



Dear Parent/Carer

We have had a great start to the new school year. I have been very pleased with how all students have started the year with behaviour, homework and overall expectations. We look forward to it continuing throughout the year. Students are largely meeting our expectations with SLANT in the classroom, but there are refinements needed in a few areas and I ask you to reinforce these expectations over the half term ready for their return. Attendance has started higher than last year but Year 10, in particular, needs to improve as they are significantly lower than other year groups. The DfE also published school performance data and our Progress 8 score remained similar to last year, despite my disappointment with the results. The overall score was -0.09, which falls in the 'Average' category. The current Year 11 have already performed as well in some subjects in their September mocks than last year's cohort did in the summer exams, so I expect a significant jump in progress next year.

## KNOWLEDGE BOOKLETS

The main focus for this newsletter is to update you on the homework expectations and to provide you with extra guidance on what to do at home to support your son or daughter. So far this year around 70% of students are completing this work with some year groups slightly higher and some subjects above and below this figure. We have undertaken an initial evaluation of the work done and we have been very impressed with the efforts of the students so far. Remembering we are only 3 weeks in for some year groups, it has been a good start. Next term we will be starting to issue detentions and invite parents in where we see a reluctance to do the homework.

### Where can I find the booklets?

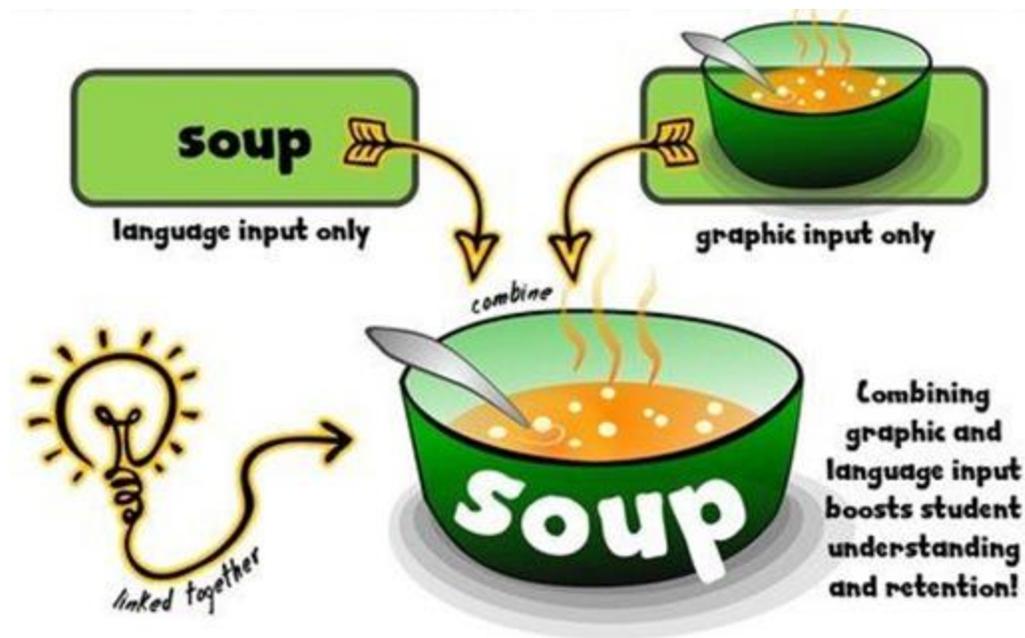
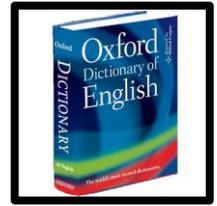
Each student has been given a Knowledge Booklet for Term 1. Term 2 booklets will be ready straight after half term. Copies of Term 1 booklets are on the website in the 'Parents' tab and then under 'Homework'. Any parent or student can access them electronically together with a copy of the homework timetable.

The screenshot shows the website for The Robert Napier School. The main navigation bar includes links for Home, About Us, Information, News & Events, Parents, Students, Staff, Sixth Form, Partners, and Contact Us. The current page is 'Homework' under the 'Parents' section. The page content includes a heading 'Homework' and a paragraph explaining the redesigned homework structure. Below the text are three download links: 'Homework timetable' (DOCX File), 'Y10 Knowledge Booklet' (PDF File), and 'Y11 Knowledge Booklet' (PDF File). A right-hand sidebar contains a list of other school-related links such as Attendance Matters, Catering, Key Dates, Prospectus, Safeguarding, SEN, Term Dates, The School Day, and Uniform.

