



BROMSGROVE PARENT NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2024

ARTICLE 1

BACK TO SCHOOL: ROUTINES, AIMING HIGH, AND SETTING GOALS

The beginning of a new school year marks a fresh start, a chance to reset, and an opportunity to approach things with renewed focus. As a parent helping your child transition back into academic life, embracing effective routines, setting high expectations, and establishing clear goals are key in setting the tone for success.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE ROUTINES

Establishing a routine is one of the most essential parts of starting a new school year. A good routine helps students manage their time, reduce stress, and stay organised. Here are some important elements which combine to create an effective and healthy routine:

- **Morning:** The way a child starts the day can impact their mood and productivity. Encourage your child to wake up at the same time every day, eat a nutritious breakfast, and incorporate some form of mindfulness (as simple as a one minute, closed eye activity focusing on breathing).
- **Study Time:** Designate specific times during the day for studying and completing homework. A structured study routine helps students avoid last-minute rushing and ensures they keep up with their homework. Break up study time into timed sessions (around 45 minutes) with short breaks to help maintain concentration.
- **Sleep Schedule:** Adequate sleep is critical for academic performance and mental well-being. Students should aim for eight to ten hours of sleep each night. Developing a consistent sleep schedule (going to bed and waking up at the same time daily) supports focus and energy throughout the day.
- **Extracurricular Balance:** While academics are crucial, balancing schoolwork with extracurricular activities is equally important for personal development. Encourage participation in sports, music, clubs, or other hobbies to foster creativity and social skills.

AIMING HIGH: STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

Aiming high doesn't mean striving for perfection but rather setting ambitious goals and working steadily toward them. Whether students are aiming to improve their grades, make new friends, or excel in extracurricular activities, having high expectations motivates them to push beyond their limits.

Here are some tips to help you encourage your child to aim high:

- **Positive Self-Talk:** Encourage positive affirmations like, "I can do this" or "Challenges help me grow." Self-belief fuels motivation and helps students overcome doubt or fear of failure.
- **Embrace Challenges:** Instead of avoiding difficult tasks, view them as opportunities for growth. Facing challenges head-on develops resilience and problem-solving skills, which are essential for long-term success.
- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Aiming high doesn't mean only celebrating major achievements. Recognising progress, no matter how small (such as being awarded a housepoint), keeps students motivated.

SETTING CLEAR GOALS

A new school year is the perfect time to reflect on what you want to accomplish and set clear, actionable goals. Having goals helps students stay focused, measure progress, and remain accountable. Here's how to set goals effectively:

- **SMART Goals:** Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Students have already set these for this academic year so ask your child what they are, and how they are progressing towards them.
- **Short-Term and Long-Term Goals:** Having both short-term and long-term goals provides a clear path forward. Short-term goals (like completing all homework on time) help build discipline, while long-term goals (like getting into a particular university), give a sense of purpose.
- **Track Progress:** Regularly checking in on goals to see what's working and what needs adjustment helps students stay on track and make necessary changes to their goals when obstacles arise.

ARTICLE 2

SENSIBLE SOCIAL MEDIA USE: A BROMSGROVE GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF TEENAGERS

Navigating the world of social media can be a daunting task for parents of teenagers. As your children become more active online, it's crucial to understand how to guide them in using these platforms responsibly. Here are some practical tips to help you foster sensible social media habits in your teen.

1. Educate About Privacy Settings

Encourage your teenager to review and adjust their privacy settings on social media platforms. Discuss the importance of controlling who can see their posts and personal information.

2. Discuss the Importance of Digital Footprints

Teach your teen about digital footprints—the trail of data they leave online. Explain how posts, comments, and photos can impact their reputation and future opportunities. Encourage them to think before sharing anything online and to consider how it may be perceived by others.

3. Model Responsible Behaviour

Teens often look to their parents as role models. Show them what responsible social media use looks like by limiting your own screen time, avoiding negative interactions, and being mindful of the content you share. Your actions can significantly influence their behaviour.

4. Promote Open Communication

Create a safe space for your teenager to talk about their online experiences. Encourage them to share their thoughts on what they see and encounter on social media. Regular conversations can help them feel comfortable discussing any issues or concerns they may have.

5. Teach Critical Thinking Skills

Help your teen develop critical thinking skills when consuming online content. Discuss how to identify credible sources and recognize misinformation. Encourage them to question what they read and to verify facts before sharing.

Supporting your teenager in navigating social media responsibly is an ongoing journey. By fostering open communication, modelling positive behaviour, and teaching critical skills, you can help them develop healthy habits that will serve them well both online and offline. In a digital world filled with opportunities and challenges, your guidance can make a significant difference in their social media experience.



ARTICLE 3

BEAM: BUILDING EFFECTIVE ATTITUDES AND MINDSETS

In secondary school we aim to give all students the necessary skills and confidence to develop themselves as well as having a better understanding of the wider world and what is expected of them as global citizens. Each Monday we dedicate an hour for students to explore, investigate and experience topics from health and relationships through to careers.

Highlights so far

1. Peer mentoring

The academic year has started with our peer mentoring program. Our Yr 12 students have been mentoring our new year 7 students as they navigate their way around their new school life in secondary. Each Year 12 student is paired with one or two Year 7 students, meeting twice for one hour. The aim for Year 7 students is to adjust to secondary school by being able to discuss topics like organisation, time management, personal responsibility, and building positive relationships. Mentors provide a supportive role in helping mentees feel more confident, connected, and capable in their new environment.

The process benefits both year groups. This helps build our school community and encourages inter year connections so we become a stronger community.

