

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Headteacher: Mrs R V Worth



March 2025

Dear Parent(s) and Guardians,

RE: Support in AS Level Biology

We write to update you on your son or daughter's progress in Biology following the completion of the Year 12 Mid-Course Assessments (MCA). We believe that a more structured approach to independent study will be beneficial in helping them meet the demands of the course as we look towards the AS Examinations this Summer and continuation onto A Levels.

To support their learning, we will be checking their independent work regularly. In addition, we strongly encourage students to attend the lunchtime support sessions held each Thursday in W13, where they will have the opportunity to reinforce key concepts, receive targeted guidance, and address areas of difficulty from both Year 13 mentors and teaching staff.

We would also encourage students to review their current revision strategies and consider whether there are more effective ways to structure their study sessions. Active recall, self-quizzing, and working through past exam questions can all be valuable techniques for improving understanding and exam performance.

Effective Revision Strategies for A Level Sciences

To enhance your son or daughter's performance in A Level Sciences, we recommend the following evidence-based revision techniques:

1. **Active Recall:** Encourage your son or daughter to actively engage with the material by testing themselves on key concepts without referring to their notes. This method has been shown to strengthen memory retention more effectively than passive review.
2. **Spaced Repetition:** Advise your son or daughter to distribute their revision sessions over time, revisiting topics at increasing intervals. This approach helps combat the forgetting curve and reinforces long-term retention.
3. **Utilising Past Papers:** Practising with past exam papers familiarises students with the exam format and types of questions they may encounter. This practice can improve exam technique and time management skills.



4. **Diversifying Revision Techniques:** Encourage the use of various revision methods, such as summarising information in their own words, creating mind maps, or teaching the material to someone else. This variety can make revision more engaging and effective.
5. **Structured Revision Timetable:** Help your son or daughter develop a realistic and structured revision timetable that allocates specific time slots for each subject and topic. A well-organised plan can reduce stress and ensure comprehensive coverage of the syllabus. [You should have received a *Revision Planner* alongside this letter that can be adapted and used as a suggested revision schedule.]

Implementing these strategies can lead to more effective study sessions and improved academic performance. We encourage you to discuss these techniques with your son or daughter and support them in integrating these methods into their revision routine.

For more detailed insights and additional tips, you may refer to the following resources:

- theuniguide.co.uk
- sherpa-online.com
- my.chartered.college

By adopting these research-backed strategies, your son or daughter can enhance their understanding and retention of the material, leading to greater confidence and success in their A Level Science examinations.

Furthermore, research indicates that handwritten note-taking can enhance memory retention and comprehension compared to digital methods. Writing by hand slows down the note-taking process, encouraging students to summarise and rephrase information, which leads to deeper cognitive processing.

This method also allows for greater flexibility, enabling students to use different colours, underline, or draw diagrams, thereby creating more meaningful and personalised notes. In contrast, digital note-taking, especially typing, can lead to verbatim transcription without sufficient processing of the material, potentially resulting in lower retention and understanding. Therefore, we encourage students to incorporate handwritten methods into their revision strategies to enhance learning outcomes.

We will continue to monitor progress as part of our usual academic tracking and both the grades and written teacher-feedback on your child's progress in Biology will be provided in the upcoming report issued on 26 March. Thank you for your ongoing support. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us via School Enquiries (enquiries@shsb.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C Brook
Leader of Biology

Mr D Hill
Leader of Science