



Supporting Your Child Through the Exam Period



A guide for parents and carers

This guide has been produced by Virtual School Kent and Medway Virtual School, following requests from adoptive parents.

The exam period can be a challenging time for young people. They may feel pressure from school, from themselves, and sometimes from home. Your calm, consistent support can make a significant difference to their wellbeing and confidence.

One of the most important things you can do is remind your child that you're on their side – no matter what. You do not need to be an expert in the subject or exam topic to be able to support your child. You are their parent, their mentor and not their tutor.

Below is a collection of practical tips to help you support your child before, during, and after their exams in a positive and nurturing way.

Before the Exam Period

Create a Supportive Environment

Year 11, and particularly exam season, can feel like an emotional rollercoaster for young people and others in their family.

If your child seems to be struggling, it's always worth speaking to their school or their Designated Teacher (for looked after and previously looked after children) in the first instance. Understanding what's going on behind the scenes can really help you support your child at home and it gives them the reassurance that everyone is working together.

Try to keep conversations gentle and open. Encourage them to talk about their worries but also let them know that no matter the outcome, their exams do not define who they are.

Stay positive and remind them that their worth is not defined by their grades. Life rarely follows one straight path – what matters most is that they know they're loved and supported throughout the journey.

Before Exams Begin

You might notice that your child feels tense or irritable or isn't sleeping well. These can be signs of stress, and it's completely normal. Encouraging regular meals, fresh air, decent sleep and a bit of flexibility around chores or family routines can make a big difference.

If they are into podcasts, [Health for Teens](#) is a great place to find short, helpful tips designed especially for young people.

Look Out for Signs of Stress

The [NHS](#) advises parents to:

- Notice signs of stress
- Encourage healthy eating
- Support good sleep routines
- Be flexible during revision and exams

[Kooth](#) is a free, safe and anonymous online mental wellbeing community for 10-25 year olds living in Kent and Medway. It offers free online counselling and support including Self-Help tools, articles, journals, magazines, discussion boards and access to fully trained counsellors online 365 days a year.

Be a Role Model

Children and young people learn so much from observing us, often more than we realise. So, it can be really helpful to show them how you manage busy or difficult days – planning healthy meals, carving out time for exercise, getting things done before relaxing etc. Model how you approach tasks you may not enjoy, such as saying, *“I’ll get the washing up done now so then I can relax and watch Eastenders.”* This models resilience and good habits and shows your child that we all do things we don’t enjoy doing - but there are ways of managing.

Small acts of kindness go a long way too. Putting away their dishes, making their bed or bringing them a snack can show them that you appreciate how hard they’re trying and that home is a safe and supportive place.

Maintain Routine

Try to keep to normal routines as much as possible. Clubs, sports and hobbies are just as important as revision and are vital for their physical and mental wellbeing. Homework may still be set—usually in the form of revision—so avoid pushing for more than they are able to give. Remember, when it comes to exam revision, ‘Time Out’ is just as important as putting ‘Time In’.

Throughout your child’s Year 10 and 11 studies, most schools will offer supportive revision guidance, either on their website or available through the Form Tutor or Subject Teacher. The guidance will often cover revision techniques, recommended websites, podcasts etc. Schools may use external support providers such as [GCSEPod](#), to support with revision. (You will find some quick guides which are free to access within the Parental Resources section of this website, even if your school does not subscribe).

Supportive planning – from the Easter holiday onwards...

School holidays, particularly the Easter holiday, often feels like crunch time for parents; but for teenagers, even the Easter Break which is four weeks before the first exam can seem like forever! A gentle approach works best. Talk to your child about what support they might need: stationery, a quiet space to revise, and time to relax.

Ask them when they think they might want to revise over the school breaks (if at all!). Once they’ve worked out what feels realistic, you can both plan nice things around it – meeting friends, day trips, sports, movie nights etc. Remind them that breaks are genuinely as important as revision – so planning for them is just as important.

If they enjoy being outdoors, consider a flexible plan where rainy days are for revision and sunny days for fresh air.

Not all subjects need the same amount of time, especially if they’re already doing well in some areas. Talk to them about what matters most for their next steps. English and Maths are often key, so they might want to focus more there. For the subjects they dislike but still need, little rewards after a study session can be great motivation—something fun to look forward to afterwards.

Showing that you trust them will encourage them to achieve more. If they tell you that they are revising whilst listening to music or 'hiding' away in their room – trust that they are. If they want to go to friends' houses to revise, allow them. If you are worried, suggest that next time their friends can come to yours, so that you can reassure yourself that they are revising (and if they are not, this will give you the opportunity to suggest to them that perhaps separating time with friends and time to revise may be a better option.)

Knowing your child's capabilities and limits will allow you to reflect on how much revision they are able to achieve. If they are a visual learner, a visual timetable of their agreed revision plan will support them a lot more than you verbally reminding them to revise!

And if they simply don't manage to revise much at all—please don't panic. The relationship you have with your child is far more important than their revision schedule. Pushing them or reminding them constantly can actually make things worse.

