

Mr. S. Gill: Senior Deputy Head Teacher

Welcome to the Year 9 Pathways Presentation, my name is Mr Gill; I am the senior Deputy Head. Before I hand over to Ms Constandi who will outline the options process to you, I would like to outline key changes that have been made to the GCSE qualifications in recent years.

The reformed GCSEs were introduced four years ago and have represented the biggest change to examinations in a generation. There has been significant changes to the content, structure and assessment of the qualifications.

The courses are linear:

- GCSE grading from 9 -1 (9 is the top grade)
- Assessment will be mainly examinations in nearly every subject which means 3 examinations rather than 2 – the exception to this will be the various practical subjects
- Content is certainly more challenging and your son or daughter need to apply knowledge more than before
- Courses will last 2 years and all assessment will be at the end of Year 11
- More marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar – therefore literacy is very important
- More Mathematics content in Science and Geography
- More problem solving in Mathematics
- Hopefully providing better progression to their Post 16 studies

This slide demonstrates how the new 9-1 grades are equivalent to the previous letter grades, which many of us will have been familiar with.

Grade 8/9 - equivalent to an A*

Grade 7 -equivalent to an A

Grade 5 - equivalent to a low B or high C and is considered a strong pass

Grade 4 - equivalent to a low C and is considered a standard pass and so on

The vocational courses are graded differently but are equivalent to GCSE grades as shown here. D* = 8 D=7 and so on...

Our aim is to ensure positive outcomes for our pupils so that on results day we see happy and relieved faces as you can see was the case in the photo in front of you.

GCSE grades are certainly used more now by universities as part of their selection process and admissions tutors are using GCSE grades (or their equivalent) as a cut-off point to select applicants.

It is therefore essential Year 9 that you really do focus in your lessons and start to develop good study habits in the lead up to your end of year examinations.

I will now hand over to Ms Constandi

Ms F. Constandi: Assistant Head Teacher

This is undoubtedly one of the most important transition stages of your child's academic career and time should be taken to consider the range of options available as they progress into the next key stage.

So, what does transition mean, and how can you best support your child in making the best and most considered choices for their future academic pathway?

Although there is an element of choice, there are compulsory subjects which must be taken, these subjects form the core pathway for the majority of pupils and they are: English literature and language, Maths, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and PSHE. Further to this, most students must study a Humanities course, where they will be offered to choose from either Geography or History, or both.

Studying a language is also compulsory for most students and they can choose either French or Spanish. A number of students will be offered an alternative to languages in order to support their progress.

We offer a broad range of courses, suiting the range of abilities of our students. The vocational options on offer are wide and we offer programmes of study for pupils who would be best suited to an alternative to GCSE courses. The courses we have on offer within our vocational range are ICT (Imedia), Sport, Travel And Tourism, Performing Arts and Music.

The options are listed on the board. The vast majority of pupils will be offered two subjects from these listed.

Students are asked to think carefully about these options. Decisions should be formed based on research of the programmes of study, interest in the subjects and their usefulness when planning for both Further and Higher education as they begin to shape their future careers. They should not be chosen because they want to be with a particular friend or be taught by a particular teacher.

The Year 9 options booklet outlines the courses in more detail and explains more fully the expectation and content of each course. This has already been emailed to you and is available on line, so please take some time to read through it, if you haven't done so already.

When it comes to deciding between GCSE and vocational courses, this needs to be considered fully and pupils should always think about what is best for them, the vocational or academic routes. Vocational courses have become more and more popular in choice and the myth of this type of course being for those who were less academic is now a thing of the past. What are the main differences in these two pathways?

GCSE is the traditional route and as mentioned earlier by Mr Gill, they have undoubtedly increased in difficulty following education reforms.

Vocational courses are also 2 years long. There is an exam element, but a large proportion of the course is made up of coursework. This programme of study is more suited to student's who prefer project or coursework based assessment and marks are offered from Distinction through to Pass awards. Student can use these outcomes to move on to further education. Each year we have

students in our 6th Form who move on to Russell Group universities having successfully completed BTEC courses.

You may notice that we offer similar GCSE and equivalent subjects. For example GCSE Drama and BTEC Performing Arts. Though there is no typical student, in the past those who have achieved well in Drama GCSE have demonstrated the ability to write critically and analytically about performance. Those who achieve well in BTEC would be most likely to be students who have a wider interest in the entire theatre experience, both performance and design; as the course has much more extended coursework, it requires focus and the ability to work independently. So please do consider all options.

