mathematics

What are they being examined on?

Exam board: Edexcel

Paper 1: Non-calculator. Total marks: 80	Paper 2: Calculator paper. Total marks: 80	Paper 3: Calculator paper. Total marks: 80

Tier	Topic area	Weighting
Foundation	Number	22 - 28%
	Algebra	17 - 23%
	Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	22 - 28%
	Geometry and Measures	12 - 18%
	Statistics & Probability	12 - 18%

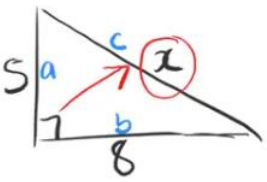
Tier	Topic area	Weighting
Higher	Number	12 - 18%
	Algebra	27 - 33%
	Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	17 - 23%
	Geometry and Measures	17 - 23%
	Statistics & Probability	12 - 18%

Exam aids: A formula sheet will be provided for PPEs and the external summer exams.

As a parent, what can I do?

- Students will be provided with a great number of preparatory materials to help them get ready for the real exams in the Summer. This includes past paper packs, revision checklists and our 'Look It Up' revision guide. Check that your child has these things and uses them regularly to get the best use out of them
- Does your child know their target grade for maths? Do you know how they performed in the November mocks? Do they know which areas of the curriculum they struggle with? Check in with them regularly about all these things to better understand where their priorities lie
- Speak to your child about our Monday intervention sessions, which run afterschool in M8 until Christmas. You will be notified of any changes to the schedule in the new year

Pythagoras



$c^2 = a^2 + b^2$

$x^2 = 5^2 + 8^2$

$x^2 = 25 + 64$

$x^2 = 89$

$x = \sqrt{89}$

Where can I find extra help?

Log onto the following go-to websites for learning and revising maths at home:

www.mathsgenie.co.uk
www.corbettmaths.com
www.1stclassmaths.com
The Oak National Academy
BBC Bitesize

What can I do when they say they have no revision?

Remind them of the resources and websites listed above and ensure that they are putting pen to paper! The best way to learn mathematics is to practice it – meaning the more problems they solve and become familiar with, the better prepared they will be to solve problems which are unfamiliar i.e. the problems they will face in the 2023 real exams.

Have a revision checklist, checking to see which topics they are focusing on. Are they spending too much time on their favourite topics which they are already strong at? Be the judge and steer them onto the path of greater difficulty with trickier topics they know they struggle with. Hard work is meant to be hard!

A Parents' guide to: GCSE Combined Science

What are they being examined on?	
Exam board: AQA	
Paper 1 Biology: B1 Cell Biology, B2 Organisation, B3 Infection and Response, B4 Bioenergetics **Paper 1 Chemistry**: C1 Atomic structure and Periodicity, C2 Bonding, structure and matter, C3 Quantitative chemistry, C4 Chemical changes, C5 Energy changes **Paper 1 Physics:** P1 Energy, P2 Electricity, P3 Particle model, P4 Atomic structure	**Paper 2 Biology:** B5 Homeostasis and response, B6 Inheritance, variation and evolution, B7 Ecology **Paper 2 Chemistry:** C6 rate of reaction, C7 Organic chemistry, C8 Chemical analysis, C9 Chemistry of the atmosphere, C10 using resources **Paper 2 Physics:** P5 Forces, P6 Waves, P7 Magnets and Electromagnets
NEA: Required Practical Skills	

As a parent, what can I do?

- Review each topic for each unit using resources provided by the school
- Use the Internet revision sites
- Practice exam papers from the exam board site and revision sites

Where can I find extra help?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/examspecs/z8r997h

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xzy4Ze93G3g&list=PLidqqIGKox7X5UFT-expKIuR-i-BN3Q1g

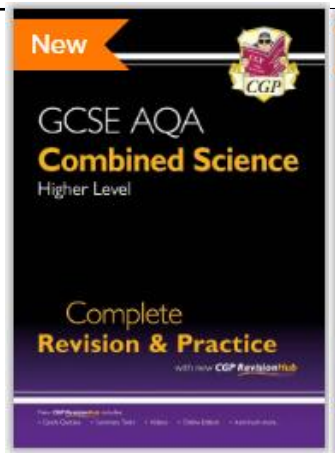
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fN8kH9Vvqo0&list=PLidqqIGKox7WeOKVGHxcd69kKqtwrKl8W