## What to do with the Knowledge Booklets

Some students have already grasped the effort required and understand rote learning principles. There is no single, specific way to do it but here is some guidance on what to do:

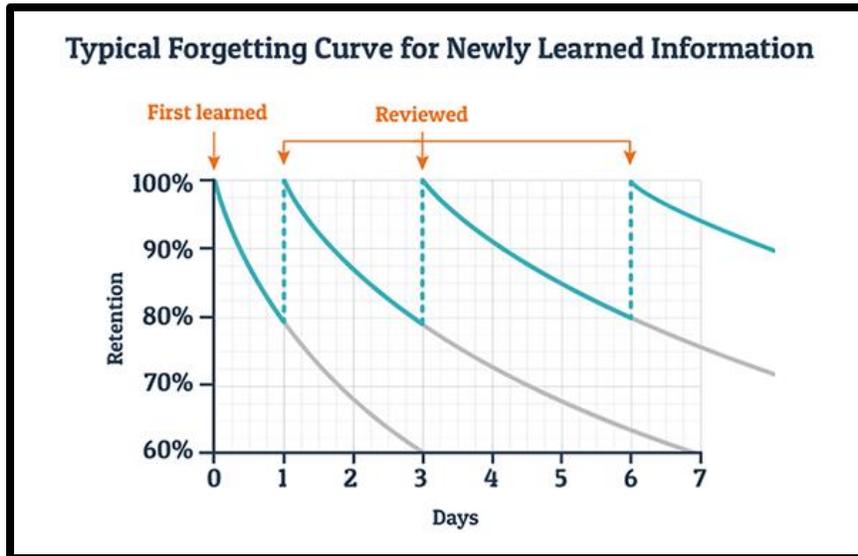
- Get your child to initially read through the subject page they are focusing on that evening. The information provided mostly explains itself. Key terms for topics being studied provide definitions to explain these key terms. Comprehension of the language is the first stage of the process, so get your child to check if there are any words that need looking up in the dictionary to clarify their meaning.
- Now focus on memory development. There are many ways to do this and some students like to simply repeat the information in their heads and then cover the Knowledge Booklet and use their exercise books to challenge themselves on what they have remembered. They can then add the bits they have forgotten in a different coloured pen. This allows students to work on what they have forgotten the next time around.
- One of the most effective methodologies is known as **dual coding**. This is when students combine text or verbal information with visual images. Allowing words to connect to visual images supports the transfer from short term memory to long term. In Appendix 1 I have included some more detail for interested parents but the following is a very brief summary:



**Students who interact with notes in a visual way by doodling, colouring, and working with images are able to convert the input into long-term memory more effectively. They remember the lesson material more consistently.**

## Why do we repeat the homework over the term?

One of the key benefits of the Knowledge Booklets is the ability to repeat learning as part of the process. Research shows that with every time a student repeats learning there is less information forgotten and the information is remembered for longer. This is shown in the forgetting curve graph below:



## Why do students do quizzes on the information in the Knowledge Booklets at the start of lessons?

This is to give subject teachers a clear idea of how much of the knowledge development in lessons and at home is being retained. It has also been shown to improve student engagement, as they see the link with doing the homework and success in the low stakes tests at the start of lesson. I was lucky enough to observe an occasion where one of Mrs Brattle's students got full marks on a very difficult test and was able to explain in his own words how he actually found it easy because of the effort he had put into the learning information in the Knowledge Booklets.

### Dylan Ellis in Year 9

*I was really pleased when I got full marks on the quiz in Citizenship with Mrs Brattle. I explained to everyone how I simply read all of the information about 3 times until I thought I knew it all. It was great to get full marks!*

Below are some great examples of work which gives you a flavour of what is being done by the students. We have reviewed around 200 homework books in the last few days and are largely very pleased with the volume of work being done; it is considerably more than last year, so thank you for your support.



### 30 Minutes of Maths homework

So far this term there has not been as much Maths homework completed as we would like. In most year groups the completion of online Maths homework is as low as 30%, whereas paper based homework is as high as 70%, with a number of Year 11 classes being 100% every day. While we can see that students are completing more paper-based homework, the reason for having a balance of computer-based homework is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and practise using different methods while managing the workload of teachers. This ensures the high expectations of Maths homework does not result in excessive marking, which in turn affects the time teachers have to plan their lessons. The students need this extra online homework as regular application of Maths is the most important component in improving student progress.

I have spoken to most students in lessons this week about this and expect students to make every effort to catch up over the 2-week half term. Please support your child by having high expectations for the completion of this homework. If students are finding this hard, please e-mail their Maths teacher directly. If they need any extra support, there are daily lunchtime support sessions in the lecture theatre with Mr Wells and homework club after school. Both of these clubs allow for online homework completion.

