

ACO/KLO

26th January 2017

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Year 8 Options

Choosing the subjects that we wish to study at GCSE is traditionally a process that we start in Year 9 and this is often a very important and exciting time in your child's school life: it is the point where they decide about the courses and qualifications they wish to study in Years 10 and 11. Decisions that will affect their future and hopefully lead them on to become successful learners.

Ensuring that students study a broad and balanced curriculum is crucial to their future success, but developing in students the skills that they need to engage with, and ensure achievement at GCSE level is also key. Many changes have, and are still taking place, with regards to GCSE qualifications nationally, and schools are being asked by the government to amend their qualifications and curriculum to adapt to the modern education system, and the requirements of students when they leave us in Year 11. The new qualifications demand more time, and greater depth. They have more content, and students will sit more difficult examinations at the end of Year 11, with reduced controlled assessment along the way. Your child will ultimately be facing more difficult GCSEs than ever before and we have to now adapt our curriculum to face this fact, by providing more time to study their option choices.

In order to support our students in the development of the necessary skills to succeed at GCSE level we have decided – in line with many other schools - to introduce a 3 year Key Stage 4. This therefore means that students in Year 8 will be asked to choose their options subjects this year, to begin their studies in Year 9. This means that, instead of the curriculum retaining a very broad skim of many subjects in Year 9, your child will specialise in fewer subjects at greater depth. We are confident this will improve their achievement and also their motivation towards school, where they are studying subjects that they enjoy.

A priority when students make their option choices is to ensure that we offer, and they choose, subjects that will allow them to continue to follow a broad and balanced curriculum. For this reason we will be asking students to choose 4 subjects to study during Year 9. The first option will be an Ebacc subject, the second will be a practical subject such as, Art (visual or performing), PE or Technology and the third and fourth options will be free choice for the student to choose based on their strengths and future aspirations. All students will study in addition English, English Literature, Mathematics and Science as well as the statutory subjects of PSE and RE.

At the end of Year 9, after guidance from school, students will then choose 3 subjects that they wish to continue studying into Year 10. The reason for this reduction in subjects is to ensure that students are given enough study time every week to cope with the demanding new courses at GCSE: 3 option subjects, combined with English, English Literature, Maths and two Science qualifications means that your child will have sufficient time to be successful in 8 GCSE subjects.

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As always we would encourage students to speak to family members, teachers and form tutors for guidance and advice and read carefully the information about each course.

Key dates regarding year 8 options are as follows:

Monday 13th February – Launch of the Options Process to students. Options booklets will be handed out.

Thursday 16th February – Options Information Evening 6-8pm, Main Hall

Thursday 9th March – Parents Evening

Monday 13th March – Option Application Forms must be returned to school

Options Information Evening on Thursday 16th February is an opportunity for you and your son/daughter to attend. Staff representing every course and qualification we are offering will be available to answer any questions and to help make sure your child makes the right choices.

Choosing options in year 8 is a significant change for our school that was implemented last year. I am confident that these changes will lead to increased achievement for every student, and bring our school curriculum in line with the requirements of our students. It provides greater depth and specialisation for our students, enabling them to be successful in the subjects that they choose over 3 years at Key Stage 4. I look forward to meeting you, and explaining this process further at the Options Evening on Thursday 16th February.

Yours sincerely

K Logan

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