

Montsaye Sixth Form

Information Booklet

For

Parents and Carers



2017-18

Introduction

This booklet will hopefully provide answers to some of the questions that are often asked about the Sixth Form at Montsaye and about what students can expect and will encounter as a Sixth Former. If you have any other questions or concerns then please do not hesitate to contact the Sixth Form.

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Advice from students

Comments made by Year 13 students in answer to the question:

“What advice would you give to Year 12 students just starting in the Sixth Form?”

- Allocate specific time to each subject
- Attend all lessons and copy up notes if you miss something
- Make use of the library/study room during free lessons
- Take notes and develop them - you will need them to revise
- Start things such as coursework early because if you leave it to the last minute it will not be very good
- Always ask if you don't understand
- Do your homework as soon as you get it - if you don't it will soon pile up
- Make notes that are easy to revise from. If you make all your notes in a similar style it also makes revising easier
- Free periods are an advantage to you if you use them
- Don't prioritise subjects you like most, at the expense of others
- Set school as your main priority
- Speak to someone if you are struggling
- Prepare for the Sixth Form to be harder than you think
- Re-write your notes if they are not clear
- Complete work to deadlines so that teachers can give you advice and feedback

Attendance

The school day for students attending the Sixth Form is 8:40 am - 3:00 pm. Students in Year 12 are expected to attend full-time, and should therefore ensure that they have sufficient work with them to be completed during study lessons.

Once staff have completed the first review, those students who have demonstrated that they have made a successful start to Sixth Form study may negotiate lessons of home study if they wish.

When students come into or leave the Academy it is imperative that they sign in and out, using the register in the Sixth form. This is for Health & Safety reasons, as this register is used in the event of a fire evacuation.

Holidays during term time should be avoided if at all possible, and will not be authorised. A level study is significantly more intense than GCSE and any lessons missed could mean missing essential parts of a course. If lessons are missed for ANY reason, students should make every effort to obtain notes from either their teacher or other students in their group.

All student absence needs to be reported to the Sixth Form. This can be done either in writing or by leaving a telephone message with the details, using the main academy telephone number and dialling through to extension 185 (Mrs McNish)

The vast majority of A Level subjects are now examined at the end of a two-year course. This means that students need to stay on top of their learning from the very start of the course; they will not be able to leave two years' worth of work to the last minute to revise. Students should spend some time each day reviewing the work covered in lessons that day to ensure they understand it, and so they can check anything unclear with their teachers.

Careers

Students are encouraged to start thinking about possible career choices during PSHE in Year 12. Some students may need to consider careers alongside Higher Education options and those hoping to go into employment after Sixth Form will be given the opportunity to research career possibilities during PSHE sessions.

We have a number of career related resources and contacts at the Academy that the students can make use of, as well as computer and Internet based resources.

Sixth Form Agreement

At the start of Year 12 students are required to sign an agreement, which sets out both our expectations of the students and what the students can expect from the Academy.

A copy of the agreement can be found on the Academy website. As well as expectations, it also contains the Sixth Form dress code and behaviour rules. The dress code is currently subject to change, and will be adjusted gradually throughout 2017-18, with a view to introducing a new dress code in consultation with students for September 2018.

Students are expected to behave in a mature and responsible manner that serves as an example to younger students.

Financial Support for Students

The EFA Bursary Fund is intended to help support those young people who face the greatest barriers to continuing in education Post-16. Eligibility for the full Bursary targets students who are or have recently been in the care of the local authority, as well as students (not their parents) who receive income support.

Discretionary bursaries are available to cover specific costs that are related to the decision to remain in full time, Post 16 education e.g. travel costs, educational visits or specific materials. Eligibility for the discretionary bursary is dependent upon qualification for income related benefits.

If you would like further details, please contact the Sixth Form Administrator, Mrs McNish.

Employment

A number of students will work part-time whilst studying in the Sixth Form. Having a reference from an employer or being able to show an ability to work whilst studying can be a bonus when it comes to life after Sixth Form. However, the amount of time needed for private study outside school should not be underestimated if students are to achieve their potential.

Past student experience has shown that, realistically, 12 hours per week of paid employment is the maximum that can be done without impact on school work. This assumes that private study is still being done as well. Working until late in the evening during the week should also be avoided if possible. Students should not be doing any paid work during school hours.

Opportunities for Personal Development

All Year 12 students are expected to make a contribution to the Academy community, as Sixth Form Ambassadors. The contributions include:

- Supporting a tutor with their form group
- Working within a subject area of their choice to support the teacher or a small group of students, for example.
- Mentoring students in school, or at an externally arranged placement, e.g. primary school support, peer mentoring.

Alongside this, students also have the opportunity to take part in further enrichment opportunities, such as Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise and the Debating Matters competition.

Exams

Exams in the Sixth Form take place in May-June. In Year 12 these will mostly be trial examinations, with the A Level examinations themselves taking place at the end of Year 13.

