

Parents in Partnership with JSTC - A successful future for your child

The difference parents can make

Did you know that research has shown that parents can make a great difference to how well their children do at school? In fact they can help to support their children to make the most of College. This can increase their success both at College and beyond. Supporting your child to complete homework tasks and projects, revising for tests, meeting deadlines and becoming confident learners finding out information for themselves – all of these can help your child. Staff at JSTC are always happy to talk to you about helping support your child at College so please don't hesitate to ask!

Different learning styles

There are different ways that students learn. Once you know which styles of learning suit your child best you can help them more. Talk to your child about the lessons they like and why. This will allow you to find out more about which style they work best using. Staff who teach your child can also help. The different learning styles are

- **Visual** :You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- **Aural** : You prefer using sound and music.
- **Verbal** : You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
- **Physical** : You are a practical 'hands on' learner
- **Logical** : You prefer using logic, reasoning and mathematics.
- **Social** : You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
- **Solitary** : You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

Homework – how to help

Homework is an important part of your child's learning process. It will enable them to work independently and challenge their thinking. They will be able to explore more fully what they do understand but also what they find more difficult so they will need to think about how to research ideas and information to solve problems. Learning these skills will be important for their future career goals and life after JSTC.

Some homework activities will link directly to the learning in the classroom – others will extend and stretch beyond the boundaries of the lesson. Some homework activities will be longer term projects where students will need to be able to plan and organise their time. By encouraging your child to complete homework activities you are helping them to prepare for the demands of KS3 and 4 and beyond. If you have any concerns about homework please contact your child's House Tutor in first instance.

Target setting

Making sure your child reaches their full potential is very important both to their success in College and for their future life chances. When your child comes to JSTC they complete a number of tests called Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATS) to give us information about their strengths and areas that they find more challenging. This will help teachers to understand better how to support your child and plan their lessons. This information together with other data (eg KS2 SATS results and other performance indicators) will also allow us to set targets so that together we can monitor the progress your child is making. Targets are set both within KS3 and KS4. In KS3 these targets relate to levels and students are given targets for the separate years within KS3. If a student meets these targets they are raised to ensure your child is stretched and challenged in all curriculum areas. Any student who is under-performing can be identified and staff can they develop strategies to improve performance.

In KS4 targets refer to GCSE grades that your child should be achieving. These are based on their past levels of achievement and national performance data. The targets set are rigorous and again will allow teachers to identify where there is under-performance so that intervention can take place. If a student meets their targets then again the target would be raised to ensure all students strive towards challenging goals.

The CATS tests are an assessment of 'reasoning skills' and your child will take three tests.

1. Verbal CATS test ; assesses your child's reasoning skills using words. Where scores are lower than average JSTC can help develop language reasoning through a range of strategies
2. Quantitative CATS test; assesses reasoning through number looking for patterns and relationships and applying numerical rules. Again where results are below average numeracy support can be given.
3. Non-verbal CATS test; these use shapes and figures to assess reasoning skills requiring no use of language or number. This allows us to assess the potential of students who have poor English language skills or find tests related to language and number difficult.

Using the CATS tests results we are able to

- Identify students who would benefit from numeracy and literacy intervention
- Set meaningful targets that will stretch and challenge
- Support a personalised approach to the learning experience of your child
- Monitor progress through KS3 and 4

Monitoring the progress of your child and target setting takes into account a range of factors including CATS test data. Information is gathered from a range of sources so that an overall picture is gathered on each child. By analysing the information and sharing assessment data with you we can work together to make sure your child makes the most of their time at JSTC and reaches their potential before going on to the next stage of their education at 16.

Examinations and assessment – internal and external

Your child will take a number of tests and examinations throughout their time at JSTC. Some of these will be 'internal' tests. The results will allow teachers to see how well your child understands the work. You will find out the results of these tests through the reports and assessment grades that are sent home three times a year. Your child will also be set targets that they need to use to make sure they reach and exceed their target grades. Although the results of 'internal' examinations don't officially contribute to any final grades for GCSE examinations etc they do indicate how well your child is doing at school. Success in 'internal' tests means that students are more likely to be successful in the external GCSE examinations that come in Key Stage 4. Internal testing is important as the students will take all their GCSE examinations at the end of the course and therefore these internal tests can inform students and parents about the progress being made. The tests along with other assessments allow teaching staff to develop strategies to support students make the requisite progress towards targets.

'External' examinations are the tests that make up qualifications like GCSEs. They can be examinations papers that are formally sat in the examination hall or 'controlled assessment' that the student sits in the classroom of the College. All of these 'external' examinations contribute to the final grade your child will get.

You will receive three formal assessments for your child each year reporting on how your child is performing in each subject that they study. Two of the assessments are summary grades describing achievement, behaviour and effort in each curriculum area. You will also receive a full report where in addition to the grades or levels given staff will give detailed written feedback on your child's progress together with targets to improve their work and make further progress.

