



February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

## Year 8 Option Choices

As you may be aware, your son/daughter will start his/her GCSE courses in Year 9. This arrangement of studying GCSEs over 3 years is in place for our current Year 9, 10 and 11 students. We have followed a three year GCSE course since 2015 following a consultation with students, parents/carers and staff and it has proven to be highly successful. As part of the process of starting their GCSEs in Year 9, we allow students a degree of choice regarding some of the subjects which they continue to study up to GCSE level. I am writing to you at this point to update you on the arrangements we are putting in place for after half term to support your son/daughter in making his/her option choices and to alert you to some important dates.

The current restrictions in place due to Covid-19 have provided us with the opportunity to reflect upon how we share our option choice information with parents/carers and students. I am delighted to inform you that shortly after half term we will be launching a brand new section of our school website dedicated to Year 8 options which will replace our options booklet. We are just putting the finishing touches to it and will email you as soon as it is available for you to view. The website will provide:-

- **Information about the core curriculum in Years 9-11 (Key Stage 4)**
- **Information about each of the option subjects available for students to study in Key Stage 4** – this will be in the form of pages dedicated to each subject along with a presentation from the Subject Leader and, where these can be arranged, short video messages from students who have studied the subject previously. The pages for practical subjects such as Drama, Music, Art and Photography and D&T will feature videos of students' work.
- **Information about the different types of qualifications that students will study in Key Stage 4** – this will also include information about the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), which we would strongly encourage all students, parents and carers to consider when choosing option subjects.
- **Helpful advice and key reminders** – key reminders about choosing your options along with details of a range of websites relating to different careers
- **Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a dedicated email address** for emailing any questions you may have which aren't answered elsewhere on the website.

Unfortunately, due to current restrictions, we are unable to run our usual Curriculum and Options Evening for parents/carers. However, we feel that the website will be a more than adequate replacement and will in fact allow you and your son/daughter to browse the same information as would have been given out at the Curriculum and Options Evening from the comfort of your own home and at a time which is convenient to you. Where you feel your questions aren't answered through the information available on the website, you are more than welcome to email them to the dedicated email address.

In addition to the website, your son/daughter will also be provided with the following support to assist him/her in making his/her option choices:-



- **Taster lessons** – every subject taught in Key Stage 4 has been asked to provide a taster lesson prior to your son/daughter making his/her option choices in order to give students a flavour of what the subject involves at Key Stage 4. In most cases, this will take place during their normal timetabled lesson in that subject. Taster lessons will be organised separately for Drama, Health and Social Care, Sociology and Business as these subjects are not taught to students in Year 8. Further details about how to go about booking taster lessons in these subjects will be issued during the week commencing Monday 8th March.
- **CPSHEE** – CPSHEE lessons over the next few weeks will focus on choosing option subjects and future learning opportunities.
- **Advice from class teachers, form tutors and his/her Progress Leader** – who can be messaged via Google Classroom or spoken to directly when we return to school.

There will also be the opportunity for parents/carers to speak to their son/daughter's teachers for the non-core subjects (i.e. all subjects apart from English, Maths, Science and Modern Ethics) about their son/daughter's most recent progress in these subjects at the **Year 8 Student Progress Evening on Thursday 11th March**. Details will follow after half term about this event.

So what next? Please look out for my email during the first week after half term to let you know when the Year 8 options section of the website is available for you to view. This will then be followed a couple of weeks later with information about how to book taster lessons in Drama, Health and Social Care, Sociology and Business. The option form which we will require you to complete to indicate your son/daughter's final option choices won't be released until a few days before the **options deadline on Friday 26th March** in order to allow your son/daughter to have taken part in all of the taster lessons before making their final choices.

Clearly, we want to support your son/daughter in making the 'right' option choices by giving them as much information as possible prior to the **final deadline of Friday 26th March** for their option choices. Please encourage them to talk to you, other family members, their form tutor, teachers of those subjects they are interested in and students already doing these subjects in order to gather as much information as possible. I would also suggest researching the qualifications needed for any careers that your son/daughter might be interested in along with what the entry requirements are for particular courses which they might be interested in studying at post-16 level.

Should you have any further questions regarding these arrangements, please do not hesitate to contact me at the School using the [contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk](mailto:contactus@highamlaneschool.co.uk) email address.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you and your sons/daughters a healthy, safe and restful half term.

Yours sincerely,

Mr P. Banks  
Deputy Headteacher

(BP-AA) Year 8 Option Choices - February 2021