

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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15 July 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this email finds you well and looking forward to the summer period whilst your son is on holiday. After a difficult year, I hope this time is filled with activities and enjoyment without the limitations we have endured for so long.

You should have recently received your son's IAR Data in which he achieved between 28 and 39 of the 52 required points to enter Sixth Form. This leaves him in a precarious position as it leaves him needing to convert 3 or 4 of his current subjects up to a level 6 or above to meet the entry requirements. Whilst this is not an impossibility, it requires some attention as he has not yet mastered the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil his potential when we reach the examinations next year. His report should lay clear the subjects he needs to focus on if he is to return to Sixth Form and I hope this, along with feedback on his Year 10 exams by his teachers, makes him clear on areas he needs to improve. I also hope you've had the opportunity to sit down with him and discuss his report and look at ways to support him through his GCSE year, which can prove to be stressful for many of our young people.

Whilst it may seem negative having this conversation just after exams and before a holiday, it is vital your son understands this timing is essential to allow him enough time to implement change to his study habits, allowing him to meet the entry criteria. If his current performance was replicated at the end of next year, this would be a way off from securing a place in Sixth Form, something we all hope to avoid. Having these conversations next year would be less effective in changing the outcomes at GCSE. On top of this, with six weeks off it can be easy to lose some of the hard-earned knowledge that has been acquired throughout this term, leaving him further adrift of the 52 points.

I would insist for his benefit that your son spends some time working on his knowledge and skills over the summer in preparation for the challenges of Year 11, particularly in the subjects he is finding more difficult. This continued study throughout the break is essential to keep him progressing rather than falling backwards at the start of his final GCSE year. Many successful students construct a revision timetable with the help of their parents, allowing for revision time in the morning and free time in the afternoon, as of course a break is also needed from the rigorous demands of school. Fortunately for our young people, technology has advanced so far which can actually make this process quite enjoyable compared to the days of old, which brings me to my next point around revision resources the school provides.

Online Resources

Effective learning comes in three parts, firstly covering or revising material and secondly, testing the understanding of the content covered and finally revisiting this at a later date. It is for this reason we have purchased subscriptions to two online resources to help our students attain highly at GCSE. Its vital students understand the sections of the process and the below is a guide of how these resources should be used, along with how to gain access.



GCSEPod

The best use of this software is for the learning and revision stage. Every GCSE subject is included, broken down into the smaller topics or 'pods' as per the specifications given by the exam boards. Each of these topics is then covered with instructional videos and written resources designed to teach the learner the content and skills necessary for the exam. Students should spend time going through each GCSE 'Pod' for each subject, recapping material they've covered in class. In order to access GCSEPod, follow the instructions below:

- Visit www.gcsepod.com and hit login in the top right corner
- On the left of the next page it says 'New to GCSEPod?', click 'Get Started' underneath
- Click 'Student' and fill in the details using your full name as registered with the school
- Start accessing the content!

Seneca Premium

This software is the most powerful assessment tool we have found, containing quizzes and rapid-fire testing on almost every facet of the GCSE curricula. Our previous students have always highly recommended this software so we have enabled access to the premium service for every child to help with their revision. Once a student has started using this software, they can then use it to go back after a certain period and revisit the content studied to ensure they remember it. If they find they are struggling, they should revert to GCSEPod for further instructional help. In order to access Seneca Premium, follow the instructions below:

- Visit www.senecalearning.com and hit 'Sign Up' in the top right corner
- Click 'Login with Microsoft' and use your school email address and password
- Start accessing the content!

Should your son spend some time using these resources over summer, I'm confident that come the first Year 11 IAR Report in October, he will see the benefit ahead of Year 11. This should be a definite target to come far closer to the 52 points required and will be a good indicator of how his skills have developed over the summer. We will be working specifically on revision techniques during classes and tutor times, alongside some Evening Workshop provision for both students and parents to give you the tools to succeed next year. If he is still finding things difficult, we shall also look at extra, tailored support available to him.

Uniform

The only other point I would like to mention throughout summer is uniform and, in particular, school shoes. Many of our students will purchase new shoes ahead of the new term which should conform to our school uniform code of 'plain black formal shoes'. Many retailers across the country are trying to sell black trainers under the guise of school shoes, with popular brands including Nike and Adidas designing shoes just for this purpose. This do not conform to our uniform regulations so please do not purchase these over the summer as they will not be permitted next term. I will also take this opportunity to remind our students that our school policy is that of no facial hair, and no hoodies or sweaters other than a plain black school jumper.

Finally, I wish you and your sons the very best summer imaginable, and I look forward to starting again in September for a successful Year 11. If there is anything you need before then, please feel free to contact me on LXB@shsb.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



Lewis Baines
Director of Key Stage 4