

**Welland Park  
Academy**  
Learning For Life

# Welcome to GCSE Year 11



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Dear Year 11 Parent,

Welcome to GCSE!

The GCSE years are exciting but can also be daunting, both for students and parents. However, they don't have to be confusing and it certainly isn't a journey for you and your child to work your way through alone.

The aim of this booklet is to explain some of the components of this year. However, teaching staff, form tutors and the Key Stage 4 Progress Team will always welcome any questions that you or your child may have, if they have not been addressed here or on the school website. A questionnaire will be sent out alongside this booklet and I would appreciate you taking the time to complete this in order to identify areas that would benefit from further explanation.

We are now a number of years into the new grading system for GCSE examinations. Instead of being graded with A\*, A, B, C, D, E, F or G, papers are now given a 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 or 1 grading. The highest three grades (9, 8 and 7) are replacements for A\* and A, with the top 20% of students being graded 9, 8 and 7. To date, Grade 4 has been seen as a 'standard pass' with a grade 5 labelled a "strong pass".

This might sound confusing, but essentially, a new gold standard grade has been born. In fact, it's more a platinum standard - with some even classifying a grade 9 as the equivalent to achieving an A\*\* (to make it a little easier to comprehend).

New GCSE Grades									
U	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
U	G	F	E	D	C	B	A	A*	
Old GCSE Grades									

Tutorful

Individual post 16 providers will have entry requirements for courses in their institution – but there will be more on that later in this guide.

I am looking forward to working with you and supporting your child in their final year at Welland Park Academy – it's a real privilege to be supporting them. It certainly is a busy and exciting year ahead!

Kind regards,

Fiona Horne

KS4 Progress Leader

## Key dates

The events included here may be subject to change.

<b>Date*</b> <small>Dates may be subject to change</small>	<b>Event</b>
Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> September	Boost sessions begin (after school and lunch times) Students will be issued with a Personalised and General Timetable on 13 <sup>th</sup> September
Week commencing 30 <sup>th</sup> October	Commitment reports home to families. Accessible via Edulink
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> October	Year 11 Parent's Evening – in person. Book via Edulink
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup> November	2-week mock exams – all subjects
Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> November	Interview Day 1
Week commencing 16 <sup>th</sup> December	Progress reports to families. Accessible via Edulink
Tuesday 3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Interview Day 2
Thursday 16 <sup>th</sup> January	Year 11 Parent's Evening – virtual. Book via Edulink
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March	2-week mock exam week – all subjects
Week commencing 7 <sup>th</sup> April	Progress reports and mock results available to families on Edulink
12 <sup>th</sup> May	GCSE exam period begins
<b>25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Students must remain available until this date</b> – this is JCQs last contingency date put in place in case of national or significant local disruption to exams.
26 <sup>th</sup> June	Presentation Evening – invitation only
27 <sup>th</sup> June	Prom



## Mock exams, NEA subjects

Throughout Year 11, students will gain exam experience just as they have had throughout their time at Welland Park.

Previous cohorts have found the mock exam periods extremely valuable allowing them to feel incredibly well prepared for the summer exam series. The more exposure students have to the exam environment and style of papers, the more confident they will be going into the final exam series.

Subject staff will also periodically conduct more informal classroom-based assessments as another means to ascertain any gaps in subject knowledge, whilst continuing to maximise student exposure to the style of questions they will come across in the final exams.

### Mock exams

We will run option subject exams and core subjects (English, Maths and Science) throughout the year. Departments will set their own exams and these will most likely be previous GCSE exam papers. Staff will use these exams to determine a student's current attainment and will allow staff and students to acknowledge and act upon any gaps in knowledge or skills.

As a school, we will keep hold of these mock papers in case they are needed as a contingency in the summer.

### Subjects containing NEA elements

We run a number of courses which include aspects of NEA (Non-Exam Assessment), which have replaced the traditional coursework. Grades are awarded based upon a combination of the completion of non – exam assessments, most of which are internally marked and externally moderated, and external examinations.

Students will prepare for and work on the NEA throughout the 2 years of the course, so it is essential that students keep up to date with their NEA preparation and completion.

Information regarding how students will be examined in NEA subjects and all other courses can be found on the school exams page under [Curriculum](#)

## Exam season

The public exam period generally runs from around mid-May until the end of June. **Students must remain available until 25<sup>th</sup> June.** This is the date specified by the JCQ as the last contingency date put in place in case of a National or significant local disruption to exams.

GCSE results are usually released on a Thursday in the **3rd week of August.**

We will be running an extensive revision programme in the build up to the summer exams, minimising the need for an extended period of study leave. We will offer students the chance to work more independently later in the exam programme.

