

August 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

### **Preparing for GCSE Final Examinations: Our commitment to Year 11**

As we look forward to Year 11, I am writing to help the family prepare for the challenges ahead. This letter sets out what to expect, how to prepare and what the school has to offer beyond the day to day lessons. **Here, at Mossley Hollins, we know that year 11 is the most important of all academically for your child.**

We intend to work with you to give your child the very best chance of success as they prepare for the next stage of their life beyond school. In today's college and career-market, there are two things that will give them the best chances when they leave us in June 2020. The first is that achieves the best possible GCSE results in English, mathematics and the full range of subjects. The second is that their school record and reference is strong, demonstrating: positive values; hard work; honesty; great attendance and above all an excellent behaviour record.

It is worth reminding ourselves that almost all grades will be based solely on the final examinations with only a handful of key practical subjects still having a practical or in-year controlled assessment. Thorough revision and additional work and learning throughout Year 11 is the key to success. Your child will have to revise hard for the Pre-Public Examinations (the Mocks) in November and February, and for other in-year assessments so that we have a clear understanding of where their strengths and areas for improvement are. Students may be asked to resit any internal exams where their classroom teacher does not feel they have prepared adequately. Students will need to work even harder still at home for the real examinations in May and June, but **the key will be to put in extra hours each week throughout the year so that there's not too much to cram at the end.**

To support you there will be a **Parent Partnership event on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019** where subject leaders will go through the examination requirements in their subjects and provide additional revision resources. We will give you more details nearer to the event. In addition, we will arrange **Personalised Progress Meetings** with you and your child to agree action plans if their progress dips below what is expected. To support our students we will be inviting them to a **Revision Focus day** on 16<sup>th</sup> January where we will give them further revision techniques and tips and help them plan for the final run in.

### **Meeting individual targets**

We have set each student targets based on their own personal previous performance and capability taking into account the achievements of thousands of students nationally with similar previous performance over the last few years. These targets, are achievable by your child and are set in line with our high expectations as we want them to fulfil their potential, to give them the best possible chance of success and to have a wide range of options available to them at college and beyond. This can only happen if your child puts **time aside each week to work hard after 3pm** and doesn't leave it to the end of the year. I am delighted to say that our teachers can and will help with that in their own time, too, but the challenge will be for your child to get in the habit of working on their own, re-reading and re-writing what they have just studied in class and practising some exam-style questions in their own time. This is the only approach that is known to bring good results. The key message, of course, is that Year 11 is different and much more important than the preceding years: **work beyond school-time is simply essential for success at GCSE level.**

In preparation for their final GCSE examinations, your child will be expected to work hard and demonstrate their commitment to their studies. Classroom teachers have already set work for their students, to be completed over the summer, to ensure that they have a smooth start to Year 11.

## **Extra Lessons after School: Compulsory for Some**

From September, there will be booster sessions after school to consolidate and deepen learning, In English and mathematics these will start from the second week back and in some other subjects they will begin at the most appropriate time. For some students such sessions will be compulsory (where we have noticed that the extra intervention required to enable them to reach their target). Others are welcome to join the sessions if they wish. For all students our expectation will be that they understand there's just a lot more to do at home in Year 11. Those who work hard in school and at home always seem to do well. This may seem strange at first, especially if students are used to leaving at 3pm but we are competing against every school in the country, including selective and private schools for who such arrangements are common. I am determined that your child will have the same opportunities as privileged students from these schools.

If your child is selected to attend these additional sessions, they will have an extended school day, usually finishing at 4pm instead of 3pm for a fixed number of weeks. This may be a short-burst of additional teaching or, for some, it may have to be extended so that we continue to progress faster. The teachers involved are giving their time voluntarily.

If your child does get a letter saying an after-school booster session is compulsory please help us to 'sell' it to your child as a lovely and supportive offer by our teachers, rather than as a punishment. We would never ask if we didn't feel it was necessary. As I have already said, many privately educated students have much longer days and so staying in school beyond 3pm for extra sessions or further private study should be considered quite normal in Year 11. It's important that all students keep on top of their work each week: **cramming at the end will not work.**

## **Being organised**

You can help by making the conditions just right at home. There are some really simple things that you have probably already thought of. For example, over the summer you may wish to invest in folders, files or plastic document files (I suggest one good-sized file for every subject so that you can help your child remain very organised – there's so much to learn now and so many bits of paper for each subject!). Try to agree where your child will study, it could be in a bedroom or other quiet place in the house but try to establish a single comfortable area for study.

## **Avoid distractions**

For some students, time spent without games and with minimum use of social media will provide so much time for learning at home. Please speak to your child and agree together as a family how to make learning a priority by limiting such activities. It really will be worth it in the long run: there is no short-cut to success but hard work, dedication and some personal sacrifice for the students make all the difference. It may even be helpful for you to please ensure that social life is more limited to weekends and holidays: there's so much to learn, retain and practise for the GCSEs. Please remind your child that, following the exams, they will have the longest summer holiday they have ever had.

I would like to thank you in advance for your continued support in preparing your child for their Pre-public Examinations (PPEs) during Year 11 and the final examinations at the end of Year 11. I know we can work together to ensure that your child has great attendance, a fabulously positive attitude to learning in class and a mature understanding that Year 11 requires consistent work each week at home and school. This should ensure that your child can leave school proud of their results and achievements.

Yours sincerely



**S. Marshall**

**Head teacher**

**Mossley Hollins High School**