



Our Ref: ML/HJR

26 February 2018

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: GCSE options process

I write to clarify the Year 9 into Year 10 options process for your son/daughter. As you are perhaps aware, in the past it has been the norm to host an options evening so that parents can visit subject teachers and ask questions. This approach was suitable at the time when students were encouraged to do as many as thirteen GCSE subjects and choices were broad. However, the educational landscape has changed significantly recently with the introduction of new progress measures, grades 9 -1, more challenging GCSE specifications and the English Baccalaureate group of subjects. Such change requires a response in terms of the way we do things. The reality is that the emphasis from government is upon students achieving better grades in fewer subjects (i.e. 8 or 9). We also believe that this is necessary from a well-being perspective. This has already led us to restructure the school timetable so that it is based on a one week cycle instead of two so that students see their teachers more regularly. In addition, we have also given key subjects more curriculum time and sought to reduce the number of subjects that students do in favour of mastering fewer of them. We believe in starting early and that the three year or two year KS4 debate is unnecessary as we increasingly view their time at The Hayfield School as a five year KS4. Students are introduced to GCSE topics and skills from Year 7 onwards and work is graduated in difficulty as they progress.

In short, everything we do in the current educational climate is more targeted than ever before. In terms of Year 9 options the truth is that choices will be more restricted than in previous years. Students must study Mathematics, English language, English literature, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. If they want the English Baccalaureate group of subjects on their CV then they must also study a humanities subject (History or Geography) and a language (French, German or Spanish). Computer Science can also count towards this. This leaves relatively little scope for opting for several new subjects for some students. They already study Music, Drama, Art and Design Technology too and know what these subjects are about. All must continue with core PE too. We therefore feel that an evening where students largely find out more about subjects that they are already studying is unnecessary. Students can ask questions about the GCSE within the lessons that they already have. We also feel that the comprehensive subject information booklet that we are producing, as well as the subject information already on the newly designed school website that includes GCSE topics and specifications, will allow parents/carers to have informed discussions with their son/daughter and make a carefully considered decision about their route henceforth. It is my role in school to examine the data e.g. KS2 entry SATs scores, target grades, current grades and ATLs in order to make recommendations to parents/carers as to the route that seems to best suit their son/daughter. We have already undertaken preliminary surveys of their

subject preferences and their likely career paths and will factor this in too before making any recommendations. You will soon receive a letter outlining our data led recommendations.

Furthermore, in order to find out more about subjects that they know little about students are to attend a 'subject roadshow' type event held during the school day. It will resemble a careers fair where students visit subject stands and ask questions and gather information. In this manner they will find out more about the subjects that they have never studied e.g. Business Studies, Economics, Sociology, Spanish, Computer Science and some of the new design and technology subjects. Every student will also have a 15 minute interview with members of the senior team to advise them, answer questions and guide them in their decision making. Parents/Carers will be invited to these meetings and can attend if they wish. You as parents/carers will have the final say and indicate to us the subject choices for your son/daughter on a reply sheet. We feel that this model will be far more effective than an options evening and guarantees a personal, one on one, tailored approach.

We appreciate that the pace of change within the school has been fast and that the options process changing is another example of this. It affects us too but we have had to rapidly modernise and respond to an unprecedented number of national changes within education in order to keep the school at the forefront. We are still finalising some of the above events that relate to the Year 9 options process and will be in touch in due course clarifying finalised dates and details for each part of the procedure. Thank you for your ongoing patience and support.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Linley', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

Mr M Linley
Assistant Headteacher (Data, Progress and Achievement)