Instead, try sharing the learning with them in a relaxed way. Listen to a podcast together on the way out or ask them to teach you something they know or offer to find out something for them. Even something fun like watching *The Muppets Christmas Carol* or *Gnomeo and Juliet* together can spark a great conversation about themes and characters!

Help them to find a Podcast or YouTube Presenter that works for them and encourage them to stick with them, rather than flitting around different broadcasters – it can be very easy to waste away a valuable hour or so looking for content, rather than sticking with what works.

Remember:

- They do not need to revise all their subjects equally.
- Short, achievable revision sessions can be far better than trying to study all day.
- There are many different ways of revising – your child may find some techniques and methods more effective than others. Just because they are not sat in front of a textbook or exam paper, doesn't mean that they are not revising.
- Showing interest in what they are learning can motivate them and help revision feel less daunting.

Celebrate Small Wins

Finishing a topic, sticking to a schedule, or simply trying their best deserves recognition. Remind them that effort matters just as much as the final grade.

Discuss what matters most to your child:

- Which subjects do they need for their next steps?
- Which ones do they want to feel proud of?
- Which subjects are going well and need less revision?
- Which require more focus (e.g., English or Maths)?
- Help them set small goals and rewards, especially for subjects they find harder.

Useful Websites

[Top Tips for supporting your child during the exam period.](#)

[5 top tips on how to keep calm during exam season – The Education Hub](#)

[Young Minds](#)

[Exam Support Guide 2025](#) (Produced by NHS Kent and Medway, i-Thrive and KCC)

You Tube videos:

[Exam Stress Tips for Parents](#)

[BBC Bitesize. The Mind Set: Advice for parents when their face exams](#)

Planning around the Exam Timetable.

Once you have the exam timetable, it can really help to go through it together. GCSE exams span over 8 weeks. It is important for them to understand that whilst this feels like a very long time, with on average 25 exams, it is not 8 weeks of constant exams! Help them to 'chunk' out the exams in the same way they would tackle a question or task in school. By highlighting the length of each exam, and, more importantly, the time between each exam, can really help them to feel less overwhelmed – and therefore each exam becomes more manageable. There is also a week break between school terms when there will be no exams – which subjects are after and before this break and how will that feed into any revision plans?

Many mock exams are crammed into 1–2 weeks, which isn't reflective of the longer, more spaced-out summer exam schedule. Helping your child see this difference can reduce anxiety.

Work out when the 'halfway' point (in terms of number of exams and in terms of time) of their exams is (and quarter way points too!) and highlight this on their timetable. What little celebrations (for example, favourite dinner) would they want to celebrate reaching these milestones?

During the Exams

When each exam is over, try to avoid asking too many questions or going into detail about what they wrote. They will have almost certainly discussed this with their friends, so may not want to repeat it at home. Simply recognising that they did their best is enough. Knowing when to talk to them is just as important. For example, if your child doesn't like talking about their day as soon as they come home and prefers to discuss it after dinner, then wait until then to show them you are proud of their efforts and know that they tried their best.

Let them have a bit of downtime before expecting them to think about their next exam. Encourage them to cross off each completed paper on their timetable so that they can see their progress as this can be really uplifting and motivating for them.

If you have the space at home, encourage them to pile up any books and revision guides that are no longer needed – it is a visual reminder of how hard they are working and what they have achieved. The taller it gets, the nearer they are to finishing!

If you want to lighten the mood, share some of your own exam memories – especially the slightly disastrous or funny ones!

After the Exams

The wait for the results can feel just as long and stressful as the exam period itself (it is in fact, near enough the same length of time!). Keeping things calm and normal is the best approach.

About halfway through the summer break, when things feel more relaxed, it can help to chat together about what they'd like on Results Day. Do they want you with them? Waiting outside? How would they like to tell you their results?

As the day approaches, keep everything as normal as possible. Reassure your child that whatever happens, you are proud of them, that you know they tried their best and that whatever happens, they will still be as amazing as ever! Make it clear that you love and value your child for who they are, not the grade they achieved in their exams.

Results Day

Whatever your child's results are, the first 24/48 hours after the results are published are really important. Staff and organisations are ready to offer their support, for which they will have local knowledge and contacts for those next steps.

Even if they already know their results online, encourage them to go into school. Staff will be there to support them, celebrate with them, and help them with their next steps if things didn't go as well as expected.

If there is a need to contact a college, school or employee, remember that enquires from the young person rather than parents are typically viewed in a more favourable light. There are often opportunities to make enquiries online, but this may not always be the case. We know our teenagers do not typically use their phones to speak with others – this may need a little practice if calls need to be made.

- [Parents' guide to exam results | National Careers Service](#)

Should your child be thinking of attending a further education provision for their September Pathway, please remind them to enrol in good time, preferably on receipt of their results in preparation for the September start. Most learning providers will hold their enrolment events towards the end of August or the beginning of September. Please check the providers' websites to make sure your child knows when the enrolment date is for their chosen provision. Remind your child to take along all the relevant paperwork with them, such as your examination results, confirmation of their placement letter/email etc.

Please be aware that enrolment can be a very busy time and seem a little chaotic but there will be support available at your child's chosen provision around enrolments. If they have secured an apprenticeship or traineeship your child will also need to check with the provider for their official enrolment & start date.
