Year 8

Option Choices



2020

**Return signed options form to student reception by**

**Monday 30th March 2020**



**Y8 Options Guide**

**Introduction**

Y8 students are approaching the time for them to make decisions about their courses for the next three years. Students will need to consider their individual strengths, talents and plans for the future. Although subject choices are made now, the formal transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 will be made when students are ready and they have an appropriate depth and breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Students will not necessarily notice this change and the timing of it will vary depending on each individual class.

In Y9 all students will be required to study:

* English language and English Literature
* Mathematics
* At least two Sciences (some will study three)
* Citizenship
* Relationships and Sex Education
* Core Physical Education
* Either History, Geography or a Modern Foreign Language

In addition, students choose further options from the subjects outlined in this booklet. All subjects are GCSEs apart from Hospitality and Catering, Health & Social Care and Btec First in Sport. These are vocational qualifications which are equivalent to GCSEs.

**Why humanities and a language?**

There is strong evidence to support many students following this route (The Sutton Trust, July 2016). Research from 300 schools found that statistically students following the English Baccalaureate subjects were:

* + - more likely to achieve good GCSEs in English and maths
* more likely to be taking an A level or other level 3 qualification after the age of 16
* less likely to have dropped out of education after the age of 16

<http://educationdatalab.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Changing-the-subject_FINAL.pdf>

In addition, The Russell Group which represents 24 of the country’s leading universities identifies the following subjects as ‘facilitating subjects’ at A level:

Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, Geography, History, Physics, Modern Foreign Languages and Maths.

Their guide, ‘Informed Choices’ gives more detail on this.

http://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/

**Changes to qualifications**

The Government have made a number of changes in recent years. The most significant of these for an individual are the grading of final exams and the format of final exams.



Exam grading has changed from the system of A\* to G grades at GCSE to a numbered system with 9 being the highest awarded grade and 1 being the lowest.

The value of all qualifications remains exactly the same to students, colleges, universities and employers.

Exam format has changed to a greater degree of written content in a formal examination setting, and a removal of controlled assessments and coursework in most subjects.





**Options – Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who will be the teacher for each option subject?**

This cannot be answered at this stage so do not assume it will be the same person who teaches you this year. It is wiser to make an option choice based on the subject content, learning style and assessment style rather than on who teaches the subject.

**Are there boys and girls subjects?**

Absolutely not. All subjects are appropriate for students regardless of gender. What makes a subject suitable or not is your enjoyment of a subject, the learning style, the assessment methods, and your aspirations for post 16 education.

**Am I guaranteed to get my option choices?**

We will do all we can to ensure you get your choices but it cannot be guaranteed but most students have their first choices met. There are a number of reasons for this;

* Too few people might opt for a subject so no class can be created
* More people opt for a subject than can be in a class e.g. we cannot place over 20 students into a Food Technology class due to the number of ovens and workstations available. If forty students opt, two classes of twenty can be created, but if twenty one students opt for it only the first twenty will get their option choice.

**Will I be able to change my mind in September?**

This is possible, but there will be restrictions once the curriculum has been finalised. It is far better to make the correct choice in the first instance based on all of the information available.

**Who can help me with my choices?**

Your tutor and your subject teachers are the first people to ask for help and advice.

**What subjects do I have to study?**

English, Maths, Science, Physical Education, Citizenship, Relationships and Sex Education and either History, Geography or a Modern Foreign Language.

**Do I have to put reserve choices on my options form?**

Yes. If a subject you have opted for is full, you will be allocated one of your reserve choices. For this reason, reserve choices need as much thought as your main choices.

**What is the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)?**

The EBacc is not a qualification in itself. It is a measure of performance introduced by the Government. This is recognised by some universities, post 16 providers and employers as a reflection of a broad and balanced curriculum which facilitates progression to many other qualifications and jobs. To achieve this performance measure, a student must achieve a Grade 4 or higher in English, Maths, two Sciences, a humanities (Geography or History), and a modern foreign language (French, German or Spanish).



**Factors to consider when making your choices**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sound reasons** | **Reasons to avoid** |
| I already study the subject at key stage 3 and enjoy it | My friends are choosing this course*You need to be more independent. You do not necessarily learn in the same way or have the same skills as your friends. It does not mean you will be in the same class either.* |
| I’ve already achieved success in the subject at key stage 3 | I don’t like any other subjects so I’ll choose this one*You need to find out more detail about each subject and make a positive choice based upon learning style, assessment methods and subject content.* |
| The subject will help with my plans for the future | I really get on well with the teacher I have this year*There is no guarantee whatsoever of the same teacher next year.* |
| I’ve not studied the subject before but it interests me and I’ve discussed this with my Mentor and teachers to get a lot of information | I don’t need to choose too carefully as I can change my mind later*Once the timetable and options blocks have been constructed it is very hard to change subjects. You will also have wasted valuable time and have a lot of work to catch up on. Much better to make the right choice now.* |