

## Supporting Learning at St Margaret's School for Girls



At St. Margaret's, we recognise that pupils may require additional support at any stage in their learning. As well as specific subject support, we offer help and advice with study skills and organisation strategies.

Having the right environment for productive study is hugely important. To this end, we welcome girls into our Learning Support room, which is resourced with the latest technology and study aids. Our dyslexic learners are able to access text in digital format using assistive technology on our computers and their Chromebooks. Read Write software is available on all platforms to the girls in both the Junior and Senior School. The text to speech feature and literacy tools have proved invaluable, as have the study skills and research features of the program.

A variety of different learning styles and abilities are accommodated in the department. Girls very quickly discover which work methods suit them best, and they are then able to go on and apply these in their studies. Here are some important hints and tips from Learning Support, to help with planning and organisation.

### Routines help your child to be better organised:

- ✓ Help them have a set routine for getting ready for school the night before – saving a rush in the morning and meaning that they have everything they need for the day.
- ✓ Encourage the use of checklists. Listing the steps involved in a task will make it easier for your child to see how to get started. It also may lessen her anxiety around planning. Checklists also provide a visual reminder of where your child left off if she gets distracted.

You can make checklists for everything from the tasks your daughter has to do:

- Check homework diary
  - Do homework
  - Check timetable for next day
  - Pack books, jotters, pencil case, calculator, diary
  - Pack any gym kit needed
  - Organise a snack and packed lunch if needed
  - Set out clean school clothes
  - Follow a bed time winding down routine
- ✓ Allowing time for tasks can be difficult. On your checklists, consider giving a time estimate for each step. If your child doesn't read yet, you can put some inexpensive kitchen timers around the house. Set them for the amount of time your child should be spending on everything, from completing a maths sheet, to brushing her teeth.

### Using Planners and Calendars

Not all planning needs to be done on paper; a good thing if your child has trouble keeping track of items. A family planner calendar could be hung somewhere centrally in the home and your child could have her own coloured marker.

For older girls, there are plenty of free or inexpensive apps and time-management software which can help. If the pupil has memory issues and they are badly organised, remind them not to try to keep everything in their head, the following strategies may help:

- ✓ Sticky notes at home or school are good reminders to do things.
- ✓ A timetable, large enough for easy viewing, on a bedroom door would help when organising school bag packing.
- ✓ Bulleted lists should be used for planning and organising work.
- ✓ Homework diaries should be used accordingly to help organise the week, and prioritising which work needs to be done first. Pupils may need help from a parent/adult until they are able to do this for themselves.
- ✓ Timers on phones/watches to set time limits for things like room tidying, and doing homework will give pupils a sense of time and give them something to aim for.

## Study Techniques for Tests and Exams

Some pupils may be reluctant to take on board new learning strategies. If you find they don't take feedback well, or see the point of learning new ways to do things, try to explain why it's important to learn a new skill, or how it may save time and energy in the long run. You may want to suggest that they try some of these strategies.

- ✓ Make up a revision timetable to cover all subjects – share out the time but make more space for subjects that you find most difficult. The pupil may need help with this part to get them started.
- ✓ Colour code the timetable to give a good overall visual idea of the subjects that need to be studied.
- ✓ Study for short periods of time (20-30 mins) then have a break, walk to the kitchen to get a drink, toilet break etc.
- ✓ Use study techniques such as highlighting key points, spider diagrams, brainstorming, use memory cards with questions on one side and answers on the other. Remind pupils that they can come and ask at Learning Support if they need help with this.
- ✓ Use lists of outcomes and 'traffic light' the points. Study the 'red' areas first at the start of a study session, and then finish your study time with the 'green', known points.
- ✓ Record model answers on an iPod/phone and play it back through headphones on journeys to and from school.
- ✓ Try different study techniques for studying different types of information. One method may not work for all topics/subjects.
- ✓ Practice timings using actual past papers from the SQA. This is worthwhile as it will let you see the pace you should be working at. Do revise a topic and then test yourself on specific questions about that topic firstly, before attempting whole papers. Always check your answers (or get a teacher to check them for you) and evaluate how you did. Focus your next study session on what you didn't do so well last time.
- ✓ Set up an area in your bedroom to study or a place in the house where you will not be disturbed. If it is in your room, aim to pack your books away when it is time to sleep. Good restful sleep is important at study time.
- ✓ Too much tea/coffee or high caffeine energy drinks is not good as these can add to feelings of anxiousness.
- ✓ Eating regularly with not too many unhealthy snacks is also important, but treats can be used as rewards for working hard.