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CLA/Ks2209

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Dear Parent/Carer

It was so lovely to be able to open our doors to so many parents and carers last Thursday 22nd September at the Year 11 Information Evening and thank you to everyone who was able to join us. I know that several people were unable to make the meeting and so thought it might be useful to write with the key points.

The first thing to stress is that we are all in this together. No-one can manage year 11 without some support and guidance, and our students are fortunate to have you by their sides encouraging them and showing that you believe in them. Please don't doubt or underestimate the importance of this.

Of course in school we will be ensuring that they have the opportunities they need to be successful in achieving their goals, and together we can help to prepare these very special young adults for the next steps. During the evening many things were highlighted however the key points to be aware of are:

- It is great to be able to plan for the upcoming year with a sense of normalcy. While we now know things can change very quickly, at the moment everything looks calm ahead.
- Staff are ensuring they are preparing the students for the exams and with this in mind revision sessions, revision days, year 11 assessments, etc. are all being planned as we speak. Details of these will follow but it's important that the students begin to think like Year 11...making the most of their lessons, the expertise of their teachers and the opportunities available to them, and that they do this with maturity and determination, getting into the Year 11 mind-set.
- Attendance really matters. I appreciate that children get ill and need time to recover. But if you think they can manage the day then please do all you can to encourage them to come in. We can be sympathetic but being in class and learning will make all the difference.
- All the Year 11s were involved in the Future Self project last year and the message of this - asking yourself if you are making the right choices and whether the choices you make now will help or hinder your success – remain important. Together we can help to guide these decisions, but part of the Year 11 mind-set is to do with taking responsibility for yourself and your actions, so we will be supporting the students to take charge. Connected to this is helping them to understand that there are some things they can't control and some things they can: Dr Sievewright spoke about APE (attitude, preparation and effort – three things every student has control over).
- It is important that the students know what they are doing and what is expected of them. This includes knowing the exam board for their subject, the number of papers and assessment methods expected and the content to be examined. This information is on the website but they can ask their teachers too.

- Mind-set is a familiar concept for Year 11, they understand that they may have a positive outlook – making the most of opportunities, believing in themselves and having the confidence to have a go. The alternate is a fixed mind set in which a student believes that things that go well are a fluke and that giving up is better than trying and failing. It is important that students realise that it is never too late to have a go and that there can be no success without hard work.
- A number of approaches to studying were considered during the evening. All students will have homework time, (about 1 ½ - 2 hours per night for year 11) but they might not have homework every night! Rather than 'celebrating' I would suggest they use this time to talk to you about what they have been learning, to check their notes and their understanding. That they begin to make summaries of the learning as revision notes for later... these might be mind maps, 100 word key points, or 3 dots and an underline (dot three vital pieces of information and underline one quote, or one explanation). Memory techniques are also a good thing to develop at this stage... making up stories or fantastic rhymes to help them to remember key information, (the ruder the rhyme the more it appears to stick, so be warned)
- The final points were perhaps the most important as they underline everything else. The students need to look after themselves. This means eating, sleeping, having fun and spending time with family and friends. It is easy for my colleagues and I to get carried away stressing the importance of working hard and there is no doubt this is vital. However we all also recognise that in order to be well we all need down time. So please ensure that your child is balancing/juggling all the aspects of their lives and staying healthy. Your being there for them really matters, even if they don't always appear to appreciate it!

The Year 11 are a great bunch of individuals and have been amazing over the last few years. I, Dr Sievwright, Mr Brooks and all the staff will be by their side this year; we will be prompting, encouraging and praising them all the way. I know you will be working with us in this and that together we can make a difference, so please keep in contact, communication is essential.

I realise that this summary of the Information Evening is wordy and if you have any questions or concerns then please don't hesitate to get in touch. Thank you for all you are doing and will do during the next nine months.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Laird
Assistant Headteacher