2. Year 13 MMI's and Mock Interviews

A large part of our BEAM curriculum, particularly our older students, is our focus around careers. In particular preparing students for a life beyond Bromsgrove. This year we have introduced Multiple Mini interviews (Assessment days) and mock one to one interviews. The purpose is to prepare students for real-world interviews, such as university admissions, job applications, or work experience opportunities.

Students participated in four problem-based mini interviews, where they were presented with scenarios to solve. The following week, they attended a one-on-one interview focused on questions related to their university applications and future aspirations.

These provide students with a safe environment to practise answering questions and engaging in formal discussions, helping them feel more confident and comfortable in future high-stakes situations.

3. Well being

The start of this academic year has had a focus on wellbeing for KS3 and KS4 looking at fostering students' mental and physical health, resilience, and personal growth. Students explored strategies for handling stress, coping with life transitions, and maintaining a healthy mindset. The lessons also covered the impact of digital screen use on mental health and encouraged resilience in the face of modern challenges.

These lessons aim to create an overall understanding of wellbeing, focusing not just on mental health but on how physical health, positive habits, and personal responsibility contribute to a balanced and successful life.

Parents have an important role in supporting your children's growth and wellbeing. To reinforce the lessons learnt in school, you can encourage communication, providing a safe space for your child to share any challenges they face, whether academic or personal. Fostering healthy routines, such as limiting screen time, promoting physical activity, and ensuring proper sleep, can greatly impact their mental health.



ARTICLE 4

INCLUSION - STRENGTHENING MEMORY

The human brain is a very complicated thing - we don't fully understand how it works, and possibly never will. We do know, however, that the brain is an extremely adaptable and flexible organ and that the more we look after our brains the more effective they will be. Children learn in a huge range of ways and if we help them to strengthen their memory skills we can support them in many of the ways they learn.

There is an obvious link between memory and learning - those with 'good' memories often do well on tests and exams and are expected to recall key information and concepts with relative ease. What is less obvious is that our memories are pliable and very changeable - known as neuroplasticity (more information can be found [here](#) or on [this video](#)),

Like any part of the body the brain needs food, rest and exercise to perform properly. Children who skip meals will not be able to concentrate and problem solve anywhere near their potential. [Factsheet](#). Likewise children who have disordered sleeping patterns or who don't get enough sleep will also face difficulties. Whereas our bodies need physical exercise to keep fit and healthy, our brains (and therefore our memory power) benefit from a regular 'workout'. Games and activities that involve remembering facts and information can be really helpful. Board games, rehearsing dance moves and songs, word games and number games can be really good ways of 'stretching' our brains. Further ideas can be found [here](#). The important thing is that these kinds of activities are fun and engaging - as soon as they look and feel like extra work they will be significantly less effective.

COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

We also need to be aware of avoiding [cognitive overload](#). This is when the brain has too much information to process and hold on to. If this happens then mental functions, especially memory can suffer. Therefore, being very mindful of expecting children to deal with large quantities of information at once is very unhelpful and often counter productive - too much information at one time and the brain does not function properly.

Here are some videos and websites for further exploration

- A very interesting talk from Dr Lynne Kelly: [Modern memory, ancient methods \(TED Talk\)](#)
- An brief (and entertaining) introduction to how memories are made from [Crash Course Psychology](#)
- There are further ideas for memory games on [this website from Childhood 101](#)
- Understood - a website for parents of children with special educational needs provides some very useful information [here on improving working memory](#)

STUDENT WELLBEING - IMPROVING SELF CONTROL AND REGULATION

This month we have celebrated World Health Day and have focused on improving our self-control. Our Wellbeing Assembly looked at how students can learn to delay gratification & improve their ability to manage emotions, and control their behaviour generally.

DELAYED GRATIFICATION: TEACH YOURSELF IMPULSE CONTROL

Delayed gratification is the resistance to the temptation of immediate reward or pleasure, as a way to try and achieve a larger or longer-lasting reward. Delayed gratification can help people improve self-control and achieve their long-term goals.

HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S GOOD AND WHAT ARE THE ACTUAL BENEFITS?

The Original Marshmallow Test

- Mischel tested 100s of children around the ages of 4 & 5 years old
- He sat them down & placed marshmallow on the table in front of them
- He explained that he would have to leave the room for a moment
- He struck a deal - If the child didn't eat the Marshmallow while he was away - they would be rewarded with a second one - if they ate it - they would not be rewarded with a second one
- The researcher left the room for 15 minutes

Results of the Marshmallow Test - and what it could predict

- Some children jumped up and ate the first marshmallow as soon as the coast was clear
- Others wiggled and bounced and scooted in their chairs as they tried to resist temptation
- Some gave in to temptation a few minutes later.
- A few of the children managed to wait the entire time - **and received their reward**

In follow up studies - Children who waited 15 minutes for the 2nd marshmallow ended up having -

- Higher SAT Scores
- Better Social Integration
- Higher Stress Tolerance
- More Likely To Set & Achieve Goals
- Higher Self - Esteem
- Greater Personal Growth



CAN DELAYED GRATIFICATION BE LEARNED?

Yes, delayed gratification can be taught and learned, whether it is a child or an adult.

[Follow this link for Top Tips To Perfect Delayed Gratification At Home!](#)

HOW DOES DELAYED GRATIFICATION RELATE TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

If a person has difficulty managing their emotions, they might give in to instant gratification to cope and make themselves feel better. On the other hand, when a person can understand and manage their emotions, they can block urges and stay focused on the long-term reward rather than trying to satisfy their needs immediately.

We hope you have found our first secondary parent newsletter informative. If you have any suggestions for topics or content that you would like to see appear in future parent newsletters, please email Nicola Hardy nhardy@bromsgrove.ac.th or contact the SIC.