



Year 9 Parents' briefing – 12 Jan 2022

Year 10/11 curriculum from Sept 2022

This is a summary of the questions asked during the meeting; the points raised are grouped by themes, with the school's response below.

Are students allowed to choose more than 3 optional subjects?

Can students ask to choose one less subject? Or is it up to teacher's decision?

- The curriculum structure is set up so that all students continue with the language (French or German) studied in year 9 plus three other optional subjects.
- The only students who would do fewer subjects overall would be those who follow the alternative pathway. The school will identify students who we feel would be well suited to the alternative pathway. Students will have the choice whether or not to opt into the pathway.

Is Economics an option for GCSE?

Could you please tell us more Business Studies? How does it help with other main subjects?

How is drama / art graded at GCSE? Does class work carry any weight?

- Economics is only available as an A level subject in the Sixth Form.
- For details about individual subjects such as Drama or Business Studies, please look at the curriculum booklet when you receive it - it will have a page on each subject explaining what the course is about, how it is assessed and why it might be useful.

Are there additional maths qualifications students can do?

Does choosing the further maths qualification reduce the number of options students can take?

- We offer a level 2 (ie equivalent to GCSE) qualification in Further Maths as an enrichment for the more capable mathematicians.
- This is not an additional option – the content is taught in normal maths lessons. It is normally offered to students in the higher maths sets.
- The additional 'further maths' course is taught within the normal maths lessons - which is why it is only the higher sets that do it.
- Students do not choose further maths. It is offered to the students in the highest maths sets as an additional qualification. They still take the same number of optional subjects - three plus their choice of language.

What is the alternative pathway?

Does the alternative pathway restrict future choices?

- The alternative pathway provides extra support for core subjects and students take one fewer GCSEs overall by reducing the number of optional subjects from four (including the language choice) to three.
- This is appropriate for some students who might find the core subjects a little more challenging and the aim is to ensure that they get the best grades possible.
- The final number of grades has no real negative impact on their future choices, and it is helpful in supporting some students to get the best English and Maths grades they can as these are essential. Sixth Form entry at LGS is determined by the average grade across all the GCSE subjects they do.

Can students take any other languages?

Can they do a different language outside the curriculum like their mother tongue for GCSE?

Can they do both Spanish and Mandarin?

Can the extra language subjects be dropped if it becomes too intense for the student?

- We offer French and German in the Yr 10/11 curriculum, plus the Mandarin and Spanish beginner options after school. All students continue learning the language they are studying in year 9. They can take the other language as one of their options if they wish.
- We also offer beginner courses in Mandarin and Spanish after school. These lead to a qualification (assessed by a form of examination although not a GCSE) and there is a charge made to cover the costs of putting on the courses.
- If students want to do a GCSE qualification in their home language, they can do so but this would have to be through a private provider or centre.
- Students could choose to do both Spanish and Mandarin – but bear in mind these are additional activities after school, and there is a charge for each.
- Students can drop the extra language if they wish – but it may not be possible to refund the charge which will have been paid.

What are the entry requirements for Combined Science?

- All students study the content for three separate science GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Combined Science is not a choice at start of Year 10.
- As we get nearer the Year 11 exams, we advise some students to take the Combined Science exams, which examine about two thirds of the material studied rather than the whole course, and lead to two GCSE grades not three. This is advised where students may be struggling with the demand of a full GCSE in all three subjects.

Are there any supporting sessions for children to help choose subjects?

How does performance in Year 9 affect option choices?

What will feed into suggestions for the optional GCSE subjects for the students? Ability? Teacher recommendation?

Do the teachers advice children based on their ability rather than what they might want to do?

At the next PTC in February, will we have opportunity to discuss choices with subject teachers?

- We run a comprehensive programme of information and support to help students make their choices of optional subjects. This is outlined in the presentation slides from the meeting.
- Performance in Year 9 may have some influence on optional subject choices. We want students to feel confident they will succeed in the subjects they choose. We would always advise students against taking a subject where they are really not very strong in it, or feel they may struggle.
- Teacher recommendation may play some part, but students should certainly be choosing subjects they will enjoy studying for two years.
- The PTC is scheduled so that you can have a brief discussion with subject teachers about suitability for a particular subject before the deadline for submission of the options form.

Can they change subjects after making their choices?

If my child feels like there is an overload of coursework and doesn't want to continue a subject is it possible to change?

- Changes are normally possible up to the point where we finalise the timetable in the late summer term.
- Very occasionally, students change their minds at the start of Year 10. However, we don't allow any subject changes after the end of September in Year 10 as would then be too late to catch up.
- In fact, very few students ever ask to change, which suggests that the advisory process is good at ensuring they make sound choices in the first place.

- Students should consider carefully how each subject is assessed, including the balance of NEAs (coursework) and examinations and the demands this places on them before making their choices. Students cannot drop a subject just because of the coursework demands, just as a student cannot drop a subject just because there are more examinations in that subject.

How do qualifications relate to possible future careers?

Is there a pathway chart ie if a child wants to go in health sciences or business, which subjects are the right ones?

- It is best to think of GCSEs as a set of gateway qualifications, which open up the next stage to students. A good level of performance across a broad range of GCSE subjects provides a good academic foundation for A Level study.
- All the subjects that students are going to absolutely need are compulsory anyway - maths, English, science. Some GCSE subjects will certainly be very helpful in providing a good grounding for future study in that area at A Level - eg music, drama, geography. However, it is not always essential to have studied these at GCSE to take them at A Level.
- A GCSE in Business Studies may be interesting and helpful in formulating ideas about whether students might want to consider a business career, but it is not a gateway to being an entrepreneur!
- As far as options go, students can't really go wrong if they take a broad range of subjects that they can be confident about succeeding in.
- The careers links on the school's website provide useful information on the links between GCSE choices and particular careers.

Are there sets for optional subjects?

How will the sets be made? Based on grades in class till y9 or will there be some sort of exam?

Will there be sets for all core subjects?

- Students are placed in sets **only** for science and maths – there are no ability sets in any other subject.
- The maths/sciences sets are determined near the end of year 9.
- Sets are based on performance in Year 9, including assessments and exams. There is also a discussion by teachers.
- Essentially all students cover the same courses in the core subjects whichever set they are in; the purpose of setting is to tailor the approach and support provided to give students the best chance of succeeding. Setting is reviewed periodically through the GCSE course, so there is scope for students to move up or down a set if this is deemed necessary.
- It is worth noting that as a selective school, the difference in ability and attainment between the 'top' and 'bottom' sets is quite narrow and every year we have students achieving very high grades from the lower sets.

Are the students given extra help in subjects which they need added attention?

In the student-teacher-parent triangle, is there any support for parents, where we have access to course materials.. syllabuses, lab work, etc.. if so where do we find them? If a student is unable to attend classes due to illness etc. how can we get course materials or will there be extenuating circumstance be used?

- We monitor students' progress throughout the GCSE courses and ensure they get the help and support they need if they are not doing as well as they should.
- Materials such as examination specifications and past papers are available to students and parents through the school website or the examination boards.
- We write to parents to signpost subject specific resources and guidance on how to support your sons and daughters with their studies, as part of our 'Steps to Success' programme in Year 10.
- Where students may be absent from school, we help and support them to catch up as appropriate.
- In the final examinations, we can apply for special consideration if students have experienced difficult circumstances.