On Friday 20th March, students will receive their pin number and this will be distributed by their Tutor during registration and will be emailed home to you by the end of the day. Los on the 20th March the online application form will open via the school's website. Student's will need to enter their pupil pin number to access the online application form.

There is a week's deadline and on Thursday 26th March, the online application process will close. In May, each student will have an individual meeting with a member of the school's Leadership Team and all options will be confirmed. Later in the summer term, you will also receive a final confirmation letter.

Filling in the application is straight forward and the application form can be accessed through the school website, by clicking on the Curriculum tab and then Year 9 Options.

Students must have their pupil pin number and enter this when making their application. If this is not entered correctly then the form will not open, or you run the risk of the form not being submitted correctly and the choices not being processed.

Choices can only be made once, and once entered they cannot be changed. So before submitting, please make sure all details are entered correctly.

Students will be asked to make a preferred choice and a reserve choice for the optional subjects. Preferred choices are not always allocated, this is dependent on how many students choose particular subjects. It could be the case that reserve choices are used, so please do think carefully about all choices you are making. Please do not enter the same course as a preferred and reserved choice. If you do this, then the school will make your choices for you.

Any student who does not meet the deadline of Thursday 26th March and does not complete the online application process will have their ks4 courses chosen for them by the school.

Other significant points to note are listed on the board: Separate Science and Computer Science will be offered to students dependant on the results of their exams, attainment results and teacher assessments.

You cannot chose the following subjects together

- BTEC sport and Theory of PE
- BTEC Performing Arts and Drama
- Art, Photography or Textiles.

During the Leadership interviews in May, students will be informed as to whether they will be following these courses and this will be followed by a letter of confirmation to yourselves.

Thank you and good luck with your options

Mr P. Birch: Assistant Head Teacher

The transition from KS3 to 4 is a hugely important moment in your child's schooling and educational career. It brings with it new challenges and new opportunities as students ultimately start to become young adults with all the responsibility that that entails.

One of the challenges increased level of independence. Teachers rightly increase their expectations with regard to both the quantity and quality of classwork and homework. Topics are studied through perspectives that are more complex and the material itself is more difficult. In order to best meet these challenges of demanding GCSE and BTEC courses students should ensure they read widely and frequently; studies have shown that students with higher reading ages do better across all GCSEs- even maths. The most important part of any student's education is their lessons. Students must ensure they make the most of these by having a positive attitude to learning and working hard in all lessons. With the increase time expectation on homework- to between 30 to 40 minutes per subject- students need to be organised and use the school resources effectively to support the completion of high quality work outside the classroom.

Some of the ways that you as parents can support this is through the encouragement of reading for pleasure- It can literally be anything from graphic novels to young adult fiction to autobiography's. Additionally some students will need additional support in organising their time around homework and meeting the increased amount of deadlines at KS4.

Secondly, as your children become firmly in the middle of being a teenager the level of potential distraction can also increase. Avoid becoming even more addicted to your phone, don't stay up to late scrolling endlessly through Instagram or gaming online to the small hours. Teenagers need a minimum of 10 hours sleep a night for their brains to develop properly. It is important not to use your phone in bed as this disrupts sleep and sleep is vital to learning. Make sure you have time at home away from your phone etc. Create a dedicated workspace if you do not already have one, you cannot do homework watching the TV, or watching YouTube. You could even try to have a timetable around when activities both work and fun will be done.

Parents if you could support your student to manage responsibly their technology and social media time that would be a massive help. Equally, encourage your daughter or son to take up a sport or extra curricular activity outside of school so student have the opportunity to develop other interests and skills.

Just as at ks3, attendance and punctuality a ks4 are essential. Most subjects will cover most topics only once. Learning first time around is the key to successful revision and exam results. 90% attendance means that your child is missing half a day of lessons every week. Four weeks per year missed. Over 5 years that is half a school year. Ensuring your child is in school every day, on time gives student the best chance to learn.

As you are aware at the end of 2 years of GCSE work, you will face a number of assessments and exams across all your subjects. The consensus amongst teachers is that these are harder, longer and more numerous than they have been for some time. Remembering key ideas from every single lesson is challenging. Every lesson counts- all content from the start of year 10 is potentially something that

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could come up. GCSEs are meant to be hard. Therefore you have to work hard. We all want you to achieve the best possible grades. If there is an issue to do with the work or other you should come and talk to a member of staff. Increased importance on exams can lead to increased challenges around managing the quantity of revision required as well as the organisation skills required to organise this time. You will be given plenty of guidance and support in school on how to do this but again if you are unsure come and speak to us.