

2 February 2024

Dear Parents/ Carers,

You and your child may have started thinking about the Options process. Attached with this letter is a copy of the Options booklet and Options Selection Form. These are also available on the website, Tutors will also have spare paper copies that your child can ask for if needed. The booklet aims to give you key information on each subject to help support your child in their decision when choosing Option subjects. You will also find key dates and information on the Options process in the booklet.

A presentation on the process has been delivered to students the day they receive the booklet, and presentations to parents/carers will be during the Year 9 Options Evening on Thursday 22 February, to give you more information and further help support you in this process. The aim of the presentation is to provide clarity on the process, and help you feel more informed and confident in supporting your child as they make their decision on the subjects they will study in Years 10 and 11, also how these could link to his post 16 pathways and career. A copy of the presentation will be made available on the website after the Options Evening. Throughout the process, myself (Mrs Alltraine), your child's Tutor, Head of Year, the SEND team, the EAL team, and the Inclusion team will all be available to provide the support that you need and answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, please find a summary of FAQs that you may find useful as you begin to think about the process.

FAQs

Can students choose Triple Science, then one less Option subject to lessen the workload?

ANSWER: They do not select to do Triple Science; it is only offered to certain students based on their ability (generally set 1 and set 2). This means that these students will have an extra GCSE. We have followed this pathway for several years and students have been able to cope with workload. Where issues arise, they can revert to Double Science.

Is EBACC a qualification? It is difficult to pass? What are the advantages?

ANSWER: Students do not get a certificate to say they did EBACC at school. It's a pathway, with a group of academic subjects that are valued by several universities. It provides a strong academic core that develops key academic skills. Grade 3+ in English and MFL should enable students to achieve Grade 5 in EBACC subjects. EBACC is open to all students. In fact, the government wants around 75% of students completing this pathway.

Are there any courses students can't do together?

ANSWER: Students cannot take different qualifications in the same subject. For example, they cannot do GCSE Media and Media BTEC, GCSE PE and SPORT BTEC, etc. The differences will be in the content and the way they are examined.

Are there subjects with entry requirements?

ANSWER: No, but we strongly recommend students who choose to study Computer Science to be working on a strong Grade 3 in Maths. This is because the course demands high levels of mathematical skills. OCR National in IMedia is an ICT course that does not require a similar level of mathematical skills.

Can students do both Geography and History?

ANSWER: The school does not actively block this option pathway. However, students need to consider if this will provide them with a balanced curriculum.

Can a student choose to study a language that they haven't been taught in KS3. For example, they want to do French, but studied German in Years 7-9.

ANSWER: We look at individual cases; students are given the relevant information and guidance to help ensure that they pursue a pathway that will enable them to succeed. For example, if a student has regular access to the language, or perhaps has spent time in the country, the head of MFL will meet with the student and assess their ability.

Will a student be at an advantage if they return the form early?

ANSWER: No. Options Selection Forms are only processed after the deadline (Thursday, 24th March 2022).

Are GCSE Subjects all taught in sets? Will students stay in their Year 9 sets in English and Maths?

ANSWER: No. There are subjects that are taught in mixed ability classes such as GCSE History, GCSE Media, etc. In subjects where they are taught in sets, the setting is normally reviewed at the end of each academic year. Therefore, setting could change between Year 9 and Year 10.

Do students need to be re-assessed for SEND need before GCSE exams for extra time and other access arrangements?

ANSWER: Yes. They are assessed by our Special Consideration Co-ordinator, then applications are made to exam boards in the Autumn Term of Year 10. A decision is made by exam boards based on evidence. If any further tests are required, the school will normally arrange these.

Can a student study Geography and choose not to study MFL? or do EBACC then have Computer Science as an Option?

ANSWER: Students can choose any combination from the Option columns. However, please consider the school recommendations for specific pathways. For example, taking Geography without a language will not allow the students to take the EBACC pathway. We recommend that students should keep their options open; the idea to follow a humanity, a language and Computer Science is perfectly acceptable.

Is it mandatory to select a subject from each column in the Options form or just 4 out of them all?

ANSWER: One subject needs to be indicated for each column.

Can students switch to a different subject if they decide they do not like their current choice?

ANSWER: No. Once the subjects are finalised, it is not possible to change.

The deadline for the Options selection forms to be returned to tutors is **Thursday 14 March 2024**.

Please read the information in the Options booklet, speak to teachers on Options Evening regarding their subjects and your child's performance, and attend the presentation on the evening to help inform and support you in this process. If you have any more questions after the evening, please do not hesitate to contact your child's tutor in the first instance, and you will be directed to appropriate specialists where necessary.

Kind regards

Isabella Alltrain
Assistant Headteacher

