



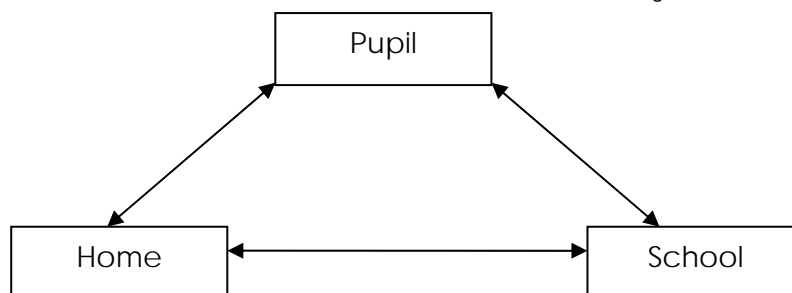
## HELPING YOUR CHILD AT KEY STAGE FOUR A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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## 1. How can you help your child at Key Stage Four?

Key Stage Four at Beal is an exciting but challenging time for our students. The demands of their new courses, the GCSE/BTEC content, along with the pressures of coursework, controlled assessments and possibly college courses, all mean that we need to work together more than ever to help them.

There are three main factors which contribute to a successful student's learning:



Working together with common goals, we can maximise your child's chances of success.

There are a number of ideas to help you help your child make a success of their studies. The ideas are for you to consider rather than being prescriptive. No one knows your child better than you do and you must therefore use your judgement as to which you apply or discard. It is not our intention to patronise; we are aware that many of the ideas mentioned here will be well known to you already.

A large majority of the information focuses on areas which we know Year 10 will be most concerned with at this stage and therefore much emphasis has been placed on homework, coursework and organisation.

Our main advice can be summarised as follows:

1. *Get your child to school – on time and every day.*
2. *Make their learning a priority.*
3. *Show an interest in your child's learning and school work. Talk to them and look at their planners. Use these to communicate with your child's teachers.*
4. *Encourage your child through praise of their achievements. Compliment good effort and good work – many of our pupils care about success but fear failure even more. Implement achievement targets with appropriate rewards but avoid instant rewards for quick successes – praise is sufficient for these.*
5. *Help your child establish routines and be organised particularly with regard to school work but also with their rooms and daily activities.*
6. *Ensure that your child has a suitable place to study. This should be well lit, clear and quiet and with everything they are likely to need, at hand.*
7. *There is always work to do each day - about an hour per day minimum. If your child claims to have finished everything then they should be encouraged to revise.*

## 2. Helping your child with school work

In order to promote success within school for your child, we would not encourage:

- a) "Terrorising" your child by threatening them with failure and "putting them down".
- b) Humiliating your child by comparing them to other, cleverer children.
- c) Exhausting them by forcing them to work for hours at their desk

However it is vital to realise that:

You ARE important as a parent/carer.

You CAN make a difference to your child's progress in school.

### First principles

**Emphasise the importance of education and model a lifestyle/attitudes that will help your child succeed.**

- Recognise *together* how important the work is and how much time/effort will be needed if they are to do as well as possible.
- Model appropriate behaviour and demonstrate in your own life that you value learning (e.g. let your child see you reading) – actually showing your child who/what you are is being a better role model than just what you say.
- Take an interest in what your child is learning – *ask them!* Do not interrogate them about school but encourage a time each day when they tell you about their work, targets and aspirations.
- Teach them that sometimes success is NOT instant. Encourage them to persevere, work hard and try to overcome failure.
- Encourage interest and positive conversation – do not encourage the moaning about or mocking of work/ school.
- Encourage your child to ask their teachers for help regarding any aspects of their work which they do not understand.
- Do not be afraid to ask teachers for advice/guidance – you can do this via your child's planner.

### Attitude and Self-belief

**Encourage confidence and self esteem. Help your child to see work as a challenge and a joy, not a burden. Help them relax and do not pile on too much moral pressure.**

- Encourage your child to believe in themselves. Show respect for their ideas (before you tell them not to be so stupid).
- Encourage the attitude that getting stuck is not a problem but a challenge and get them to develop an "I can do it!" attitude to the work.
- HELP THEM TO ENJOY. OFFER LOTS OF PRAISE. BOOST THEIR CONFIDENCE because SOME PUPILS ARE VERY NERVOUS!
- Parents should be the 'cheerleaders' in their child's education.
- Being calm with your child if they are worried, will help them to keep calm – try to be available to discuss their concerns with them.
- Do not put your child under too much pressure – they will find things easier if they have enjoyed doing them rather than if they were pressured to do so.
- Teach them how to relax by breathing deeply and closing their eyes to picture a calm scene.

## Planning for work

Provide an appropriate place for your child to work and help them to get organised by working out what they need to *know*, need to *have* and need to *do*.

