

# Year 9 Parents' Information Evening

Wednesday 4th October 2023



## Questions & Answers

***The following questions were asked through the chat during the online meeting. Most questions were responded to during the meeting, but the answers below may be more detailed than the response originally given.***

***The slides from the presentation are available on the school website.***

### **The curriculum in Year 9**

***Can we get a copy of the curriculum areas that will be covered for each subject? Can parents be given a list of topics being taught in the subjects in advance so we can support them at home?***

- The school website curriculum pages have high-level information about the topics taught in each subject in each year.
- Subject leaders have planned their programmes of study in a logical and systematic way to build up students' knowledge in the right way. It is important that students don't try to rush ahead as this can cause problems with misunderstanding. It may be more helpful for parents to support students by deepening their understanding of the content as they go along.

***Can we get a list of a books for each subject & exam boards where available please?***

- We do not have a specific list of books used for each subject. This is because teachers use a wide range of different resources including elements of physical and online textbooks, and other online resources. Each subject will handle this differently; for example, in science there is a very good set of online textbooks available (see below)

***What books or resources are there for science?***

- All students have access to the three GCSE science textbooks via their Kerboodle login. The Kerboodle platform also give access to resources and self-test materials

***Please can you provide us a list of recommended wider reading books.***

- It is important for students to read widely. Students should speak to their individual subject teachers for recommendations about subject specific reading. The library can offer wider reading suggestions outside of subjects.

***Can we get advance notice of tests and assessments as currently it's up to the children to inform parents and they sometimes forget. Also, can results of assessments be shared with?***

- Most teachers notify students about assessments via Classcharts, so please ensure you are checking their ClassCharts. We are helping students to build independence and take greater responsibility in relation to their studies, and we do expect them to remember when assessments are and organise themselves, so they are properly prepared. We would suggest you talk to your child regularly and ask them what assessments they have coming up.
- We do not routinely share results of individual assessments and tests with parents. We report to you three times each year on how well your child is progressing. If subject teachers have concerns outside these formal reporting occasions, they will contact you.

**What examination board is LGS following for all subjects? Are the GCSE examining boards which are mentioned on your website up to date?**

- There is information about the examination boards currently used on the website. In the Spring term we issue a booklet to Year 9 students and parents with full details of each GCSE subject including the examination board for the course in Years 10 and 11. Please be aware that some subjects do change boards from year to year for various reasons.

**If intervention is needed, will that happen in Year 9 or year 10? Do you offer tuition from older students to year 9s? Could mentoring during these crucial years regarding attitude to learning be something LGS could offer?**

- The great majority of students make good progress because of the work done in normal lessons. We have good systems in place to identify students who need additional intervention, and this would normally happen in Year 10 and Year 11.
- Later in Year 9, we do have a programme of mentoring where older students will spend time with those whose attitude to learning is not where it should be.
- We do not currently offer subject-based support from older students to younger ones, but this is something we are looking into.

## **Reporting, predicted grades and PTCs**

**Do they get predicted grades only in maths and sciences or in all GCSE subjects?**

- Once students start full GCSE courses, they are given professional predictions for each GCSE subject on each reporting occasion. In Years 10 and 11, all subjects will be reported using professional predictions. In Year 9, they have started GCSE courses in some subjects but not others, so some subjects (eg maths and sciences) will report using professional predictions, and others using Approaching/Meeting/Exceeding grades as in Years 7 and 8.

**Would maths and science prediction grades be done in every term?**

- There are specific reporting dates throughout the year. Generally, we operate through Years 9, 10 and 11 on three reporting points each year; staff provide Attitude to Learning and progress grades of professional predictions at each reporting point. One of these reporting points is always followed by the Parent-Teacher Consultation (PTC).

