

9th January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 9 students,

I am writing to you with some advance information for the Year 9 GCSE preferences process. The information required for the preference process will be emailed to parents and carers and found at <https://www.lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk/students/year-9-preferences> There is a two-part presentation Loom which compliments this letter. This can be viewed by clicking the following links -

Part one –

<https://www.loom.com/share/7d457f045a9e4788a90a4e7c44a7bdc1?sid=24efc895-5ce4-493c-b56f-8b056f061e80>

Part two –

<https://www.loom.com/share/737d45670ba84cdf8c19f9c95ce53ecb?sid=3d4f8c78-09aa-4da7-8ac2-f4b9ffd2fd16>

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. Last week, in form time, students started to find out about all the subjects being offered.

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 as described below.

Later in January we use the second and main phase of the process to explain the main aims of the preferences 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 during timetabled Aspiration and Careers lessons, Personal Development days and events 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 30th January prior to students completing a Microsoft Form to indicate their preferences no later than Wednesday 12th February. February 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 2025.

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.

Secondly, 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 two 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. At this point students will be provided with a science recommendation.

Thirdly, 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 Year 10 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, so please don't hesitate to contact the preferences team at any stage of the process by emailing GCSEpreferences2025@lsahigh.org.

Your sincerely,
Mr J Howard
Assistant Headteacher