Revision lessons will usually precede the exams, and students will be expected to spend a significant amount of time doing similar work in their own time. Consequently we would advise students not to take holidays in the time leading up to the exams.

Students following vocational courses will have coursework deadlines throughout the year in addition to some examined content. Please check with subject teachers for detail.

General

The transition from Year 11 to Year 12 can be quite difficult for some students and can take some time. For these students the difference in level and intensity of study compared to GCSE can cause a significant amount of anxiety. We aim to support all students throughout their time in the Sixth Form and would encourage them to talk to their form tutors, subject teachers or Sixth Form staff as soon as possible if they feel anxious. This may mean arranging appointments with staff after school or during break times.

The dress code for the Sixth Form is set out in the Sixth Form Learning Agreement that the students sign at the start of the year, a copy of which can be found on the Academy website. As a general rule we request that students wear clothes that are suitable for a learning environment. The dress code for sixth form students is currently under review, and could be subject to change.

The Sixth Form area has a number of facilities - computers and laptops, a drinks vending machine and a kitchen area. The students are expected to keep the area clean and tidy at all times so that it is always ready for others to use.

Transport

For those students wishing to use the school buses a bus pass must be obtained from the County Council (contact details at the back of the booklet) using their application form. Students in Year 13 who have passed their driving test may wish to drive to the Academy. At the moment the students are able to use the car park to the rear of the Sports Hall, but there are only a limited number of spaces so parking during the day can sometimes be a problem. Any students who choose to do this should fill in the relevant form from Mrs. McNish.

Higher Education

During Year 12 we hold an information evening for parents, carers and students to give an overview of the processes involved in applying to Higher Education. This coincides with a visit for Y12 students to a Higher Education Conference at a local university and relevant PSHE sessions.

The UCAS application website is open to students at the end of Year 12 and we encourage them to make a start on their applications after their summer exams.

Most Universities and Higher Education institutions also hold Open Days throughout the year and we would encourage students to visit their preferred institutions, if at all possible, before applying.

A further information evening is held in Year 13 to give advice about applying for student finance and other finance related considerations and implications.

Research is now much easier thanks to the Internet as all Higher Educational institutions have their own websites detailing courses and facilities. Other general websites are available that compare different institutions with regard to facilities, locations, student facilities, employment opportunities and nightlife! We would encourage students and their families to explore some of these sites together as soon as possible as we sometimes find that students who have a focus for their studies early on are more likely to approach their studies in a positive way.

Note-Taking - Top Ten tips for students

1. Don't write down every word

The whole point of note taking is to be able to summarise information in a different, shorter form to use later, therefore if you try to write down every word of a lecture or book then you will soon get behind and lose the thread of what is being presented to you.

2. Decide what is important

Listen/look out for key phrases such as 'the most important factor is...' which is like a large signpost directing you to the fact that a vital piece of information is coming up and instructs you to ready your pen to take a note of it. The author or lecturer you are working with will have their own particular style and phrases that you should look out for, so become familiar with their signposts.

3. Be an active listener / reader

It is easy to drift off and lose the thread of a lesson – concentration is important. Break down note-taking tasks from texts into smaller sections.

4. Use symbols and abbreviations

When you take notes you will not have time to write in full sentences, and sometimes the information comes so thick and fast that you cannot even write full words. Develop your own set of symbols and abbreviations. Some obvious ones are + or & for 'and'; = for equals. Other examples seen less often are w/ for 'with' or wch for 'which'. There will be subject specific short hands that you can use too.

5. Use colours

For extra clarification and to improve your active listening/reading techniques make sure you use different coloured inks when taking notes. You can show different themes and approaches by changing to a different colour for example. This is especially useful if you will need your notes later for report writing or revising for exams.

6. Revise your notes as soon as possible

Do not simply take your notes and then file them away and forget about them. The best use of your notes is to read over them a short time after and perhaps re-write them again, more neatly or in a different order, depending on how or why you want to use them. This will help you to use the information actively and it will stay in your memory for longer.

7. Improve your handwriting

Do not be so immersed in note-taking that you forget to notice that your handwriting has become unreadable! Remember to write or type clearly and legibly throughout, however tired your hand becomes.

8. Be consistent

If you are listening to an hour-long lecture, don't be tempted to take a lot of notes for the first 10 minutes and nothing at all for the rest of the session. Make sure you pace yourself and gather information consistently throughout the lecture. A good lecturer will provide quality information throughout their lecture slot, so don't lose concentration.

9. Forget spelling and grammar (as long as your meaning is clear)!

This is the one time in academic life when no one is going to blame you for a few spelling and grammar mistakes. Achieving perfection in these areas is not important; rather, focus on the gathering and recording of information. And if that means your spelling and grammar has to slip, so be it!

10. How to avoid plagiarism and use paraphrasing instead

This is an issue especially when taking notes from written texts. Do not copy down material from another source without putting it in quotation marks and noting its origin. If you do, you will forget that these words are not your own, include them as yours in a report or essay and then you will have committed plagiarism. If you do not want to use someone else's words, while you are note taking make sure you paraphrase (i.e. put a passage into your own words). If you do this at the note-taking stage, there can be no confusion later on. Alternatively, use quotes and attribute the material to the author.

