

Our Ref: SW/TSE

18th April 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian

### Year 8 Options

I am writing regarding our “Options” process for Year 8 students and to outline the key reasons for this change.

You may be aware; GCSE examinations have undergone a phased programme of reform. These new, reformed GCSE qualifications are linear - this means that all examinations will be sat at the end of Year 11. They are more demanding in their content than previous GCSEs. Non-examination assessments (controlled assessment and coursework) has been removed or reduced in the majority of GCSEs so the grade achieved will now be solely determined, in most cases, through examination at the end of Year 11.

There is also be a new grading structure, with a 9-1 scale replacing the existing A\*-G scale. Within this new scale it is anticipated that only around 50% of those students currently achieving an A\* will achieve the new grade 9 and the new ‘good pass’ grade of a 5 will only be achieved by around the top third of candidates currently achieving a grade C.

Students who are currently in Year 8 will be the third cohort to sit reformed GCSEs across all of their subjects. In order to address the increased demands of these reformed GCSEs and to maximise students’ chances of success, we have introduced an element of choice into Year 8 and ask students to narrow down the subjects which they would like to study. This does not mean that students cannot opt to take a GCSE in a subject that they have not chosen but they will benefit by doing so. The GCSE option choice process will continue as usual in the Spring term of Year 9. This move is motivated by our desire to maintain the wellbeing of our students as well as to support their academic outcomes as they undertake Key Stage 4.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Students will benefit from an increased allocation of lesson time for subjects, including English, Maths and Science to better prepare them for the increased demands of the new qualifications.
- Year 9 will be used as a “foundation” year across all subjects seeing a move into GCSE content in the core subjects.
- Students will spend less time studying subjects which they will discontinue.
- The additional time allocated to the subjects chosen will aid the preparation of students should they continue with them at GCSE level.

Please be assured that both parents and students will be fully supported as we introduce this change. Advice and guidance on option choices will be delivered to Year 8 students within assemblies and option subject lessons in the coming weeks. I would also like to invite you to a Parents Information Evening on **Tuesday 24th April** from 6.00pm to 7.00pm in the School Hall at which the process will be explained in more detail and give you the opportunity to ask any questions that you may have.

Yours sincerely

Mr S. Withers  
Assistant Headteacher