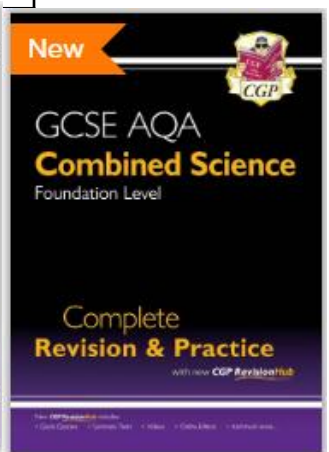
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGwcDCeYRYo&list=PLidqqIGKox7UVC-8WC9djoeBzwxPeXph7

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIOMlwBoe_4&list=PLAd0MSIZBSsF3vV_uxzbcNHuDrQ6Hc-Ul

What can I do when they say they have no revision?

- Ask them to get their revision book which can be bought from the school to revise from.
- Refer to BBC bitesize GCSE and Seneca Learning which lists all the GCSE science topics and review them
- Go through their exercise book and make sure they have all their notes up to date and then add more detail to them.
- View the required practical on the internet to remind them of the procedures.





A Parents' guide to: GCSE Triple Science

What are they being examined on?	
Exam board: AQA	
Paper 1 Biology: B1 Cell Biology, B2 Organisation, B3 Infection and Response, B4 Bioenergetics **Paper 1 Chemistry**: C1 Atomic structure and Periodicity, C2 Bonding, structure and matter, C3 Quantitative chemistry, C4 Chemical changes, C5 Energy changes **Paper 1 Physics:** P1 Energy, P2 Electricity, P3 Particle model, P4 Atomic structure	**Paper 2 Biology:** B5 Homeostasis and response, B6 Inheritance, variation and evolution, B7 Ecology **Paper 2 Chemistry:** C6 rate of reaction, C7 Organic chemistry, C8 Chemical analysis, C9 Chemistry of the atmosphere, C10 using resources **Paper 2 Physics:** P5 Forces, P6 Waves, P7 Magnets and Electromagnets, P8 Space physics
NEA: Required Practical Skills	

As a parent, what can I do?

- Review each topic for each unit using resources provided by the school
- Use the Internet revision sites
- Practice exam papers from the exam board site and revision sites

Where can I find extra help?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xzy4Ze93G3g&list=PLidqqIGKox7X5UFT-expKIuR-i-BN3Q1g

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fN8kH9Vvqo0&list=PLidqqIGKox7WeOKVGHxcd69kKqtwrKl8W

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGwcDCeYRYo&list=PLidqqIGKox7UVC-8WC9djoeBzwxPeXph7

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIOMlwBoe_4&list=PLAd0MSIZBSsF3vV_uxzbcNHuDrQ6Hc-Ul

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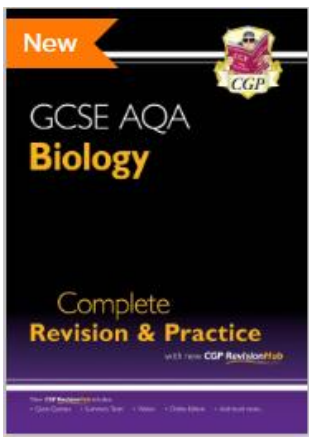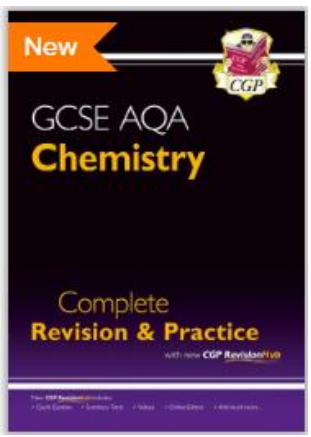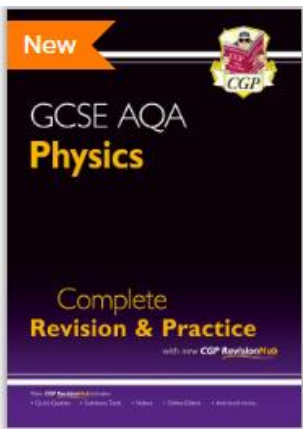
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- Refer to BBC bitesize GCSE or Seneca Learning which lists all the GCSE science topics and review them
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