### 30 MINUTES OF READING (KS3 ONLY)

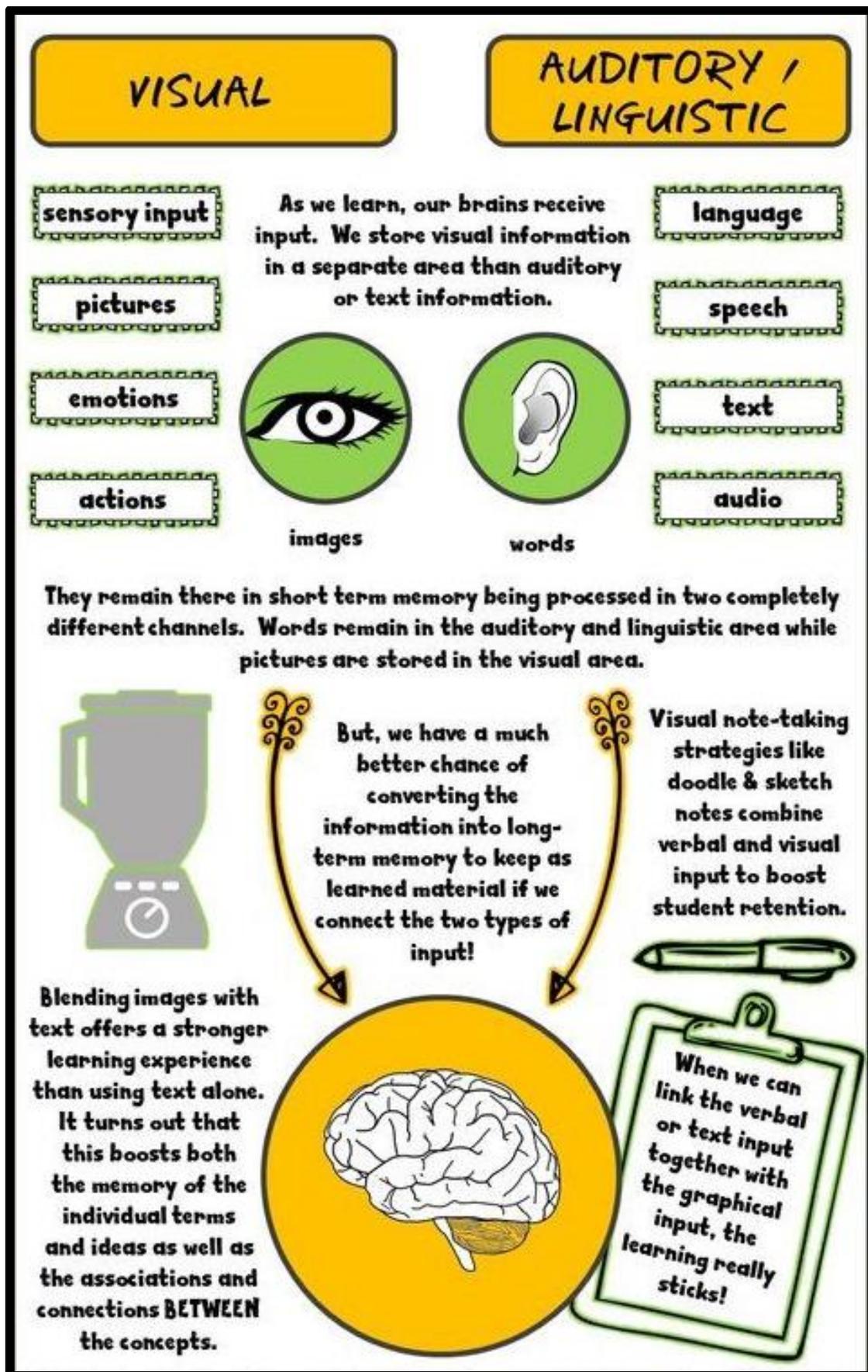
We have been delighted that many students have been including a summary of what reading they have done each night in their Knowledge Booklets. We like this idea and want to copy it! Please encourage your son/daughter to do this as well.

Finally, I would like to wish all students and yourselves a very enjoyable and restful half term break. Please remember we have a 2 week break and we look forward to welcoming students back on the Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Minchin  
Headteacher



## 2017-8 Term Dates:

TERM 1 Begins - <b>Year 7 &amp; 12 ONLY</b>	31/08/2017 & 01/09/2017	
All Students in School	04/09/2017	
End of TERM 1	20/10/2017	
Autumn Holiday	23/10/2017	03/11/2017
TERM 2 Begins	06/11/2017	
End of TERM 2	22/12/2017	
Christmas Holiday	25/12/2017	05/01/2018
TERM 3 Begins	08/01/2018	
End of TERM 3	09/02/2018	
February Holiday	12/02/2018	16/02/2018
TERM 4 Begins	19/02/2018	
End of TERM 4	29/03/2018	
Spring Holiday	30/03/2018	13/04/2018
Good Friday	30/03/2018	
Easter Monday	02/04/2018	
TERM 5 Begins	16/04/2018	
End of TERM 5	25/05/2018	
May Bank Holiday	07/05/2018	
May Holiday	28/05/2018	01/06/2018
TERM 6 Begins	04/06/2018	
End of TERM 6	20/07/2018	