A short period of study leave will be granted later in the exam series.

### Lessons during the exam season

During the exam series we will 'tweak' students' regular timetable so that they will have a series of revision lessons in a subject the day or morning before an exam. This information will be shared with you and your child, normally in the format of a weekly timetable. This will be shared with students and families on the Noticeboard feature on Edulink.

We will also interweave well-being sessions into this time so that students have time to pause and re-group.





## Academic support

During Year 11, we run various support measures which will ensure the best possible outcomes for all of our students at the end of the year.



We run an extensive series of 'Boost' sessions to support academic progress.

Staff run these extra sessions during lunchtimes and after school on a timetabled plan. Sessions are run in small, targeted groups so that students receive much more personalised intervention. Staff may also use mock exam or NEA information to request attendance at Boost.

Your son / daughter will periodically be given a timetable showing them when their **compulsory** sessions are, but we will also issue a general timetable as students are more than welcome to attend any session, should they wish to.



We run extensive mentoring programmes throughout the year.

Our Pupil Premium students have all been assigned a mentor and they will have been in touch with your son / daughter to introduce themselves. They may also have made contact with you to make introductions.

Mrs Horne will also co-ordinate personalised progress meetings with students. The Year 11 team will work closely with you and your son / daughter to keep you updated with progress and they will also share targets with you. You may be invited to attend a progress meeting to discuss any concerns and support measures to ensure positive steps are taken. These usually take place during Parents' Evenings but may also be scheduled during the school day.

We welcome the opportunity to work with you in order to support your child in achieving the best possible outcomes in their final exams.

We also run Academic Mentoring for all Year 11 students. This is an opportunity to reflect on what went well with the exams and revision and to set targets for the next series.

## Post 16 choice and applications

Young people are required to stay in school, training or work-place training until the age of 18.

There is a huge array of options available to young people nowadays. Whilst it is incredible to have so many opportunities, for some it may be really tough to find a course. We are incredibly fortunate to have Mrs Hix available to guide our students. She began meeting with students during year 10 to create an action plan for post 16 research. All of our Year 11 students will now have received this plan and hopefully shared it with you.

It's strongly advisable to attend as many open events as possible to get a feel for post 16 courses. Many colleges and schools also have Facebook or Twitter pages to follow so that you can keep up to date with events.

## Support in school

Guidance on writing a personal statement began as soon as we came back after the Summer Break. Form tutors will be reading through each personal statement so it is of the highest possible quality for any applications that your son / daughter will make, but we also ask you to get involved in supporting with this. Personal statements can also be adapted for the Mock Interview Applications in November.

Throughout the year, post 16 providers will visit the year group for assemblies about studying with them, and we are holding a networking event before Christmas. We will also continue to share information about open events via our newsletter, Facebook page and via form tutors. We have also collated dates of common destinations for previous students onto a poster that is shared on the Noticeboard Feature on Edulink.

Students are very much in control of their own research and applications. At the start of the Academic Year, our students will complete 2 computer room sessions in order to introduce them to the PS16 website. This is where they will complete most applications for Leicestershire Post 16 providers. Applications for Robert Smyth and Northamptonshire providers need to be completed directly with the provider. We will run regular support sessions at lunch times for students who cannot access a computer at home or need support with their ideas.

