

12th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 9 students

I hope you had an enjoyable break over Christmas and are looking forwards to 2023. I am writing to you with some advance information for the Y9 GCSE preferences process. The information will be emailed to parents and carers and found at <https://www.lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk/students/year-9-preferences>. There is a loom which compliments this letter at <https://www.loom.com/share/74f102b982d6473099213acf21733be3>. You can you read the letter or watch the loom or use a combination of both.

The process runs in two distinct phases as shown overleaf. In January and February students find out about all the subjects being offered without trying to make final decisions! We encourage students, parents and carers to avoid worrying unduly, but we do want all concerned to be aware of the main aims of the process and the three key principles for students.

In March we will explain the main aims of the process. This allows students to make their preferences with a full understanding of how Year 10 and Year 11 lesson time is complimented with various aspects of careers support. We will be holding Personal Development days and events for all, alongside the Aspiration and Careers Excellence Programme. The preference process aims to provide students with a broad and balanced curriculum which meet their needs, aspirations and many future careers. The qualifications attained and bespoke careers experiences are designed to facilitate development of the employability skills needed in 21st century.

The whole process is fully explained on the GCSE preferences evening on Thursday March 2nd prior to students completing a Microsoft Form to indicate their preferences no later than 15th March. April to June sees a period of consultation with students and parents where required, prior to a final confirmation of Year 10 subjects being shared with students, parents and carers in early July 2023.

For students, the first key principle is to avoid making their GCSE preferences around a single career. Careers experts advise students to prepare for five careers over their working lives! A broad and balanced range of subjects is more useful than a narrower range of subjects and should be considered as a whole alongside the career activities described above. The preferences process is not a chance to simply 'drop' the subjects they don't like and continue with the subjects that they do like. It is important to not rule out any subjects at this stage and keep working hard in all curriculum areas right through to the end of year 9.

An understanding of the whole Year 10 and Year 11 curriculum will help students see the impact of their preferences. All students have 50 learning hours per fortnight, including 30 core hours of English, Maths, Science, Physical Education and Personal Development. There is a further 10 core hours for which students can make a preference between Geography and History and between French and German. Finally, there are 2 blocks of 5 open choice hours. Some students may prefer to use one open block to increase their science time up from 10 hours of combined science in the core, to 15 hours to study single sciences.

Students should be aware that every preference form is carefully and individually scrutinised. We will endeavour to provide the subjects preferred where this makes for a suitable curriculum and supports onwards study and employment routes. Students will indicate extra reserve preferences and may be advised to study a reserve choice. In such cases, there will be thorough consultation, support and guidance for parents and carers. Once Y10 subjects are confirmed in July it can be very difficult to change, so please assume that late changes cannot be accommodated. Late problematic changes are very rare when there is good communication between home and school. Please do not hesitate to contact the preferences team at any stage of the process by emailing GCSEpreferences2023@Isahigh.org with any queries.

Yours sincerely
Mr T.Cubbon
Deputy Headteacher

GCSE Preferences Process 2023 – Key dates and events

In January and February form tutors will show students a series of 'subject information looms'.

We encourage students to re-watch looms with parents and carers, selecting from:

- core subjects of English, Maths and Science (Combined Science or Single Sciences)
- core subjects of Geography or History and French or German
- open choice subjects for the eleven other subjects being offered

In February students will be provided with a paper copy of the Year 10 subject information booklet.

It would be helpful to bring this booklet to the GCSE Preferences evening on Thursday 2nd March.

On Wednesday 1st March the Assessment 2 spring term full report will be emailed to parents and carers and distributed to students on paper.

On Thursday 2nd March we have the main event, the GCSE Preferences Evening from 6pm - 8pm.

We explain the whole preferences process and how Year 10 and Year 11 lesson time works hand in hand with our Aspiration and Careers Excellence Programme to support future careers through providing both academic qualifications and wider careers experiences.

Heads of subject will be available to provide general advice for each subject on offer.

On Thursday 9th March we have the Year 9 Subject Video Consultation Evening during which teachers provide specific feedback on student progress across eight subjects. We expect most parents to book to see teachers from English, Maths, Science and 5 other potential subjects. General support appointments are also available in addition to those on the 13th and 14th March. Parents and carers will receive an emailed invitation one week ahead of this event.

On Monday 13th and Tuesday 14th March you can book a general advice appointment by emailing GCSEpreferences2023@lsahigh.org. Book to see Miss Hindle if you have a pastoral related question or book to see Mr Cubbon or Mr Howard for a curriculum or general subject related question.

By Wednesday 15th March students must electronically submit their online GCSE preference form. On a Microsoft Form students indicate preferences for:

- Geography or History and French or German.
- Combined Science or Single sciences.
- A further four or five open choice subjects in preference order (some are 'reserves')

During April, May and June we will carefully scrutinise the preferences indicated by every student contacting and consulting with parents and carers as necessary.

We will endeavour to build a timetable for September which accommodates the most suitable preferences that students have indicated.

We guarantee every student a fair preference process and a curriculum package which supports forward career and study paths.

We are unable to guarantee every student all their top preferences in the open choice subjects meaning students must thoroughly consider all open choice subjects and accurately indicate their preferences and reserves in order.

In July, students, parents and carers will receive a final confirmation of Year 10 subjects once the timetable for September 2023 is completed.