

Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College

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Our Ref: MQ/SM

24 October 2024

Dear Year 11 Parents and Carers

With a half term complete, approximately 25 teaching weeks remain until your children start their external examinations and around four teaching weeks until the December mock exams. With this limited amount of time, I would like to reinforce a few expectations.

Last year students performed particularly well at both GCSE and A level. However, this success does not come easily. Despite the challenge ahead the best outcomes are achieved when home and school have work in tandem to support students.

1. Communication

As the year moves towards public exams, many students feel stressed and anxious. This is normal as exams **are** stressful, 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 your child's form tutor in the first instance (email addresses below); Mrs Over, Head of Year 11, or Mrs Bonnington, Deputy Head will also be able to discuss any such concerns if needed.

St Catherine	Mr Marshall	20Ca@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Clare	Mrs Rose	20Cl@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Dominic	Ms Mousdale	20Do@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Margaret	Mrs Vary	20Mg@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Martin	Mrs Schofield	20Mt@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Stephen	Mrs Jones	20St@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Teresa	Mrs Lopez	20Te@oaklandscatholicschool.org
St Vincent	Mrs Gamble	20Vp@oaklandscatholicschool.org

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 has already written to you to provide information about the Year 11 mock exams.

3. **Planning for Post-16**

Students have access to Careers Education and our advisors give guidance regarding post-16 options, it is also 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. More information about the Sixth Form can be found by following [this link](#).

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**

Like you, we 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.

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 half term 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 clearly we want all students to be part of this. **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', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr Matthew Quinn
Headteacher