## Organisation

- Encourage a START NOW approach – procrastination is the main cause of poor homework.
- Familiarise yourself with your child's homework and planner. Help them organise their work routine. Work out together what needs doing and when. Especially, encourage them not to leave everything until the night before. Teach them HOW to organise themselves. POOR SELF ORGANISATION IS A CRUCIAL FACTOR in failure.
- Help your child plan out their study time each evening BEFORE they start.
- Insist on an unchanging schedule for each task:
  - ❖ A time thinking about the task and what it involves.
  - ❖ Sufficient time devoted to doing the work.
  - ❖ Time spent evaluating/reviewing/proof-reading the work.
- Encourage routines such as doing homework immediately your child gets home.
- Insist that work precedes play e.g. insist that they finish homework properly before they go out.

## Workplace

- Identify a quiet SPECIAL STUDY PLACE for your child to study and a place where their work can be kept safely. Make sure the necessary equipment is to hand. Encourage the rest of the family to help by not disturbing them when they are working.
- Have all the materials they need to hand so they don't have to go off looking for information.

## Helping

- Only help when asked but always help when asked.
- Familiarise yourself with your child's textbooks and courses so that you can speak with authority.
- It can sometimes be an advantage if you don't understand it either! Ask your child to explain the problem to you – often they will see the answer because they have had to organise their thoughts to explain things to you.
- Know when to insist that they persevere and when to tell them to stop (and put an explanatory note in their planner to the teacher).

## Working at home

**Work in 20-minute bursts, in an appropriate environment. Get your child to try out their learning on you. Help them to find their best 'learning style' and reward them when they have successfully reached their targets.**

- Remember, the brain works best for 20-minute stints – after that you get brain drain. Plan for short, sharp sessions. Any longer than 30 minutes and it is likely that less and less will be achieved. Take a short break and have a glass of water (the brain needs water to function properly). Ideally take a break involving some physical activity (e.g. taking the dog for a walk/playing catch etc).
- One of the most important factors is to recognise that people have their own learning style. Be aware of what helps your child to learn. Approach a subject from lots of different angles - software, games, activities, books, flash cards etc.,
- Working with the TV or radio on or with loud music is NOT a good idea. Having Mozart or your favourite background music may help.
- Working with a friend is NOT useful – they waste time chatting and you will feel less comfortable about getting involved.

- Working with an older brother or sister who has already done the course may help (if they don't kill each other!).
- When they have finished, check that they have done their homework thoroughly. It is a breakthrough when pupils start to 'quality control' their own work before they show it to you.
- Ask them to read their answers and notes out loud to you. (Reading it out loud will improve their written expression because they will realise the bits that do not make sense). Respond only at the end. It is a good 'rule of thumb' that if you can follow their explanation, then they have done a reasonable answer on that topic.
- Offer rewards for each bit of work completed (e.g. points towards a visit to the cinema at the weekend or a phone call to a friend at the end of an evening's work, for example).
- If they do not have any specific homework, encourage them to take some time to do some extra work, perhaps using the Internet. Many activities/sites including SAMLearning are available from the school website at:

[www.bealhighschool.org.uk](http://www.bealhighschool.org.uk)

## Everyday help

### Insist on active learning and discussion in your everyday family life

#### A Learning Family

- Help your child to learn a new descriptive word every day and all the family use it correctly as much as possible – maybe stick it to the front door!
- Encourage your child's learning by reading and discussing newspaper articles – try to identify key points which convey the message and ask them questions to test their understanding.
- Insist that 'your house is a **listening** house'. Encourage your child to LISTEN and THINK before they speak.
- Talk to your child about things in the news/the world around them and encourage them to ask questions about how things work.
- Encourage them to make mental lists of everything.
- Get them to use numbers in everyday situations like shopping and to work out sums in their head.
- Play memory games when you are traveling in the car together. Have memorising competitions just for fun.

#### Lifestyle habits

- Make sure your child has breakfast every day, especially during the week of the tests – children who miss breakfast perform worse in late morning.
- Encourage your child to read for 10 minutes every day.
- Encourage relaxation time (too much study is not helpful).
- Encourage your child to include some positive TV such as information programmes and documentaries in their TV viewing.
- Make sure they get to bed at a reasonable time. If children are tired they find it hard to concentrate even when they are assertive teenagers with a mind of their own about such things!

You will find guides to coursework and controlled assessments at:

<http://archive.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca-06-3403-csewk-parents.pdf>

<http://store.aqa.org.uk/support/pdf/AQA-CONTROLLED-ASSESSMENT-LEAFLET.PDF>

### 3. Methods to help your child study and learn

There is a lot you can do to help your child make the most of their homework, coursework and exam revision.