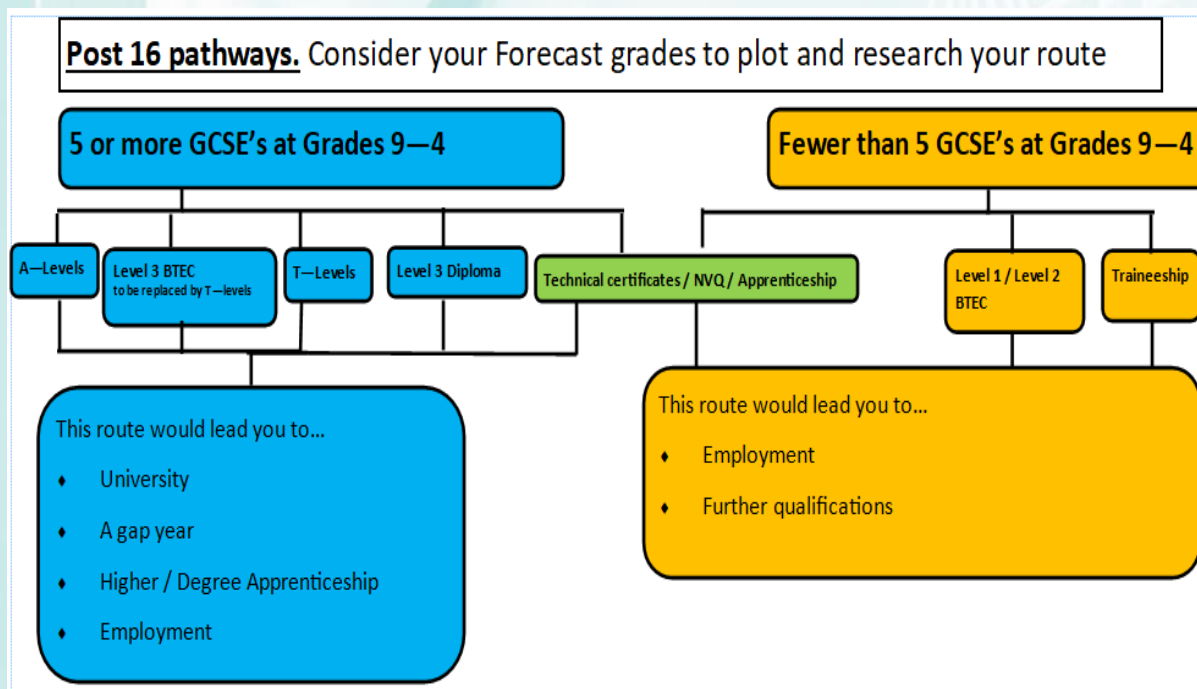
Mrs Hix will also be available to offer her expertise and support with the Action Plans created in the 1:1 meetings. Students should speak to Mrs Hix directly or to their Form Tutor or Mrs Horne to organise 1:1 support.

Form tutors will support with applications and will provide a reference upon request by the institution. These will be sent directly to the institution.

**Our aim is to ensure that students have submitted at least 2 applications before the Christmas holidays.**



## Where should you start?



## Qualifications explained

### A-Levels

An A-level is a qualification offered across a range of subjects to school-leavers. Studying A Levels allows you to keep your options open if you are not sure what to do in the future. They will also offer a pathway to further education. Schools and colleges will often look for at least five GCSEs 9-4 and will often include English Maths and Science in this list of subjects.

To study a subject at A Level, you will also need to have achieved a minimum grade in that subject. For example, to study French at RSA, they require you to achieve a Grade 5 or above.

Each subject in each institution will have different entry requirements, so it's best to check what Grades they are looking for.

### T- Levels

T Levels were introduced a few years ago and follow on from GCSEs. They are equivalent to 3 A levels. These 2-year courses were developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work.

T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days). They provide the knowledge and experience needed to open the door into skilled employment, further study or a higher apprenticeship.

T Levels are only available in our area in certain subjects and in certain colleges. These qualifications are currently still being phased in. To help T Level students get into higher education, UCAS tariff points will be allocated to T Levels.

## **BTECs**

BTECs are vocational and work-related courses, designed to accommodate the needs of employers and allow students to progress to further and higher education. A BTEC takes a practical approach to learning, without missing any of the important theory on the subject. They can be studied at level 1, 2 and 3. Level 3 Extended BTECs are equivalent to A-Levels and will give you the relevant UCAS points to progress to higher education.

## **Apprenticeships**

Apprentices study for qualifications while working. They learn the skills they need for the job they are doing. There are different levels of apprenticeships from Intermediate which is equivalent to 5 GCSEs, to a full degree. Apprenticeships are ideal for students who want to work in a specific industry. Colleges have links to apprenticeship vacancies and it is well worth checking these regularly for updated vacancies. Vacancies and more information can also be found at [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk); job websites and career specific websites.

## **NVQ National Vocational Qualification**

NVQs are great if you know what job you would like to do. There are five NVQ levels and you can start at a level that suits you and work your way up. There are no age limits or special entry requirements, although you may have to work your way up the levels. You can do NVQs in various subjects at all levels. You obtain the qualification by completing units step-by-step.

- Level 1 – Basic or Foundation Level
- Level 2 – equivalent to GCSEs or First Diploma Level
- Level 3 – equivalent to A levels or Extended Diploma Level.

## **Leicestershire providers**

Applications to institutions in Leicestershire will be done through an online application service ([www.ps16.co.uk](http://www.ps16.co.uk)) and students will spend a citizenship lesson in a computer room logging on and familiarising themselves with the website. They can also use this site to research opportunities relevant to their interest and aspirations. Last year RSA was not part of this service and applications had to be made directly to them via their website.

## **Northamptonshire providers**

Post 16 providers in Northamptonshire require separate applications directly to the institution.

## Reports explained

Below is a copy of a typical report.