Revising – how to make this effective

The following advice and guidance is taken from the BBC website:-

- *"The secret to doing well in exams lies in planning. You can help your child to create a clear revision plan and method of studying that will make them feel in control of their work."*

Tips for revision planning:

- **work out a revision timetable for each subject**
- **break revision time into small chunks - hour-long sessions with short breaks at the end of each session often work well**
- **make sure your child has all the essential books and materials**
- **condense notes onto postcards to act as revision prompts**
- **buy new stationery, highlighters and pens to make revision more interesting**
- **go through school notes with your child or listen while they revise a topic**
- **time your child's attempts at practice papers**

Providing all-round support

The best way to support your child during the stress of revision and exams is to make home life as calm and pleasant as possible. It helps if other members of the household are aware that your child may be under pressure and that allowances should be made for this.

If your child is given study leave in the run-up to exams, try to be at home as much as possible so that you can share a break and a chat together.

Make sure there are plenty of healthy snacks in the fridge and try to provide good, nutritious food at regular intervals. Encourage your child to join family meals, even if it's a busy revision day - it's important to have a change of scene and get away from the books and computer for a while. Also encourage your child to take regular exercise. A brisk walk around the block can help clear the mind before the next revision session.

Try not to nag or make too many demands on your child during exam time. Arguments are counter-productive and will only add unnecessary stress and distract from revision.

It's important to get a good night's sleep before an exam, so discourage your child from staying up late to cram. And make sure he or she eats a good breakfast on the morning of the exam.

Bribes, treats and rewards

Some children are 'bribed' to do well in exams and are offered cash or gifts to achieve good grades. But bribery is not a good idea as it implies that the only worthwhile reward for hard work is money and that you don't trust your child to work hard. Negative messages like these will affect your child's sense of self-worth.

Encourage your child to do well for his or her own sake rather than for money or to please you. Explain that exams aren't an end in themselves but a gateway to the next stage of life - to another Key Stage or to GCSEs, A levels, university, college or work. Good results are themselves the best reward for hard work and will make your child proud of his or her achievements.

Make sure your child knows you're interested in their work and that you'll be proud if they do well. Although bribery isn't advisable, it's fine to provide small treats by way of encouragement - perhaps a piece of cake or some biscuits after a chunk of revision has been completed. The end of exams can be celebrated with a treat that everyone can look forward to, such as a meal out or a trip to the cinema."

Special Educational Needs

At JSTC we gauge the needs of all students via a screening process which includes information from parents, feeder primary school and our own assessments. This informs provision of appropriate support which may include in-class support, small group or 1:1 work or a Keyworker for extra support. The Keyworker can provide a close home school link.

We believe that students make best progress when supported by home and school and strong links are therefore important. Mrs Riches, Head of Additional Needs, holds a Parent Afternoon on the first Monday of every month – please phone for an appointment. If you need to make contact at any other time please phone and if unavailable she will return your call as soon as possible.

Preparation and routine will help your child to cope with the demands of life at secondary school:

- **A drawer or shelf to keep school books**
- **A nightly planner check with your child to share homework and the planner can be signed when completed**
- **A timetable check – books not needed for the day can be left at home (in agreed drawer or on a shelf) and only the books and equipment needed for the next day packed in the school bag**
- **A quiet time and place for homework**
- **Homework support and encouragement might include reading together, discussing the work and even scribing (writing the answers dictated by your child) for your child if writing is difficult (please let Mrs Riches know if this is something that you feel would help)**

The JSTC website

There is a wealth of information on the JSTC website and this is regularly up-dated. If you have suggestions for information you would like to see included please contact the College

Accessing e-portal

Your child's reports, attendance data and information about behaviour in College are all available through our e-portal system. All parents are given a log in when their children start at the College. If you are having difficulties accessing the system or need further information please contact the office administration team at JSTC

The role of the tutor and Progress Evenings

The House Tutor is a very important member of staff in College who will get to know your child really well. They will be able to act as a point of contact for you if you have any concerns and you need to contact the College. At JSTC we operate a 'vertical tutoring' system which means that your child's tutor group has a mix of students from all year groups. This allows older students to help support the younger ones throughout their time in College and develops a 'community' within the College across all year groups. Students gather in their tutor groups first thing every day so that tutors can

guide and prepare students for the day ahead. Uniform and equipment may be checked to ensure students are ready for learning. Any notices and information that students need can be given out. Tutor time is also used for reading and preparation for study in other ways. Students may also gather for assemblies at this time again to build an identity within a given house to help students feel that they have an active role to play within the College.

Parents are invited to Progress Evenings to discuss their child's progress in each curriculum area with their child's tutor. Tutors may use the school's data analysis systems to guide discussions about your child's progress. They may also gather information from other staff about progress in subjects and any concerns that may have arisen so that you can discuss your every aspect of College. This is a very valuable opportunity to raise any questions or concerns you have.

