

FAQ by Year 12 parents at Year 12 Information Evening

KINGSBURY HIGH SIXTH FORM

October 2020

Following our video with information for Year 12 parents on 01 October, please see the response to frequently asked questions.

Why do students print a lot of pages at school even they have bought the required textbooks?

For many reasons, really. Some prefer paper copies of past papers and mark schemes rather than digital versions. Others print off coursework and essays to hand in. Even though students have a textbook, they will make use of other resources they find in the study room and the library, for instance. Students are charged to print at the low rate of 1p per sheet, which is about as cheap as we can make it. The school cannot afford to allow students to simply print for free. We provide every student on Free School Meals with a one-off extra print credit. The more we use Google Classroom, perhaps the less students will feel the need to like paper copies.

How can children get support if they are struggling to organise themselves?

One of the reasons that students stay in the sixth form is the supportive relationships they have developed with teachers from Years 7-11 as well as new relationships with staff they have never come across before. We encourage students to seek support from teachers. We also provide Year 13 support for Year 12 in the study room along with masterclasses run by Year 13. We are developing links with alumni for support Year 13 as well. GCSE Maths retake students are currently being tutored 1-2-1 in a structured programme of support to help them pass GCSE Maths in November. In terms of organisation, every Year 12 student has their folder checked by their teachers in a process we call 'Skills Review' throughout October. We report this back to parents in a grade report later in the term. We also ask parents to help by checking folders are organised, so it provides a role of parents to help, too.

What will happen if a sixth former continues to flout the uniform requirements?

We do have a uniform in the sixth form which is somewhat unusual at post 16 but we, and the students by voting to retain it when we converted to an Academy, value it too. We issue the expectations before enrolment so these are clear. We then talk to the student concerned if they flout the guidelines. Obviously, at Post 16 we try to treat the process so it is suited to the age of students being pre-university but still in a school sixth form which isn't an easy balance to strike. After that, we enlist parent support by communicating home either by phone or letter. Students who then flout the guidelines risk being sent home to get changed. Clearly, the emphasis of our energy is on teaching and learning and rightly so, though we work hard to get over 400 students to abide by the uniform guidelines. It helps us if parents do purchase footwear for school that abides by the 'all black/no logo' expectation, too and comments on uniform before they leave the house or return home.

Does coursework still have a role in A-Level and BTEC?

Far less emphasis is on coursework under the 2015 A-Level reforms and new BTEC courses but there is some which rarely amounts to any more than 20% of the overall grade for A-Level but for BTEC it is far higher. Sciences now have a Pass/Fail element to practicals which are reported separately to the overall exam grade. BTEC has a lot more coursework than A Level but it does have some examination element which varies by subject. Your son/daughter will be able to share their coursework component with you as it will vary by subject.

How can I support my child through the sixth form?

- Try to ensure that there is space to study at home with minimal distractions;
- Avoid them studying all hours - it's not healthy or effective - top performing students will work independently for 20 hours a week which is 3-4 hours a day plus 4-8 hours at the weekend;
- Assist or encourage your son/daughter to do some exercise or engage in something other than school work e.g. just a walk outside with a parent can help.
- Be careful about gaming or obsessive use of phone and social media;
- Limit gaming to weekends rather than allowing it during the week and remove it if the student is gaining an attitude to learning score of a '3' (concern) or 4 (serious concern);
- Limit paid work so that 20 hours of study can be undertaken each week;
- Encourage your son/daughter to study without their phone next to them - it's a major distraction;
- Charge phones at night outside the bedroom so there are no distractions when they should be sleeping - and too many students report texting in the middle of the night and our investigations when there are issues show a vast number texting late at night;
- Try to remain positive and avoid comparing your son/daughter to others - it's easy to do but not always helpful and it comes out in conversations with students at school when we try to understand issues about under-performance;
- On grade reports, focus a lot on attitude to learning scores - effort is key and all our data shows high grades come from those with 1s and 2s for effort;
- Spend some time talking about school in a non-judgemental way - time together (even a small amount) makes a huge difference;
- Help your son/daughter to get to school on time every day;
- Help them with uniform - not wearing correct uniform results in negative interaction at school with staff which can be avoided easily - the main issues are not wearing a tie, wearing a casual hoodie instead of a blouse, shirt and jumper, wearing footwear with a white stripe round the sides as it needs to be plain black footwear;
- Email us at sixthform@kingsburyhigh.org.uk by 8.30am each day when they are ill or have an appointment;
- If you are worried, contact us and we can try to help.

Who do parents go to with concerns of their child's progress?

Email us at sixthform@kingsburyhigh.org.uk. But remember, students will rarely score highly at the beginning of the course. It's normal to get some low grades at the start: A Level is hard. The issue with BTEC is keeping to deadlines and we will write home when students start to fall behind. We also issue grade reports roughly every 6 weeks so you will be kept up to speed. Though students also need some space to take risks and learn from mistakes, so be mindful of supporting the long-term journey.

