

How can I help my child to study & prepare for their exams?

From S4, pupils are working towards their qualifications and many will sit trial exams (prelims) in February before the actual SQA exams, the dates for which can be found at www.sqa.org.uk. The prelims are a practice for the pupil allowing them to experience exam conditions and practice exam techniques but they are also a guide for the teacher as to what work still needs to be done. The SQA appeals system changed recently and so prelim marks can no longer be automatically used for appeals if the final exam doesn't go to plan. Studying for prelims is a real challenge for many pupils as they are still working their way through the course content and being bombarded with new information but yet expected to revise over their old notes too.

From the very start of a course, pupils are recommended by teachers to read over their notes every night and do additional questions (using their course books or websites) at home so they gain a better understanding of what they've been taught as they go through the course. However many teenagers prefer to ignore this advice believing it will all be OK! As parents, we can only encourage; providing them with time, space and resources to study, unfortunately we can't do the work for them and sadly despite being told both at home and school many will still learn the hard way!



Pupils tend to be more ready for exams than their parents – it's a natural transition, it's what they've been working through the course for, so our worrying is often not beneficial to them. They can only try their best!

Some pupils will need additional help with coursework. Most subjects provide after school sessions which pupils can attend. They don't need to just go to the ones provided by their current teacher – like in life, pupils will get on better with some teachers than others – after school sessions give the opportunity to speak to/learn from other members of staff and other pupils. Those travelling to school by bus can get a bus pass extension when attending after school sessions to allow them to get a service bus at no cost, unfortunately if you're not on a service bus route or walking distance from school attending these sessions is more difficult but many teachers are happy to answer specific questions from pupils at lunchtimes occasionally, so don't be afraid to ask. After school sessions are not compulsory, they are a study tool which some pupils like to use while others prefer to study in isolation – with or without background music!

Some parents pay tutors to help their children with particular subjects. This may or may not be beneficial, it depends on the child. An external tutor is not a guarantee of passing an exam. Sometimes different methods of teaching can benefit a pupil's understanding but often they will simply learn at their own pace and all of a sudden just "get it"; hence why some pupils choose to repeat the coursework a second year before sitting the exam. Staff members will give their opinion but ultimately it is the pupil's decision.

There are many ways to study and your child will work out what is best for them. Suggestions and advice are available from teachers and many websites including the SQA <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41266.html>. One way to help your child prepare for exams is by using the past papers & marking guidelines available on the SQA website. Even if it's not your specialised subject, marking their answers following the marking instructions provided can be a big support to the youngster (this works best for subjects that involve calculations e.g. Maths, Physics, Chemistry). The process can help them identify the areas in which they're weaker and confidence can be gained when they realise that some of the marks were lost by simply not writing the units (e.g. cm, kg, etc) or not showing sufficient working (some marks are awarded for correct working even if they've got the wrong answer).

Your child will have their own course notes and workbooks depending on the subject but there is also a wealth of information online including study notes and videos of lessons which can all be used to help revision – just search for the qualification level and subject (e.g. National 5 Maths) on www.google.co.uk and www.youtube.com or try revising using BBC Bitesize resources www.bbc.co.uk/education. Remember, free internet access is available at all local libraries. Revision books to help your child can be bought e.g. How to Pass..., Leckie & Leckie etc – look out for the ones which have been endorsed by SQA as they should contain the correct material. As the courses are still new there isn't yet a large second hand market but it would be worth asking around or checking online for used copies. Buying the book is the easy part – getting your child to use it is sometimes more difficult!



SQA exam results are posted to pupils in August but notification can also be texted or emailed to your child. At the relevant time in school, each pupil is encouraged to open a MySQA account where they can provide contact details and request their method of correspondence. Waiting on exam results can be a nail-biting time for pupils, parents & teachers!

Remind your child to be well prepared for each exam, do their best both before and during it and stay calm – no-one can ask more of them!

Good luck!