

September 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to inform you of one of our home and school learning strategies for the next academic year. Contained in this letter is key information about how you, as parents and carers, can support your child with this strategy. Many subjects across the Academy will be using 'knowledge organisers' to complement homework strategies and the following information explains this in more depth.

Why are we moving to knowledge organisers?

Research suggests that equipping students with the skills to be able to learn, retain and recall knowledge is key to their examination success. The newly reformed GCSEs and BTECs are more rigorous and increasingly challenging. Nearly all subjects have lost their controlled assessments (previously known as coursework), and these have been replaced with additional exam papers. The focus of these exams is the retrieval and application of knowledge to a range of different contexts. This puts increasing pressure on our students to know and retain even more information for longer. Typically, when students leave their revision until a few weeks or even days/hours before the examinations and tests, this presents a problem.

Our short-term memory has limited capacity and students find themselves unable to retain the information so they become stressed and often give up, convincing themselves they are not good at revising or that they "can't do that subject". The secret to success is to regularly revisit the knowledge to be learned (known as 'spaced retrieval'). This helps transfer the knowledge from the short-term memory to the long-term memory. This not only helps to make 'learning stick' but it also frees up our short-term memory for day-to-day learning and experiences. To this end, we are introducing knowledge organisers as part of our homework strategy.

What are knowledge organisers?

A knowledge organiser is a set of key facts or information that pupils need to know and be able to recall in order to master a unit or topic. Typically, an organiser fits onto one page of A4, which helps students to visualise the layout of the page, which in turn helps them to memorise the information better.

How will a knowledge organiser help my child?

Knowledge organisers will be made available at the start of each unit to help your child remember what they are learning and to help them to see the bigger learning journey in their subjects. Instead of forgetting previous learning, students will continually revisit and retrieve prior learning from their memories.

How will a knowledge organiser help me to help my child?

Many parents/carers ask us how they can help to support their children at home. Many are worried that they do not have all the subject specific knowledge to be able to help their children and some worry how to check that their children have done their homework and revision. The knowledge organisers will help you to do all of this easily.

Suggested activities for parents

Most homework set will be linked to all or some aspects of the organiser. This might range from learning key words, spellings or remembering dates and definitions.

Here are some strategies that might help you to support your child's learning:

- Tell your son/daughter that the knowledge organiser will be as important as a pen, both at school and at home.
- Read through the organiser with your son/daughter – if you do not understand the content then ask them to explain it to you – ‘teaching’ you helps them to reinforce their learning.
- Try converting the information into a mind map or make your own version using clip art imagery if the organiser contains a lot of text. Display this on the wall or the fridge door until the memory ‘sticks’.
- Test them regularly on the spellings of key words until they are perfect. Make a note of the ones they get wrong.
- Get them to make a glossary (list) of key words with definitions or a list of formulae.
- Try recording the knowledge from the organiser as a sound file on their phones, so that your child can listen to it. Some students retain more information this way.
- Read sections out to them, missing out key words or phrases that they must fill in.
- Test them about their knowledge using the method below:



How will teachers check students understanding?

Rather than always submitting a piece of homework, teachers will plan their lessons to include a range of knowledge retrieval activities during the lessons, for example a ‘low stakes’ test where students are required to recall knowledge that has previously been taught. These knowledge retrieval activities recap all taught content which encourages students to continually revisit previous learning, rather than just remembering the last lesson or most recent topic. Teachers will then have a good understanding of common misconceptions which will enable them to plan lessons and support students accordingly.

Where can I find knowledge organisers?

These will be distributed to students by form teachers during week beginning Monday 27 September 2021. Every Year 7 student will be given a knowledge organiser booklet and will be expected to have this in their school bag every day, it will form part of their basic equipment. If a student misplaces a knowledge organiser, it is their responsibility to replace it.

Yours faithfully



Mark Ayres
Deputy Head Teacher