How will you ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all children especially in sixth form leadership positions?

Students self-nominate for opportunities to support the school, they are not chosen. These opportunities contribute to their Senior Prefect self-nomination form so there is equality of opportunity here and we are careful to consider gender and identification characteristics such as ethnicity and students from new schools who join the sixth form as well as the spread of students across courses. Any student can develop leadership skills e.g. on our Higher Sports Leadership programme. Students are interviewed for Head Boy and Girl positions and the opportunities they engage in throughout the sixth form are key in marking them out for the role: so there is plenty of opportunity for all to develop leadership skills and it is a very meritocratic process.

How will you support parents who are finding it a challenge help their own children in the sixth form?

Firstly, parenting is hard and there is often no quick fix when problems emerge. Our regular grade reports alert parents where there are problems by looking at the Attitude to Learning Scores. We think this score is more important than looking at grades: good grades will come from an excellent attitude to learning. Scores of 1 and 2 are 'excellent' and 'good' respectively. Scores of 3 and 4 are 'concern' and 'serious concern' respectively. If your son or daughter gains a score of 3 or 4, then things need to improve. Students need an opportunity to improve: the journey through sixth form isn't always a smooth one: they might dip, gain the feedback they need that things aren't going well, then make changes. Where there are serious concerns (A2L score of a '4') we will write home and discuss issues with the student and also meet with parents, if necessary. Scores of '3' will be picked up by tutors. But also, as parents, you have the feedback to make changes at home: look at our advice in the answer to 'How can I support my child through the sixth form?'. As a Sixth Form we achieve high grades overall, so our interventions with students which often involve parents tends to work very well. However, if you have concerns that your son/daughter is not working or even working too hard, then do get in touch sixthform@kingsburyhigh.org.uk.

There are occasions when life at home has become extremely difficult and we do meet with parents and their children to help mediate ways forward. We do not have an abundance of

time but we try our best to support parents as best we can. Obviously, where relationships break down at home is a serious challenge and often a challenge for all concerned.

We open up the study room over key holiday periods prior to exams with first priority being students on Free School Meals to book in. We also ask for data on students' background so we can target schemes which are aimed at those on Free school Meals etc so we are conscious of socio-economic background. We have counsellors on site who students can see to support mental health, too.

How do you support children who are distracted by social media?

Our Start the Day Right (StDR) programme, which runs for three sessions a week 8.40-9.05am as well as series of special 75 minutes extended Pastoral Periods scheduled with tutors throughout the year, support a range of personal issues and preparation for life beyond sixth form. Those issues include mobile phones and social media as a distraction. That is why it is important for parents to value these sessions as much as academic lessons. If and when we meet with key students 1-2-1 regarding under-performance, we will also tackle mobile phone use if that is an issue. Essentially, though, we are tackling an addiction when it's over-use has become detrimental, so it is a challenge for schools and parents to tackle.

Learning to manage mobile phone use isn't just for students: parents need to model their use at home, too. Parents can help by:

- Having conversations about use of mobile phones which are of a grown-up nature rather than being judgemental: guiding and nudging to start with;
- Do not pay or renew phone contracts if you think the phones is a damaging source of distraction;
- Have a rule about mobile phone free time e.g. during meal/in a restaurant, watching TV together as a family;
- Remove the phone if it is getting in the way of learning: parents are in charge, not the child!
- Model your own use of phones around the home and outside such as not using it when talking to others in the home and pay them undistracted attention, be clear that you are putting your phone away for a while, so you get a break from it, avoid constantly responding to your phone every time it buzzes or makes a noise. Talk openly about needing to be in control of your phone and not your phone in control of you. Mobile phone over-use is not just a challenge for students but all of us!

When is Year 12 parents' evening?

Tuesday 26th January – this is likely to be online with a scheduled video appointment (like Zoom but specialist software for this purpose).

What is my next report?

- You have already received the Bridging Work and Minimum Expected Grade report.

- The next one will include the Skills review (folder check), attitude to learning and November test results which take place 16-20 November 2020. The report will be issued in December. There will be retakes for students with U grades on 4th January.

And finally...

Thank you for taking part in the survey of questions. We found your questions very useful and we aim to continue this process throughout the year. We hope you find the responses useful too. We aim to do our best in supporting your son/daughter and, with your help, we want their journey to not only be successful but also a fulfilling. We aim to create resilient students who can face challenges along way, able to tackle similar problems in the future without the same level of support from home or school, so they are equipped for adult life, university/apprenticeship and the world of work. So, there is a balance to be struck between support and intervention as well as allowing students space to flourish, take risks with learning, face challenges and overcome them. We aim to strike that balance with parents and continue to have a sixth form where students enjoy the experience, have developed as a well-rounded person, has fulfilled their potential and are ready to move on to university/apprenticeships.

Mr M Senior
Director of Sixth Form
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