



From the Curriculum Director: Mr OT Lomax

12 February 2021

Dear Parents,

PREFERENCE FOR FOURTH YEAR SUBJECTS for September 2021

The purpose of this letter is to introduce the curriculum which your child will be following in their fourth and fifth years in the school, culminating in the main GCSE examinations in the summer of 2023. The curriculum contains both compulsory and optional subjects. On the basis of the information in this letter and discussions with your child, you need to choose your child's preferences for languages, the sciences and optional subjects.

After half term, all third year parents will be emailed with a link to an online form. Please complete this online form by Wednesday 3 March. The online form provides room for you to comment if you wish. The Parents' Evenings on Wednesday 24/Thursday 25 February will provide an opportunity for you to discuss your child's preferences with their teachers.

The choice to be made

In a nutshell, your child can express a preference for either **three** or **four** optional subjects. If they select four optional subjects they have to study Biology, Chemistry and Physics 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. Alternatively, your child might express a preference for three optional subjects, and pursue the sciences to GCSE as separate subjects. If, at this stage, your child intends to take two or more sciences throughout the sixth form, they would be advised to take advantage of the separate science option, though there may be exceptions to this for pupils who are particularly able. 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 pupils to choose both Electronics and Computer Science.

Please contact me if you would like further information, or if you wish to discuss your child's 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 nearly 200 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 pupils to choose again; that is why we call them 'preferences' rather than 'choices'.

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I should also emphasise the importance of letting me know **directly** of any changes at any time after Wednesday 3 March. The new combination of subjects might prove impossible to arrange. The 'Middle School Curriculum' 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 they have thorough previous knowledge of the subject. This would need to be assessed in a test prior to choosing 4th Year options.

MUSIC

Pupils should discuss their suitability for Edexcel GCSE Music with a member of the full-time music staff. All pupils 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.

Do contact me by e-mail if you have any questions that I can help to answer.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Lomax – Curriculum Director
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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 + Chemistry + Physics | 15 (or 10 for double award) | 15 (or 10 for double award) |
| Main MFL (French, German or Spanish) | 5 | 5 |
| Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education | 1 | Taught during weekly tutor time |
| Physical education | 1 | 1 |

| Optional Subjects: Separate scientists choose three Double award scientists choose four | Fourth Year (lessons per fortnight) | Fifth Year (lessons per fortnight) |
|--|---|--|
| Geography | 5 per fortnight | 5 per fortnight |
| History | | |
| Religious Studies | | |
| Latin | | |
| Ancient History | | |
| Additional languages: German, French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese | | |
| Greek | | |
| Electronics | | |
| Computer Science | | |
| Music | | |
| Art | | |
| Design & Technology | | |
| Drama | | |