

January 26th 2021

Important Information regarding Year 8 options

Dear Parents and Carers

In the academic year 2017-18 we made a decision as a school to move to a 2 year Key Stage 3 with students choosing their options in the Spring of Year 8. This then allowed them to spend three years on the Key Stage 4 courses. The process has worked well for current Years 9, 10 and 11 and we had intended that it would also apply to current Year 8.

In reality, the ability to move to KS4 in Year 9 demands a rigorous and comprehensive course of study in Years 7 and 8 which gives students a good grounding in all subjects before becoming a little more selective in their learning. Unfortunately, the pandemic, self-isolation and school closures have seriously impacted on that education. As a consequence of the pandemic:

- Current Year 8 will have effectively missed out on 2 terms (at least) out of 6 in school and have therefore missed out on a lot of basic knowledge and skills being taught in the classroom. No matter how good remote learning may be now, it is not the same as being in class with a teacher. It cannot be right to move on to option courses when so many basics may be lacking across a range of subjects and we would effectively be denying students a 'broad' education.
- Even when in school, students have missed out on a lot of practical activity especially in performing arts and technology and art due to social distancing and the inability to share equipment. We do not think it fair to their general education that we do not compensate for this by giving them another year of those subjects.
- We are not be able to run a normal options process and it is not really fair to ask students to choose subjects that they have had limited experience of - and they may not choose certain subjects because of that.

In light of all this it is neither fair nor right just to continue with original plans. To ensure that students are able to follow a broad balanced education in a whole range of subjects, the School Leadership and Governors have therefore agreed that there will not be an options process for Year 8 this year. Students will continue with all their current subjects into Year 9 and will chose their options in the spring of Year 9. Staff now know the new GCSE and vocational specifications much better and are very confident of being able to deliver those courses over Years 10 and 11.

For some this decision may be disappointing while others may be relieved. We will always act in what we believe to be the best interests of our young people and hope you understand the reasons for this decision.

The next event for Year 8 therefore will be Parents Evening on March 4th and information regarding that will be sent out a couple of weeks beforehand.

With best wishes



Andrew Waller

Headteacher