## Helping with homework

Here are some ways you can help:

- Suggest doing homework as soon as it is received so that the information is fresh in your child's mind from classes.
- Encourage your child to speak up when in difficulty as you may be able to help find the answers.
- Make sure your child has a good work-life balance and doesn't spend too much time either going out with friends or sitting and doing homework.
- Find out about educational programmes on radio or television.
- Find out if there are any study, support or homework clubs which may help.

## Tackling coursework

Good coursework marks can boost your child's grades. You can help by:

- Finding out about the curriculum and how much work needs to be done.
- Finding out when coursework is due and helping your child to make a schedule to complete it.
- Making sure your child is clear about what they are required to do and how marks are awarded.
- Finding internet sites and safe chat rooms which can help with studying.
- Encouraging your child to print and save their work regularly if they are working on a computer.
- Encouraging your child to talk to their teacher about any problems they are having as early as possible.
- Making sure your child has the right books and resources.

## Aiding revision

You can help ease the pressure of exams by:

- Helping your child develop a timetable and help them stick to it,
- Listening to your child and find ways to support them.
- Encouraging your child with praise and rewards.
- Creating a suitable environment for study and revision – for example, a quiet area with a desk to work at.

## 4. What can be done to help a child's organisational skills?

A number of ideas and strategies to help children to become better organised are given below. You will need to choose (and where necessary, adapt) the strategies which are appropriate for your child's needs and your home situation. Try to encourage your child to choose the ideas below which they want to try with you so that they do not feel the ideas are imposed upon them.

- Developing 'reminder cards' (using words, symbols, pictures or photographs) to provide visual reminders of routines, equipment needed, how to lay out a piece of work etc – these can be pocket size and/or larger for putting on the wall. For example, a checklist with the days of the week and all the equipment required for each day, a similar checklist (on a pocket card) to ensure they have everything required for going home; 'jobs' card for everyone in the house. 'Reminder cards' work best if the child makes their own, with your help if necessary.
- Developing routines: having set times for doing tasks – e.g. always feeding the pets straight after a favourite television programme; always emptying the school bag as soon as they get home; always putting the school bag in the same place.
- Using 'organiser' boxes – one box for each day of the week, where work books and homework are placed when finished with, ready for the next lesson; to keep different things together.

- Enlisting the support of other pupils e.g. to check that homework assignments have been recorded; working on a task together to help concentration; to provide reminders of books and equipment required etc.,
  - Dividing longer projects into shorter 'mini assignments'. These could be listed and a timetable for completion agreed, and checked off when completed.
  - Learning time management ideas e.g. deciding at the start of a task how long they feel they will need to complete a task; setting times to do jobs; learning how to prioritise what needs to be done first and sticking with the plan – not to jump from one job to another.
  - Having a plastic wallet where anything can be 'dumped' to be dealt with later so everything is in one place; another plastic wallet for everything to be taken home etc.,
  - Using 'post-it' notes, a small cork board or dry wipe board, electronic 'data cards', diary, personal organiser, 'do-it-now' notepad, mini tape recorder etc., for notes and reminders.
  - Using different coloured highlighter pens to make things stand out' or 'Tippex' for correcting errors.
  - Using a watch with built-in alarm (alarm to be used appropriately – if the alarm goes off in the middle of a lesson, your child is likely to get into trouble!).
  - Colour coding equipment, (e.g. with stickers) books etc., for each subject and recording on a check list/timetable, so they can look for the items by their colour code.
  - One ring binder for all 'current' class work with work completed on separate sheets of paper, rather than separate books for each subject, would minimise the number of work books, folders etc., they would have to keep track of. Separate sheets of paper would also allow them to rewrite a piece of work if required and discard the 'draft'. Plastic pockets can be included in the binder to take papers which have not yet been punched for insertion. Work in the 'current' binder would need to be removed frequently into subject binders.
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- This strategy can be helpful provided the child can develop the strategy of always putting work into the binder. (This idea would need to be discussed with your child's teachers as it would need to fit in with school plans).
  - Developing a homework plan for each day of the week/timetable which includes when they will do the homework (including time of day), how long they will spend on the homework and when it needs to be returned. It is better to do the homework as soon as possible as it is easier to remember what has to be done.
  - Talking homework through with a parent, sibling or friend to check that they really understand what to do before they start; finding a quiet place with as few distractions as possible for completing homework.

## 5. Organising a study space or study area

- a) Add a desk or study area to your child's room. No more papers on the kitchen table or in front of the TV. Children who have a place to study .... study! Position the desk so the child can see the door to the room.
- b) Hang a bulletin board over the desk to display achievements. This is a good place to showcase your child's awards.
- c) Include storage containers to keep the room clutter-free. Some amount of clutter is normal but excessive clutter represents the inability to move forward and will distract your child from studying.
- d) Position the computer away from the bed and shut if off at night.