Re: GCSE Pathways and options choices

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you are all well. As you will know your child is due to choose their GCSE option subjects for the next two years. This is an important decision for your child and we have tried to make that process as simple as possible for them.

However, given the current school closures and the lost learning time that has resulted from this, on top of our drive to improve the educational experience and outcomes at the academy, we have taken the decision to tighten the options process. You will see that we have limited the number of subjects on offer and have made the study of additional subjects compulsory. We believe that this will place your child in the best possible position to help them secure strong GCSE outcomes and then access 6th form or college study. We strongly believe that this model will also allow all our students to better navigate and help shape the national discourse that is currently the preserve of the privately-educated elite. In order to secure this, we need to both give students the subjects and time allocation that will facilitate access to such opportunities whilst also retaining choice for them to pursue subjects they are passionate about.

The GCSE programmes of study for 2020/21 will be as follows:

1. Every pupil will take GCSEs in the following subjects:
   a. English Literature
   b. English Language
   c. Maths
   d. Double Science – 2 GCSEs
   e. History and/or Geography
   f. RS

2. Pupils will choose two GCSE options from the following list:
   a. French
   b. Triple science (Only with agreement of Science HoD)
   c. Music
   d. Art
   e. BTEC Sport
   f. GCSE PE
   g. Sociology
   h. Drama
   i. BTEC Business
3. The Year 10 week will look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Weekly periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Science</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/ Geography</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x options (3 periods each)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE (compulsory)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total weekly periods** 30

This will provide every student with 9 strong GCSE grades at the end of Year 11. For a small minority of students, we will run a different GCSE offer that will reduce the number of subjects studied. This will only be in agreement between parents, Ms Lucas (SENCO) and myself.

Due to the school closures we will run this process entirely virtually. The stages of this process are as follows:

1. We will send each family the options booklet which outlines the courses and how they are assessed by the 23rd June
2. We will provide a suggested script/ key questions to help you discuss with your child their preferred option choices. This will be in the options booklet. There are also resources available on the website to support. [https://arkacton.org/curriculum/year-9-option](https://arkacton.org/curriculum/year-9-option)
3. During the week of the 22nd June, form tutors will discuss options choices with students.
4. Students will submit electronically their 1st and 2nd preference subject choices for each of the 2 blocks in their timetable by the 30th June
5. We will input these choices into the Timetable builder and try as far as possible to be able to provide every child with their 1st choices.
6. We will liaise individually with any student whom we cannot offer their 1st preference to by the 10th July
7. We will write to all parents with the final subjects being studied for each student by the 17th July.
We are confident that the process outlined above will best maximise each individual student’s opportunities to access the next stage of their education and leave with the currency they need to live a life of choice and opportunity.

With best wishes,

Oli Knight
Principal