



From Curriculum Director: Oliver Lomax

7 February 2020

To parents of Third Year pupils

Dear Parents

Preference for Fourth Year Subjects for September 2020

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 2021. 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 shortly be emailed with a link to an online form. Please complete this online form by Thursday 27 February. The online form provides room for you to comment if you wish. The Parents' Evening on Thursday 13 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 Double Award Science GCSE. This choice is based on a pupil's interest in science since the double award scientists spend fewer periods per week studying science. This allows double award scientists to be timetabled 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. Within the four option choices which double award scientists make they must study at least one of History and Geography (they may study both).

In order to ensure breadth, we do not allow boys to choose both Electronics and Computer Science.

Please contact me if you would like further information, or if you wish to discuss your son's choices. We are always willing to consider variations to the usual pattern when they are clearly

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in the interests of a pupil. On the other hand, you will appreciate that we offer 190 pupils a large number of different possible subject combinations in only three or four blocks of time. Most combinations are possible, although some combinations may prove to be impossible to timetable. In two or three cases a year we have to ask individual boys 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 Thursday 27 February. The new combination of subjects might prove impossible to arrange. The 'Middle School Curriculum September 2020' document can 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.

Specific notes on particular options

DRAMA AND THEATRE ARTS

One or two Sunday rehearsals in the academic year are necessary to prepare for exam performances. Visits to the theatre form an important part of the course, often outside normal school hours, and the costs of these are charged to parents' end of term bills.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Any pupil intending to take a language to GCSE must have studied that language in the 3rd year, unless he has thorough previous knowledge of the subject. This would need to be assessed in a test prior to choosing 4th Year options.

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 3 to 4 on one instrument (or singing) at the start of the course.

Outline of the Fourth and Fifth Year Curriculum

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

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

Yours sincerely

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