In KS4 there are also Subject Parents Evenings to talk in depth with specific subject teachers to support your child in their examination courses.

If you have any concerns about the progress of your child in a specific subject at any time please contact your child's tutor who can then liaise with the relevant Head of Department in that subject in the first instance.

Attendance

Not surprisingly there is a link between attendance and success at school. At JSTC we want to help support our families to make sure students attend school and are happy and enjoying their studies. The tutor can monitor attendance and any lateness at the start of the day. Registers are also taken for each lesson. Information about attendance is also looked at carefully by the JSTC attendance officer. If you have any concerns about your child's attendance please contact the attendance officer at JSTC. Family holidays should be taken within College holiday periods.

The Curriculum Pathway Process

There are three Pathways that form our KS4 offer. Placement in one of these Pathways occurs as a result of rigorous analysis of all the information available on a student. Staff look at ability and progress, learning style and attainment/achievement together with data from tests taken over a number of years. Students and parents are then given information about the Pathway they are placed in and the way that their personalised curriculum will develop to ensure the highest of outcomes at the end of KS4

Towards the end of KS3 students select the courses that they take for Key Stage 4. The choices for each Pathway should give your child a broad and balanced curriculum. In most cases not taking a specific subject at Key Stage 4 wouldn't mean that your child's future career is affected. It is more important that your child takes subjects they enjoy and are good at. It is very important that your child gets GCSE passes in English and Maths and at least 3 other subjects. Science is also important. These are the Core subjects that all students on all Pathways take at GCSE level. Students usually take two vocational courses depending on the Pathway they follow but all curriculum programmes are based on GCSE. Some students may follow the English Baccalaureate depending on their level of progress in French/Spanish.

All students are given more information about the Curriculum Pathway process via a booklet and parental consultation evening. Students are able to talk to staff about their subjects and courses offered in KS4. Choices are made by a form showing the 'option block' subjects are placed in. These blocks are constructed as a result of student preference for combinations and the anticipated numbers opting for specific subjects. Advice and guidance about choosing options is available in College from tutors, subject teachers and the careers advisor

Key Stage 4

Qualifications – different types and how they allow students to progress

Students in College will take a range of different qualifications. Most course offered are GCSEs. All students take English, Maths and Science GCSEs although the Science courses do vary between the different curriculum pathways. Students can choose from a range of traditional GCSE courses (eg Geography and Food Technology) as well as others like Performing Arts. GCSEs are assessed by examinations taken increasingly at the end of the two year course. Most GCSEs also have a controlled assessment examination which counts for about 20% of the grade. Students prepare differently for this examination as it may be assessing different skills. Some subjects are more practical than theoretical are best taught within a vocational context. These subjects are then delivered as BTEC courses where the students complete a series of assignments which are assessed throughout the course. BTEC courses will include externally assessed tests in addition to the written assignments. Whilst this type of course seems more straightforward it is important that students keep up to date with their work. Some BTEC courses may require a work placement.

Information technology (IT) is delivered through a vocational qualification which again means that students complete assignments but also includes an on-screen task.

All vocational courses will be equivalent to 1 GCSE

How the College supports your child's exam success

The College works hard to offer students lots of support with examination preparation and our staff are always delighted to talk to you and your child about the examination process and their subject examinations. The College also offers a variety of other forms of support including

- **Saturday and after school revision sessions**
- **Easter school revision sessions**
- **Lunchtime catch up sessions**
- **Intervention programmes within school time for Core subjects**
- **Academic coach to mentor students within English**
- **Warm-up sessions before the examinations**
- **How to revise advice**
- **Past paper practice in lessons**

Careers guidance

At JSTC we know how important it is to prepare our young people for the world of work. There are many activities within different curriculum areas that will help and support this process. A dedicated careers advisor works with our students to help to provide appropriate guidance and information about careers, college applications, post – 16 provision and apprenticeships. Students can also get help with completing their application forms so that the ‘personal statement’ section really stands out and their application is successful.

In KS4 students will have access to a range of post-16 providers either in assemblies or ‘drop-in’ sessions.

We track how our students are progressing with their post-16 applications so that we can identify any who are finding this challenging. By working closely with our students we can ensure that they keep up-to-date with the post-16 college deadlines and are aware of the possibilities out there beyond JSTC

Applying to College or Sixth Form

Information on the JSTC website or available through the dedicated careers advisor at JSTC will support students to complete applications to secure post 16 places at their chosen destination

Applying for an Apprenticeship

The College has direct links to advice and guidance from First College and the Work Based Academy. Advisors are invited into College to talk to students who are interested in obtaining an apprenticeship. Those students who need further help and guidance with developing an application are given personal support.