

Dronfield Henry Fanshawe School

A practical guide for parents/carers
to help support your child through
exams



At DHFS we understand that sometimes our students can feel very stressed during their exams.

We appreciate as parents that you too can sometimes feel at a loss as to how to support them throughout this challenging period.

In this booklet we have identified some tips that you might use to help release the pressure.

In advance we thank you for your support in helping your child reach their potential.

Top tips

Attend any meetings school invites you to about GCSEs. Hear first-hand about how, where and when the exams will take place, so you can support your child to be organised and prepared for what's happening.

Direct any questions or concerns you have about GCSEs to school or the teacher, rather than to your child.

Encourage your child to complete homework and coursework in a timely manner, but also encourage them to rest, have fun and enjoy their hobbies. A rested child is more likely to retain information than one who studies round the clock.

Encourage your child to engage in activities that involve going outside, take some exercise through the week.

Avoid overuse of screens – this can apply to leisure pursuits as well as revision techniques.

Plan out the week using a revision timetable including rest breaks and social / family time so your child can develop good habits of work life balance.

Encourage your child to talk to their teacher if they seem stressed or anxious about their GCSEs. Remember that a small amount of anxiety is normal and not harmful.

Ensure your child is eating and drinking well, and getting a suitable amount of sleep. This may need you to establish routines such as using the 'do not disturb' button on their phone or removing screens from the bedroom.

Eat happy– studies prove that eating a diet rich in colourful fruit, vegetables and wholegrains helps improve our mental wellbeing as well as increasing our fibre intake.

Plan something nice and fun for the weekends before, during and after GCSE season. Do it before results are about so they know it is their effort you are rewarding not the final result.

Remain calm and relaxed when talking to your child and remember to give them space to talk and feel listened to

Try not to place too many demands on your child this will not help if they are already feeling overwhelmed.

Ensure they know their exam timetable and have the correct equipment.

Spend time with your child to understand what concerns them most about exams

Is it the fear of failing?

Is it the worry of getting stuck on a paper?

If your child can pinpoint what's bothering them most, you can take specific steps to help them.

This may mean writing a list of the things they need to do short/medium/long term or using strategies to help them answer exam questions.

There are a few important things you can help your child remember about exams:

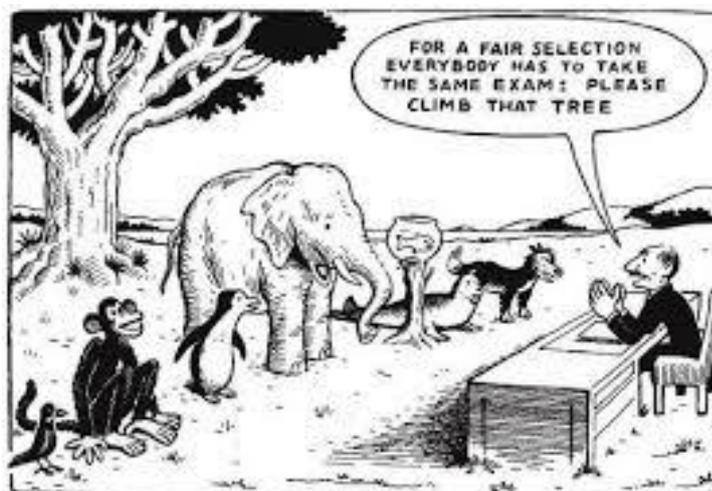
Exam results don't always tell the whole story.

Remind them that, once they have done the exam, worrying about the results is not going to be helpful, so try to forget about it.

Your child should be encouraged only to do their best. Exams are for a season. They're important and need to be taken seriously but, however tough it may seem, they'll be over before you know it.

Exams largely focus on what they are capable of academically.

Remind them the exams won't necessarily reflect how talented they may be in other areas, and they certainly won't highlight positive personal characteristics such as kindness and integrity – all of which are important factors that employers look for in individuals.



What should I do if I'm worried about my child?

It would be unnatural for GCSEs not to induce a certain degree of worry or anxiety but there is, of course, a tipping point.

Exams should not:

- significantly affect a child's appetite or their ability to sleep
- alter a child's personality or affect their relationships
- induce panic or tears
- cause a child to avoid lessons or not want to attend school

Points to consider;

Is your child showing the same symptoms at school as they are at home?

Is there anything else going on at home which may be contributing to your child's overall level of stress?

Is your child getting the required amount of quality sleep?

Talk to school - house progress leaders, mentors, subject teachers, teaching assistants or senior leaders - all have your child's best interests at heart and if there is any support they can offer they will.

It may just require teachers to be aware and a listening ear or there may be the need for other strategies such as; homework club, school based revision sessions, peer revision sessions, mentor group revision sessions.

Ultimately, work with school so everyone concerned can be offering your child the support that's needed.

RESOURCES on the school website

