

29th April 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

RE: GCSE options and your child’s Year 9 curriculum

I am writing to set out the arrangements for your child’s GCSE options process. Students currently in Year 8 will make their GCSE options choices in Year 9 during the 2020-21 academic year for the reasons set out below.

For the last few years, it has been common in many schools for children in Year 8 to choose their options and begin GCSE courses in Year 9. There have been a number of studies showing that that this approach has led to curriculum narrowing being commonplace in secondary schools in the UK. This leads to a restricted options offer and risks students leaving school with many gaps in their knowledge and skills. If students are to achieve their full potential, it is important that they are empowered by a curriculum that has great breadth and depth and includes, for example, opportunities to learn languages, study humanities subjects or to participate in a range of creative and performing arts. We do not wish to see any subjects being squeezed out of the KS3 curriculum, which means that from now on, Year 8 students will continue to take a range of subjects in Year 9.

At GCSE, alongside traditional subjects, students also have the choice of additional options such as Film Studies and Health and Social Care. Currently, students opt to study these courses with minimal knowledge of what the course entails. This often results in students changing courses partway through the academic year. As part of our Year 9 curriculum we are also keen to give them the opportunity to study modules in these subjects. This will mean that they will have gained some experience of these subject areas from which they can make an informed decision regarding their GCSE options for Years 10 and 11.

Whilst we wish to maintain a broader curriculum offer for longer and avoid restricting student choices, we continue to recognise the importance of each student having the chance to personalise their curriculum to help them develop their talents and interests. Year 9 provides an ideal opportunity to do this. Therefore, there will be a degree of guided choice in Year 9 within the framework of a broad and balanced curriculum. The diagram below sets out the curriculum model for your son/daughter.

Each student will be taught English, Maths, Science, Spanish, History, Geography, Learning for Life (PSHE) and PE. Students will also continue with their Enrichment curriculum. Each student will then opt for a creative arts and performing arts subject. Finally students will opt for three technical based subjects to study in a carousel across the year. The options for this will be as follows.

Technical	Creative Arts	Performing Arts
Catering	Fine Art	Drama
Computing	3D Form	Music
Film Studies	Textiles	
Health and Social Care		

Oak Academy

Sian Thomas, BEd (Hons), CEO - AAT
 Paul Holman, BSc (Hons), Director of Outcomes
 Richard Burgas, BA(Hons), Principal

www.oak-academy.co.uk

E office@oak-academy.co.uk T 01202 774600
 Duck Lane, Bournemouth, Dorset. BH11 9JJ



Not only will this approach mean we can preserve the richness and diversity of our curriculum, but it will mean that students also have the chance to personalise their learning within the framework of a very broad curriculum. Please also be aware of the following key points:

Modern Foreign Languages

All students who wish to take Modern Foreign Languages to GCSE level will be able to do so. There will, however, be a very small group of students who are offered catch up literacy and numeracy lessons in Year 9 in place of a language. This will only be by prior agreement with our SENDCO and the senior leadership team. Once these students have caught up in English and Maths, they will be able to progress to study MFL at GCSE level should they wish to.

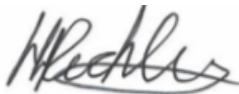
GCSE options

The formal GCSE options process will begin in the second half of the Autumn Term of Year 9 and will be supported by a set of structured opportunities for students including: taster lessons, assemblies, an options marketplace, an options evening and an options interview. All students will be able to opt for all subjects that will be offered, regardless of whether they have studied them in Year 9 or not.

I hope that this clarifies the options process for Year 8 students. I will write again in due course with more information on individual subjects and regarding the process of making these guided options for Year 9.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Academy should you need any further information.

Yours faithfully,



Hayley Richley
Vice Principal (Standards)

Oak Academy

Sian Thomas, BEd (Hons), CEO - AAT
Paul Holman, BSc (Hons), Director of Outcomes
Richard Burgas, BA(Hons), Principal

www.oak-academy.co.uk

E office@oak-academy.co.uk T 01202 774600
Duck Lane, Bournemouth. Dorset. BH11 9JJ