Reviews

Reviews take place throughout the year, with copies being posted home. Provisional dates for the academic year 2017-2018 are:

Year 12

Review 1 – Posted home week beginning Monday 13th November 2017

Review 2 – Posted home week beginning Monday 8th January 2018

Review 3 – Posted home week beginning Monday 5th March 2018

Subject Review Evening – Tuesday 30th January 2018

Revision - advice we give to students

10 Revision Rules

Plan what to revise and when

Plan to complete very specific tasks

Make it active

Base revision around 30-40 minutes of concentrated effort

Work without distraction - no interruptions allowed (not even

Facebook) Do not cheat - work when you plan to work

Plan your breaks

Tackle topics you do not like sooner rather than later

For most subjects, sit and read is not good enough

Do 15 minutes concentrated learning/memorising before going to sleep

Make it Active

Re-write sections of inadequate notes

Reduce notes to side headings and essential detail

Reduce notes to revision cards

Use colour to highlight key points

Share notes / essays with a friend

Check marked work for advice

Make mind maps - good for creating a 'big picture'

Make key word definition lists and get someone to test you

Ask someone to test you on key words

Make PowerPoint presentations which you can watch later

Past paper questions - no notes, then mark

Past paper questions with notes - written in mark scheme detail

Write essay plans outlining structure and key content

Make summary grids to compare contrasting theories - Sociology and Psychology for example

Arrange with a friend to teach each other specific topics

Make posters for key facts and formulae - put them up in your room

Make post-it note time line or story line - put it up in your room

Make a note of things to check when you are back in your lessons

School Work

We are often asked how much time students should be spending studying at home. Most subjects are now studied at school for 5 hours per week, and as a rough guide we recommend that the same amount of time be spent doing private study for that subject. If a student is studying for 3 A levels in Year 12, this should mean approximately 15 hours per week. Students do have private study time as part of their timetable, and are also able to use the facilities in the Sixth Form after school.

Private study activities could include writing up notes from a lesson, doing further research on a topic to deepen understanding, reading up on a forthcoming topic, practising exam questions or writing up revision notes.

Private study should ideally be done in a quiet place where the student is able to concentrate without too many distractions. At school students are able to use a number of areas in the school, including the library and the sixth form study room.

Some students find organisation difficult. This can include setting themselves timescales to complete work, organising their time around their studies or even organising their folders and equipment. We can offer help and advice at school to some extent but we often find that help and support at home is more effective.

Support from Parents

- ❖ Be supportive
- ❖ Don't nag
- ❖ Know their goals/hopes and what is at stake
- ❖ Help them to manage their time
- ❖ Help them to revise
- ❖ Talk about their reviews
- ❖ Encourage them to find their own solutions to problems but do contact us if needed

Communication with Students and Parents

Communicating important information to students can be a challenge, as they can be selective about what they take notice of! Students all have access to a school email account. They should be encouraged to check this daily for important emails from both their subject teachers and the Sixth Form team. Messages are also displayed on the TV screen and the whiteboards in the Sixth Form Centre. Their form tutor will also pass on messages.

We try to keep parents informed about what is going on; much of our communication with parents is done through the school text messaging service. Parents are also able to reply to texts that are sent through this service. If you have an urgent problem or query, please contact one of the Sixth Form team using the phone numbers and/or email addresses on the following page.

Contact Points

Assistant Principal KS5	Miss C Sturgeon
Assistant Director of Achievement KS5	Mrs K Jones
Sixth Form Centre Manager	Mrs L McNish

Email	csturgeon@montsaye.northants.sch.uk kjones@montsaye.northants.sch.uk lmcnish@montsaye.northants.sch.uk
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Phone	01536 418844	x184 (Sixth Form office) x185 (Mrs McNish)
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Other

Bus Passes	Northants County Council 01604 364388
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UCAS	www.ucas.ac.uk/
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University	
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Open Days	www.opendays.com/
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Student Finance	www.direct.gov.uk
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- Search "Student Finance"

Careers	www.prospects.ac.uk/ www.careers-gateway.co.uk/
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Exam boards

AQA	www.aqa.org.uk
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Edexcel	www.edexcel.com
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OCR	www.ocr.org.uk
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Diary Dates

2017

20 October	Academy closes for half-term
30 October	Academy opens to students
21 Dec	Academy closes for Christmas

2018

3 Jan	Training Day
4 Jan	Academy opens to students
9 Feb	Academy closes for half-term
19 Feb	Academy opens to students
28 March	Academy closes for half-term
16 April	Academy opens to students
26 April	Year 12 Higher Education Evening
7 May	Bank Holiday
25 May	Academy closed to students
4 June	Academy opens to students
14 June	UCAS Convention at Nottingham Trent

Summer Exams

20 July	Academy closes to students
16 Aug	Exam results published