**How accurate are the predictions? Are they the same as targets?**

- Initial 'professional predictions' are given in Maths and Science in Year 9, and in other subjects from early in Year 10. Updated predictions are then given on each of the reporting occasions in Year 10 and 11, i.e., 3 times a year. These predictions should get progressively more accurate as students move through Years 10 and 11, as they are based on an increasing range of evidence from assessments, classwork, and practice exams, as well as teachers knowing the students better.
- We think that predictions are much more useful than a statistical target. A **target** basically says, 'this is the typical grade that student with the same prior attainment have on average achieved in the past.' The **prediction** says, 'this is the grade we **think** the student is **most likely to get** if they carry on working as they are now, based on the evidence we have to date'.

**When will it be possible for the Parent-teacher consultation to return to face -to-face? As we are now out of Covid, going forward, can we please have face to face parent-teacher meetings? Can we have longer than 5-minute appointments?**

- When we surveyed parents recently, opinion was divided. From the 350 responses, 47% wanted to return to face to face, around 37% wanted to remain online, and 16% said they didn't mind. Clearly, we cannot satisfy everyone.

- Parents who want PTCs to remain online value the fact they do not have to travel to the school. This year we are trialling a mixture, so that PTCs for Year 7, 10 and 12 will be held face to face, but online for other year groups. This means that parents can meet teachers face to face at the start of key stages in students' journey through the school. We will review this pattern at the end of the year.
- It is not possible to have longer appointment times and for teachers to see all the parents who want to talk with them. Used properly, the 5-minute conversation gives you an **overview** of your child's performance. Serious issues or areas of concern can be followed up separately with the teacher or the Phase Leaders outside the meeting. For parents and teachers to make best use of the 5-minute slot, teachers need to provide clear, concise high-level information, and parents should focus on one or two key questions they wish to ask. We acknowledge that we still have some work to do to ensure the 5-minute appointments are used really well.

## **Looking ahead – subject choices in Year 10/11**

### ***How many additional subjects can you choose for the GCSEs?***

- In Year 10 and 11, students follow core courses in sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics), Maths and English (Language and Literature), plus a language, and three other GCSE subjects, freely chosen from the list. It is not possible to take more than three optional subjects – there isn't enough space on the timetable!

### ***Will art and ICT be in the same group when they give out the options?***

- Students can choose their options freely from the list, with just a small number of combinations that are not possible because of specification overlap. We then construct the option blocks based on their choices. This process minimises the number of potential clashes, and it is relatively rare for students not to be able to do the subject combination they want.

### ***Why is French or German compulsory but not computing?***

- Essentially because we believe the study of a modern language is an essential part of a broad and balanced curriculum. All students have a basic grounding in computing from their studies across Years 7-9 and can choose to take this as an optional subject.
- A GCSE qualification is clearly desirable, but not absolutely essential for the study of computing at A Level, as quite a lot of students develop coding skills as a spare-time interest. At university, the only compulsory A Level required for degree-level computing courses is mathematics; computing A Level is usually recommended but not essential. This is because not all schools offer A Level Computing, and the core skills needed are logic and methodical problem solving, which are developed through mathematics.

### ***Are students restricted to the subject options given by LGS or can they take a subject outside that list? If so, would it still count as part of their overall GCSE results? And do they have to take that subject in the same year as their other GCSE subjects or can they take it a year earlier?***

- The subjects on the list are the ones that we offer in school as part of our timetabled curriculum. Occasionally, some students do take other qualifications in their spare time. This might be a home language, or a subject they have a really specific interest in but which we can't offer, e.g., astronomy. Any such examinations have to be taken as private candidates at other centres. This is because our students an above-average number of GCSEs and we do not have the administrative capacity to enable students to sit additional examinations in school.
- Additional examinations taken elsewhere still count as part of students' overall GCSE profile and can be taken at any time. However, for the purposes of entry to our Sixth Form, where an average point score of 5.5 is needed, we only count grades for subjects studied and examined in school at the end of Year 11. This is to ensure that all applicants are treated equally and in line with the School Admissions Code which applies for Sixth Form entry.

## Miscellaneous questions

### ***When will we know which pupils have been selected for DofE in year 9?***

- Mr Podbury will be sharing this information soon. Unfortunately, there is limited capacity, and it is not possible to for everyone to take part in Year 9. If students are unsuccessful, they can apply to do the Silver Award through the school in Year 10. They can also take part in the Award independently or through other youth organisations.

