



From the Director of Studies: Dr AP Willis, BSc, PhD

14 February 2012

## TO THE PARENTS OF ALL THIRD YEAR BOYS

Dear Parents

### PREFERENCE FOR FOURTH YEAR SUBJECTS for September 2012

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the curriculum which your son will be following in his fourth and fifth years in the school, culminating in the main GCSE examinations in the summer of 2014. The curriculum contains both compulsory and optional subjects. On the basis of the information in this letter and discussions with your son, you need to choose your son's preferences for languages, the sciences and optional subjects.

All Third Year parents will be emailed with a link to an online form. Please complete this online form by **Tuesday 6th March**. The online form provides room for you to comment if you wish. The Parents' Evening on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February will provide an opportunity for you to discuss your son's preferences with his teachers.

### The choice to be made

In a nutshell, your son can express a preference for either **three** or **four** optional subjects. If he selects four optional subjects he has to study the sciences on a more limited basis leading to "dual award science" (Science and Additional Science) GCSE.

This choice is based on a pupil's interest in science since the dual award scientists spend fewer periods per week studying science. This allows dual award scientists to timetable an additional optional subject for GCSE. This combination is likely to appeal to pupils who are more inclined towards the arts side, though it might also be the case that a broad arts-based curriculum is ideal at GCSE level for someone who will later turn out to be a devoted scientist. Alternatively, your son might express a preference for three optional subjects, and pursue the sciences to GCSE as separate subjects. If, at this stage, your son intends to take two or more sciences throughout the sixth form, he would be advised to take advantage of the separate science option, though there may be exceptions to this for boys who are particularly able. Further detail regarding science options is given in the Middle School Curriculum document referred to below.

We expect to offer more than one dual award Science set. The two or more sets will be set by ability based on pupils' end of year Science exams.

Within the four option choices which dual award scientists make they must study at least one of History and Geography; (they may study both).

Please contact me if you would like further information, or if you wish to discuss your son's

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choices. We are always willing to consider variations to the usual pattern when they are clearly in the interests of a pupil. On the other hand, you will appreciate that we offer over 150 pupils a large number of different possible subject combinations on only three or four blocks of time. Most combinations are possible, although unusual combinations may prove to be impossible to timetable. In two or three cases a year we have to ask third formers to choose again; that is why we call them 'preferences' rather than 'choices'.

I should also emphasise the importance of letting me know **directly** of any changes at any time after the 6<sup>th</sup> March. The new combination of subjects might prove impossible to arrange.

The 'Middle School Curriculum September 2011' document may be downloaded via a link from the Abingdon curriculum page (<http://www.abingdon.org.uk/curriculum/>). Included in the document is detail on each Middle School subject.

### Outline of the Fourth and Fifth Year Curriculum

Boys are allocated sets based on ability in the sciences, Mathematics, modern languages and Latin.

<b>Compulsory Subjects:</b>		<b>Fourth Year</b> (lessons per fortnight)	<b>Fifth Year</b> (lessons per fortnight)
	English and English Literature	6	6
	Mathematics	6	6
	Biology	5 (3 dual award)	5 (4 dual award)
	Chemistry	5 (3 dual award)	5 (3 dual award)
	Physics	4 (3 dual award)	5 (3 dual award)
	Main MFL (French, German or Spanish)	5	5
	Personal, Social and Health Education	1	
	Physical education	1	1
<b>Optional Subjects:</b> Separate scientists choose <b>three</b> Dual award scientists choose <b>four</b>		5 for each	5 for each
	Geography		
	History		
	Religious Studies		
	Latin <b>or</b> Classical Civilisation		
	Second languages: German, French, Spanish, Mandarin		
	Chinese and Greek		
	Electronics		
	Music		
	Art & Design		
	Design & Technology		
	Drama		

## **Specific notes on particular options**

### **ART AND DESIGN**

There is a charge of £20 made each term to cover some of the costs of art materials and portfolios used on the course.

### **DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY**

Pupils are charged £15 per term on the school bill, to cover materials throughout the year and for their practical piece which they then get to keep.

### **DRAMA AND THEATRE ARTS**

Termly visits to the theatre form an essential part of the course, often outside normal school hours, and the costs of these are charged to parents' end of term bills.

**All boys wishing to pursue Drama at GCSE level will be asked to attend a brief audition to determine their aptitude.**

### **MODERN LANGUAGES**

Any pupil who wishes to take GCSE in a language without having studied the same language in the third year may only do so in exceptional circumstances.

### **MUSIC**

Boys should discuss their suitability for Edexcel GCSE Music with a member of the full-time music staff. All boys who take this option will be practising musicians who are of a minimum standard of about ABRSM grade 4 on one instrument.

Do contact me if you wish, by phone or preferably by e-mail. You may wish to discuss matters further on Parents' Evening.

Yours sincerely,

**Peter Willis – Director of Studies**

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