

19<sup>th</sup> May 2023



Dear Parents/Carers

Thank you for your support as Year 11 began their GCSE exams this week. We have been really impressed by the mature and determined way they have approached what is of course a challenging period, and I congratulated them for this during a short assembly this morning. We look forward to seeing all pupils on Monday morning as the second week of exams commences with Chemistry.

Our programme of revision sessions continues around the exams and the schedule for next week is enclosed with this letter. We believe that structured revision time, with more contact with subject teachers, is the most effective way to use the time available and maximise outcomes for pupils. Revision sessions are being planned by teachers using their knowledge and experience to identify the most important and useful subject-specific guidance pupils can be provided with immediately prior to an exam. Being with staff who care for your child's wellbeing is also beneficial in helping them to carefully manage their revision and the various stresses of the exam period.

For this reason, as you are already aware, **Year 11 pupils are expected to attend school full-time until Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> June.** They are not on 'study leave,' which has not been offered at Saint Bede's since before the pandemic and I am not aware of any other local schools operating such a system.

If during this period your child is going to be absent from school for a day or part of a day, due to illness, a medical appointment or another appropriate reason agreed with the school, **it is essential that that you notify the school office by telephone or email in the usual way.** Parental or pupil choice to study at home is not an acceptable reason for absence, and so where this is given as a reason it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Over the last couple of days, a number of Year 11 pupils have 'signed out' of the school site after exams without any communication having been received from parents/carers. This is completely unacceptable, not least on safeguarding and safety grounds. It is also an unfair and unreasonable expectation of our small Attendance and Admin team to manage and follow-up on these absences. **Moving forward, where there has been no communication from parents/carers, absences will be unauthorised and considered as truancy.** The consequences of such absences may include loss of privileges such as attendance at the 'Prom.'

In addition, a small number of pupils 'signed out' of the school site after a morning exam or revision session, before returning later in the day for another exam or revision session. Unless this is for an appropriate reason that we have been notified about in advance such as a medical appointment, or has been otherwise agreed with the school, this is also unacceptable. We are a school, not a 'drop-in' service.

Of further concern is that I have been made aware that several Year 11 pupils who left the school site today spent their time in the local McDonald's restaurant. I am sure you will agree this is an inappropriate place to find a child who is still in full-time education, during the school day, in the middle of their GCSE exams. This example further illustrates why the best place for pupils during this period is in classrooms with their teachers.

Finally, for afternoon exams, pupils do have permission to leave the site immediately rather than returning to class for a short period.

I would be grateful if you could discuss the contents of this letter with your child.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Mr P Marsden  
Headteacher