### ***How do we get to know what opportunities are offered to our children at school? How do we see as parent see the non-academic opportunities available? Can they go on the Sway newsletter?***

- Opportunities are emailed to students from departments with timetables at the start of each term. They are also advertised in the student bulletin. Many of these opportunities are also list upon the school website under '[wider opportunities](#)'

### ***When can students use the LGS tennis courts? Is there a tennis club? Why was there no tennis this summer?***

- The rebuilding of the school involved the creation of new tennis/netball courts in two locations on the school site. However, the DfE did not provide tennis nets within the contract, and these have to be provided by the school. The financial situation means that we were not able to afford these out of our revenue budget last year – the installation of posts and nets is surprisingly expensive. However, we will be able to fund these this year, and nets should be ready and installed for the tennis season in the spring/summer.

### ***Is going away for couple of days on holiday a valid reason you will approve, given that it's very expensive during the official holiday period?***

- We do sympathise with the expense of holidays during the school holiday period – all those of us who work in school know this only too well! However, holidays are not a valid reason for authorising absence.
- The [DfE guidance](#) is clear on the granting of leave of absence:
  - *Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.*
  - *If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.*
  - *As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.*

### ***Can you explain rules around mobile phones? Are they now getting negative comments for using them, and getting them confiscated, even on breaks? I sometimes need to message my child and get a response.***

- Phones should not be seen or heard at any time during the school day. Students should have their phones switched off between 8.00am and 3.15pm. This includes break and lunchtime. If phones are seen or heard during this time they will be confiscated. Students can switch their phone son at 3.15 and collect any messages from parents then.
- If students have a genuinely urgent need to contact parents, they should go to Student Support and ask if they can make a call there. If parents need to contact their child urgently, they should call the school and ask for Student Support, who can get a message to them.

### ***Where do I get login details for ClassCharts? How can I access the SIMS parent communication app?***

- If you have problems logging in to any of the apps needed, please contact our IT technician team through the school main phone number 01753 598300 or the email [school@lgs.slough.sch.uk](mailto:school@lgs.slough.sch.uk).

### ***How do we contact school if we have concerns...***

- Please contact us by phone on 01753 598300 or by email to [school@lgs.slough.sch.uk](mailto:school@lgs.slough.sch.uk) and we will direct your question or concern to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with it.
- Members of staff will respond to you directly within a reasonable timescale so you can then have a direct email or phone conversation with them. Please remember that teachers might typically have around 250 students across their classes and there is therefore limited time to respond to email queries
- Serious concerns in relation to safeguarding can be raised by email through [safeguarding@lgs.slough.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@lgs.slough.sch.uk) – this goes straight to members of the safeguarding team.

### ***Where can we access the JamF app for the iPads?***

- Please see full details on our website [here](#).

### ***Given the recent incident in Langley - what safety and awareness measures you are putting in place? Is the school doing anything towards self-defence or awareness in general.***

- Many of you will have heard about the tragic incident in Langley in which a young man aged 19 was apparently stabbed and subsequently died.
- This incident does have any connection to this school. We do know that any situation like this inevitably raises levels of concern for parents and students. Thankfully, these are very rare events. Every day, thousands of children and young people move around the Langley area on journeys to and from school without incident.
- As part of our normal curriculum, we talk in age-appropriate ways about personal safety and management of risk in face to face and online social settings. We will consider whether any more specific advice should be given in the light of this recent incident. Parents have responsibility for their children's safety outside school hours and at weekends and we would encourage discussion within your families about vigilance and personal safety during these times.
- If you do sense your child is concerned as a result of this incident – or anything else they come across in the news - encourage them to get any worries and fears out into the open, rather than bottling things up, and offer lots of reassurance.
- Specific concerns about safety can be reported to any member of our safeguarding team via the email address [safeguarding@lgs.slough.sch.uk](mailto:safeguarding@lgs.slough.sch.uk).