Achievement Points: 83					Behaviour Points: 8		Attendance: 99.3	
Subjects	Y11 Target Grade	MEG	Forecast Grade	Attainment	Commitment	What Went Well	Even Better If	Homework
English Language Mr T Mummary	7	6+	5+	4	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Written work has shown creativity and imagination	Use your initiative to look for deeper meanings and alternative interpretations of the texts studied	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
English Literature Mr T Mummary	7	6+	5+	4+	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Uses a good level of written expression and analytical vocabulary	Reflect further on the deeper meanings and messages in texts	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
Mathematics Mr Preston-Kleine	7+	7-	8-	6-	Expectations for learning are exceeded. Shows independence in learning	Concentrates in lessons	Listen to advice regarding showing working out	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
Statistics Mr S Ready	8-	7-	5+	5	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Shows a keen interest in Statistics	Be organised and prepare well for assessments	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
Biology Mrs S O'Connell	8	7	6+	5+	Expectations for learning are exceeded. Shows independence in learning	Always shows interest in applying knowledge in a positive way in lessons	Use a variety of revision techniques to allow for better consolidation of knowledge	Homework completed to a high standard and on time. Sometimes the task is extended if appropriate
Chemistry Mr T Maynard	8-	7-	7+	5+	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Is developing their understanding of the content in Chemistry	Ask for support with any areas of concern highlighted during the lessons	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
Physics Mr G Condon	8+	7	6	5	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Is developing their understanding of the content in Physics	Learn and practice applying equations	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
French Mrs H Russell	7+	6	6+	5	Minimum expectations met. Completes tasks adequately and meets independent learning deadlines	Reflects on learning and acts upon feedback	Focus on accuracy when using the target language in speaking and writing	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time
Geography Mrs D Pendell	8-	7-	6	5	Expectations for learning are exceeded. Shows independence in learning	When using a case study, specific details/figures are included showing confidence in knowledge	Reflect on learning and revise more thoroughly for exams	The standard of homework and submission to deadline is inconsistent
P.E. Core Mr S Blades					Gold Learner			
Physical Education Miss C Gray	7+	6	6+	6-	Expectations for learning are exceeded. Shows independence in learning	Demonstrates a high level of effort in lessons	Ensure practical log is completed and up to date	Homework is completed to a good standard and usually submitted on time

### Y11 Target Grade

This will be slightly higher than the MEG as this is the grade that would mean that a student has made 'better than average' progress, putting them in line with the top 5% of students nationally for progress from Keystage 2 scores. We utilise Fischer Family Trust data to support with our target setting

### MEG

Minimum Expected Grade: This is an indication of the grade your child would achieve if they made "national average" progress from their Keystage 2 SATS to GCSE examinations. We want this to be the minimum that our students will achieve.

### Forecast Grades

This is the Grade that the member of staff believes that a student will achieve at the end of the course based upon current performance, and this should be the grade used in post 16 applications.

### Attainment

Using the evidence from exams, classwork and homework (and NEA completion where applicable) staff will provide you with a grade to indicate current attainment.

### Commitment

At this stage of studying, we would like this column to be as 'green as possible'. Certainly, multiple red and orange boxes, as per the example above, could lead to mentoring sessions and other interventions to try to support improving commitment to studies. We expect more of students, as they will be unlikely to reach their challenging target grades if their commitment to learning isn't meeting staff expectations.



## NCS

Each year, we invite in the NCS to talk to our students about an incredible opportunity.

Participation in this program is a HUGE asset to any CV and is held in as much esteem as a Duke of Edinburgh award, for example.

More and more young people are completing this programme nationally and it really stands out on UCAS and job applications.

The program takes place in the summer after GCSE exams have finished.

More information will be given to students and we will hold a parents event so that you can find out more too. Alternatively, you can find out more: [www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/national-citizen-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/national-citizen-service); and their website is: [www.wearencs.com](http://www.wearencs.com).



## Well-being support

At Welland Park Academy, we aim to promote positive mental health for every student and member of staff.

How do we support students' welfare and emotional wellbeing during KS4 at Welland Park?

Open door policy – students receive quality time with a member of the pastoral team

Students are signposted to relevant agencies for free, safe and anonymous support

Well-being drop in groups to offer support and promote positive mental health


Whole school activities and tutor time activities to raise awareness of mental health

## Effective revision and studying.

**Find a good place to study** – it should be well lit, comfortable, free from distractions and your son/daughter needs to be in the right frame of mind! Don't avoid study – if your attention starts to wander, switch to a different task. Don't make excuses! Don't avoid the more difficult tasks and topics!

