Knowledge Organisers

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

We began using 'Knowledge Organisers' in September 2020 with all students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Students in Years 10-13 often have revision guides that they use to support Independent Study. We want to use 'Knowledge Organisers' in Years 7-9 in order to develop the independent study and revision skills that students will use in later education – and throughout their adult learning lives.

What are 'Knowledge Organisers?'

A 'Knowledge Organiser' is a set of key facts or information that students need to be able to know and recall in order to 'master a unit or topic.' In order to produce our 'Knowledge Organisers,' our Departments have effectively extracted from their curriculum content the key vocabulary, facts and information that it would help students to commit to long-term memory.

Why are we using 'Knowledge Organisers?'

All of us, throughout our lives, will benefit from understanding *how* best we learn – and what strategies for learning we can employ in order to commit information to long-term memory. At school, we talk a lot about the way that knowledge is accumulated over time – and about the importance of over-learning and consolidation. 'Knowledge Organisers' are designed to provide students with opportunities to over-learn and consolidate recently learned information. They encourage use of active and multi-sensory revision practices, repetition, and spaced retrieval.

We say to students that, unless something active is done with it, the vast majority of the new information that they encounter daily will be lost. Therefore, just as our curriculum needs to provide opportunities for over-learning and consolidation, independent study also needs to provide opportunities for active revision and retrieval of key information.

We believe that 'Knowledge Organisers' are important because they are designed to teach students the metacognitive study skills that they will require throughout their adult learning lives; effectively, what we are using 'Knowledge Organisers' to introduce is a five-year programme of revision aimed at developing the skills required for effective revision.

What is 'metacognition' and what is 'spaced retrieval?'

Metacognition is the awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes. When we talk about developing metacognitive skills in students, we're talking about students developing an understanding of *how they learn best*. For example, a student who wishes to commit key quotations from a text to long-term memory may *decide* to make flashcards. When making those flashcards, a student may make all sorts of decisions such as *'using the colour yellow will help me to remember that...'* The decision regarding which multi-sensory strategy to employ (flashcards) and the decisions that are made during active employment of the strategy...both are examples of metacognition.

A good approach to revision (or over-learning and consolidation) of previously learned material involves spaced retrieval – which is basically about leaving gaps between activities where learned information is recalled. A good example would be using a set of

flashcards to aid recall on Monday – and then repeating the activity on the subsequent Thursday. Another example would be undertaking a revision activity on a Tuesday, testing retention of that information on a Thursday and re-testing on a Sunday.

How will a 'Knowledge Organiser' help my child?

Many parents ask us how best to help support the learning of students at home. Some parents are worried that they do not have all of the subject-specific knowledge necessary to help and support children. Our 'Knowledge Organisers' are designed to help you support your child's learning easily. On the 'Knowledge Organiser' page of the school's website, there are a number of tutorial videos [with more to follow] that can help you support your child with the learning and retention of the information in their 'Knowledge Organisers' (or revision guides – for older students). These tutorial videos are designed for use by both parents and students – and have been produced with the aim of supporting parents to support effective learning and retention at home.

All revision strategies suggested are active and multi-sensory. All involve spaced practise and repetition. The strategies we suggest are excellent for children of all abilities, irrespective of levels of attainment or profiles of need.

What sort of activities can I undertake with my child using their 'Knowledge Organiser?'

You will generally find that teachers set tasks requiring students to complete tasks using their 'Knowledge Organisers.' However, should you wish to undertake additional activities with your child, there are some suggestions here for how these can be used. We would always say, however, that additional activity should cease when a child displays particular resistance to it – and that you should take care to ensure that any additional revision activities you undertake with your child should not be counter-productive, or result in unnecessary conflict!

- Ask your child to explain a section of the 'Knowledge Organiser' content to you. 'Teaching' you will help to reinforce their learning. Ensure that this is pleasurable – praise any retention or explanation your child is able to provide.

- Use any of the available tutorial videos, with your child, to undertake any of the activities in them. This could involve, for example, learning the spelling of a key word; learning new vocabulary; making a MindMap; or making a set of flashcards and using them at regularly spaced intervals.

- Try helping your child to record information from their Knowledge Organiser onto an MP3 file, or other audio file that they can listen to later.

- Encourage your child to make a PowerPoint (or Keynote) Presentation in which they present the information in a section of their knowledge organiser…

Remember that the key to effective revision is 'little and often' and that *all* revision activities need to be active. If you find your child sat looking at their 'Knowledge Organiser,' in the same way that you might see an older student 'looking' at a book when preparing for an exam, this is very likely to be ineffective revision and requires challenge! Good revision activities are time-limited; provide opportunities for over-learning and consolidation; are repeated at spaced intervals; are multi-sensory; and help students *think about how best they learn* so that, in the end, students decide which metacognitive strategy they would be best to employ **whenever they want to learn something new!**

With thanks for your support and best wishes.