

9 December 2011

Dear Parent/Carer

Entry for Examinations in Years 9 and 10

I am writing to you because some parents have expressed concern that students are taking GCSEs at the end of Year 9 and Year 10. The school started planning for this curriculum development in 2008 and we are confident it is working well. However, we hope the following information addresses the concerns raised.

1. All students take the CORE SUBJECTS of English, Mathematics and Science over the Years 9, 10, 11 and the majority of students take the exams for these subjects in year 11. In addition to these core subjects, students also choose between 4 and 6 options to study at GCSE level.
2. Students are only taking early examinations in their OPTION SUBJECTS, this is a maximum of two in any year.
3. Students spend double the time studying these option subjects – this is the equivalent of spreading it over two years.
4. As option courses start earlier, overload in Year 11 is avoided. In Year 11, therefore, greater emphasis can be put on studying the core subjects.
5. Current monitoring data is showing that the vast majority of students in Years 9 and 10 are on course to meet their targets. If teachers have concerns about students not making expected progress, action is taken.
6. The school and the governors firmly believe that age is not the determining factor in examination success. What is important is that students are on the courses, which are appropriate for them and students are assessed when they are ready.
7. With this curriculum, we are confident that the results achieved by year 9, 10 and 11 students will be better than ever. It is also worth noting that teachers report a vast improvement in motivation and engagement, in particular in Year 9.
8. One of the concerns raised by some parents is that this curriculum was brought in to increase the number of students achieving grade C. This is not the case. Grade C and above passes are very good at the school and have been increasing every year for the past five years.

Despite our view that this is a very good curriculum, the Education Act 2011 will require significant changes to the curriculum and we are now working on the implications for the school and reviewing the curriculum for September 2012.

Yours faithfully

Mrs C M Spillane
Headteacher

Mr R Good
Chair of Governors