How Parents and Carers can Support and Enhance Learning at Home

At John Taylor High School, we recognise that parents and carers play a pivotal role in the progress and achievement of learners. By working in partnership with teachers, parents and carers can help to maximise learning outside of lessons by offering support with homework tasks. Parents and carers can also deepen and extend learning beyond the classroom, by encouraging students to apply their learning from lessons to everyday situations, scenarios and experiences. Some of the ways in which learning can be extended include:

1. **Discuss previous learning** – Discuss the learning that has taken place during his/her school day. Ask your son/daughter to explain or teach you something they have learned today. This will strengthen future recall, reinforce key knowledge and understanding and can develop verbal communication skills as they articulate their thinking.

For example:

- *What was the best thing you learned today? Why was this the best thing?*
- *Tell me three things you learned in Science/English/Mathematics/Geography/History/ PE/Religious Education/ Art/Sociology/French/Spanish/German/CPSHE.*
- *Teach me how/why that happens. What caused that? What are the impacts of that?*
- *How can you apply what you have learned in lessons to situations outside of school? Where and how can you use this newly acquired knowledge and understanding?*

Alternatively, instead of asking your son/daughter what the best thing he/she learned today, ask him/her what the best question they asked, heard or were asked today.

2. **Encourage reflection** - Ask your son/daughter to think about what he/she has learned in their lessons. Reflection develops analytical skills and allows students to understand how they can become more effective learners by identifying successes and opportunities for improvement. Ask questions such as:

- *What do you know now that you never did before the lesson?*
- *What was the most important thing you learnt during the lesson?*
- *How can you apply this learning in the next week/month/your life?*
- *What do you want to know more about? (and where can you find this information?)*
- *How did you contribute towards the lesson?*
- *What skills did you use in this lesson?*
- *When have you had to think like this before?*
- *What have you learned that is similar?*
- *Would you do the same thing if you were faced with a similar task tomorrow?*
- *What will you do again?*
- *What would you do differently?*
- *What did you find challenging and why?*
- *On reflection, was this the best way to approach it?*
- *What advice would you give others facing a similar task?*
- *What do you take away from this experience?*
- *How could you have been more effective?*
- *How are you going to remember this learning?*

3. **Information Processing** – Students need to be able to do more than just remember information, they need to be able to understand and apply it too. At JTHS we want to prepare your son/daughter for higher education and the world of work. As a result, students need to be

confident and efficient in making sense of information and applying it to new situations, in new environments and with new people. Not just simply remembering and reproducing it.

To support your son/daughter, test them and encourage them to:

- **Create analogies** – linking learning to something similar in the real world allows pupils to explain their thinking and clarify the extent of their understanding. E.g. A cell membrane is like a cookie, an Oreo. It has two layers of lipids (the cookie wafers) separated by a centre (the white cream). Antioxidants reside either outside the first cookie layer or inside the fatty cream layer.
- **Change the form of information** – by deconstructing and recreating it, is also a very powerful learning strategy that helps to aid memory and develop understanding. E.g. turning a written description into a diagram or a piece of text into a series of steps on a story board, a flow diagram or a timeline.
- **Connect learning** – connecting information allows pupils to demonstrate a higher level of understanding. E.g. creating mind maps and concept webs that link together parts of different topics, key ideas and important processes. To create a concept web, write down all of the key components or pieces of information around the outside or a pieces of paper and see if your son or daughter can connect them up by drawing lines between them. Along the line they are to write how the two components are connected.
- **Classify and prioritise information** – Pupils can do this by placing information in groups or categories, ranking information from most important to least important, or redrafting written work by numbering paragraphs or points to sequence them to make communication more effective.
- **Distillation** – Reducing information down to key 'chunks' or points, aids learning and supports revision. It also encourages pupils to evaluate the content of the information to select and prioritise the 'chunks' of information that are the most important or relevant. E.g. reduce a passage of text of piece of information into 20 words. Then reduce this to 10, then 5 words. Reduce 3 pages of work in your class book into half a page of A4. Reduce each paragraph into 3 key words and recall the whole text using these 3 words as prompts.

4. **Searching for Information** – many pupils seem to be streets ahead when it comes to using modern technology. However, when home learning requires pupils to engage in some independent research, do they conduct their research effectively, efficiently and legally? Some key reflective questions that you can ask your son/daughter include:
   - *Is your research from a reputable source/website?*
   - *Have you used a range of sources to gain a number of different perspectives towards the issue/topic?*
   - *Have you **processed** the information to **change** its form?*
   - *Have you referenced the sources of your research in a bibliography?*
   - *Which part(s) of this information are the most/least important when answering your homework brief?*
   - *How can you **connect** this research to your **prior learning**?*
   - *Is your final product all your own work (not plagiarised from another source)?*
   - *Have you actually read it through and do you understand it? (or is it cut and pasted!)*

5. **Extending Learning outside of the classroom –** Learning can take place in all settings. Visiting a range places and providing a range of enriching experiences can provide a context for learning and help students begin to apply their learning to the 'real' world. Some ways in which learning can be maximised outside of the classroom include:

    - Engage your son/daughter with topical issues. Read a book/a newspaper article/magazine extract and question which part they think is the most important. Ask them to explain why this is the most important part. Question why he/she chose this part and what criteria he/she based their decision on.
    - When watching a television programme, ask your son/daughter to describe a process or explain what they have just seen to someone younger than them.
    - Watch the daily news together and/or buy a daily newspaper. Spend an half an hour reading the Sunday papers together and then discuss what you have found out. Make it a Sunday morning routine.
    - When shopping for food, let your son/daughter take control of calculating the budget and monitoring the spending (not the contents you buy!). Ask them to find out where the food has come from and why it is not always British. Or why the shops or brands are largely the same as those found in other places in the UK or world.
    - Visit places of social, historical and cultural interest such as museums (free entry), the theatre, music concerts, the coast, the Peak District other towns and cities, literature festivals, etc.
    - Try to encourage your son/daughter to attend clubs or activities outside of school (sports, Cadets, youth groups, religious activities, playing an instrument, cooking the dinner!)
    - Limit the amount of time spent on the computer and on phones (playing games and social networking). Instead engage them with learning tasks using this technology.

These strategies focus on quality rather than quantity and can be used with all abilities and age ranges to support home learning. They allow for personalised learning through choice and flexibility. Taking an active role in learning at home, as well as promoting and engaging in high quality engagement and reflection will support your son/daughter in school.