**Plan a study timetable** – put in school commitments first and add extra-curricular clubs / jobs. Leave room to increase study time as the year progresses and be sure to include 'down – time'. It's important that students get the balance right – they shouldn't be working every waking hour of the day and at the same time, should not be cramming the night before a mock or real exam.

Here's a basic template that we like, which would allow for longer study time in the evenings.

<b>GCSE Revision Timetable</b>								
		Don't forget to take regular breaks!						
Day \ Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	
9am								
10am								
11am								
12noon								
1pm								
2pm								
3pm								
4pm								
5pm								
6pm								

It's a good idea to break subjects down into specific topics / areas to revise. For example, instead of writing 'English' on the revision timetable, you could write 'Romeo and Juliet: Theme of Love and Hate'. Similarly, for Maths, you would look at your recent progress online to establish which topics need to be revised and put this on your revision schedule. This amount of detail is important the closer students get to exam periods. Staff are more than happy to support with this.

Information is best retained and recalled if it's presented in short bursts; reviewed regularly; linked to other information; involves more than 1 sense; it uses the left and right side of the brain; it is relevant; it is remembered using e.g. mnemonics, chants, or mind maps. So, it's important for students to consider HOW they revise. Simply reading notes would not be a successful revision method. Revision takes effort!

**Time management** – studying and revising takes up a lot of time – there is no way around this. You have to make sacrifices. You will learn and remember more if you have regular study habits. It's important to adopt these habits as early as possible even though the exams seem like a long way off. It's like exercising the body – to make a difference, it has to be done consistently and on a regular basis. Once every now and then is not enough

**Reduce screen time** – A Cambridge university study found that an extra hour a day of TV, internet or computer gaming in Year 10 is linked to poorer grades at GCSE. The average drop in the study was equivalent to 2 GCSE grades.

**Read** – on the other hand, students who spent an extra hour a day doing homework or reading did better in their GCSE grades increasing their results by the equivalent of between 4 and 5 grades. Read for pleasure, read the news, read wider in chosen subjects and read ahead before the lesson.

**Get organised** – write notes clearly in class, keep notes organised, refer back to notes when doing homework, improve notes if you can, keep on top of deadlines, keep old exercise books.

**Attend Boost** – these sessions will support work done in lessons and offer a chance to develop key skills / knowledge.

## GCSE Revision Timetable

Don't forget to take regular breaks!



Day \ Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9am							
10am							
11am							
12noon							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							



Revision: 'FACE' it.



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
FACE  
IT**

**Facts.** Identify the key facts that need to be known and learn them. Memorise them. Test yourself. You can't explain something if you can't remember the key facts.

**Apply in context:** Use recall of facts to solve problems in new contexts; it's not enough to learn isolated facts. Test that knowledge in different scenarios using questions in books and past papers.

**Connect to other ideas:** Increasingly you need to make links between topics – eg energy and forces in Science from different areas (eg mechanics and magnetism); comparing the use of techniques between different texts; seeing common patterns in historical events or geographical processes.

**Exam practice:** Use past exam questions to rehearse the process of responding under time pressure, demonstrating your knowledge and understanding, taking account of the marks available.

## How can you support your child?

We have put together a more comprehensive guide for families to support students through GCSE studying.

This is available on the GCSE Curriculum Area of the school website.

<https://www.wellandparkacademy.co.uk/gcse-curriculum>

Encourage attendance in school. Form Tutors and the progress team will support with this.

Help them to make a plan for their time....balance is key.

Support them finding a study spot at home and encourage good study skills.

Suggest anti-procrastination tools e.g. does the phone need to be elsewhere?

Be their study buddy. Be interested! If they can explain it to you so that you understand, then they know it!

Recognise their strengths but keep your expectations high.

Recognise areas for development and make sure the expectations are manageable for all of you and high.

Keep calm (or at least pretend to be).

Keep in touch – whether it be at Parent’s Evening, with Form Tutors, subject teachers or the progress team.

Celebrate their resilience, perseverance and creativity.

Encourage them to be a reader. Being a regular reader means that students will be able to access ALL exam papers, not just English, better.

Help them to keep perspective – The more prepared we are, the less stressed we will feel, but keep an eye out if your child has a tendency to overdo the revision - this can make them even more stressed.

Make sure they avoid last minute cramming - there is only so much a brain can absorb in a day. If it’s all getting too much encourage them to forget the revision timetable for a couple of hours and do something completely different, such as meeting a friend.

If your child returns from an exam saying it’s all gone very badly wrong make sure they don’t dwell on it and get on with the next one.

Let them know that even if they haven’t done as well as they could it’s really not the end of the world! But encourage a way forward.