



29<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the next few weeks, Year 8 students are going to be supported to make their Option choices for Key Stage 4 and we want to include you in this process. This letter summarises what the process is, which events will take place and how you can get involved.

### **Y8 Student Assembly - Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Students will receive an assembly on this day from Mr Stocks, who will outline the Options process to them, and share the timeline which will apply for this academic year.

### **Options lessons in RPS - Week beginning 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

All students will receive a one-off lesson exploring the Options available to them from our RPS Dept.

At the end of the lesson they will be asked to take home their initial thoughts on Options to discuss with you in advance of the following events:

### **Options Evening & Fair - Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

We will hold our annual Options' Evening on 27<sup>th</sup> February for students and parents.

On the evening itself, you will receive a brief presentation on Options and will be able to visit the different subject areas and talk about the available courses with the teachers who deliver them.

We will stagger the arrival times for different tutor groups so that we can accommodate everyone in the main hall, please arrive at your allocated time and come to the main hall.

**6.00pm:** 8A1, 8A2, 8A3, 8L1, 8L2

**6.30pm:** 8N1, 8N2, 8N3, 8W1, 8W2

### **Options Information**

We will ensure that all information about how students can choose their Options is put on our website.

This will include all presentations, letters, leaflet about courses and a timeline.

Due to changes in government curriculum policy in recent years on what students should be studying at Key Stage 4; notably the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) - [DfE EBacc Leaflet.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), and because we introduce some subjects which have not been taught in Key Stage 3, there are significant changes to the curriculum for years 9-11, compared to the curriculum studied by previous year groups.

### **Year 8 Subject Parents' Evening – Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March**

Year 8 subject virtual Parents' Evening is scheduled to be on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March. This will be online and you will be sent further details of this nearer the time. Here, you will be able to discuss with your child's current teachers how well they are doing currently and what grades they should be aiming for in Year 11, if they choose to opt for each subject. It is another opportunity for you to find out about the courses and what they involve. There are two weeks between the Options' info evening and parents' evening and in this time, students can be talking to their teachers in college about the courses and choices too.

Students will be issued with their **Option Form on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March** in tutor time.

The deadline for **submission of the form** will be **Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March at 9am** and the form must be signed by both parents and students.

This date is not the end of the decision-making process, but prepares for the next stage of the process...

### **Options' Interviews**

These are available to any student who:

- has not been successful in receiving their preferred Option choices
- would like a 1-1 Options interview/meeting

This is an opportunity for students to discuss any concerns or ask any questions they might have about what their curriculum will be like in years 9-11. It might be that the student wishes to make changes to their Option choices as a result of their interview.

### **Decisions around Science**

In the summer term, we will make decisions about which Science pathway students will follow in years 9- 11.

A large majority of students will study Combined Science GCSEs (made up on units of Biology, Chemistry and Physics and it equates to two GCSEs).



Students following the Combined Science pathway will be able to spend some curriculum time on enrichment activities (we call these Elective subjects) and they will choose what they would like these to be in the summer term.

Some students will follow the Triple Science pathway (made up of three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics).

Students on the Triple Pathway will have an additional lesson of Science per week and will not have the Elective subject.

### **A Three-year Key Stage 4**

In previous years, the large majority of schools have gone back to a three-year Key Stage 3, with all students continuing to study all subjects until the end of year 9, before choosing their Options, and then having the 5 terms of year 10 and 11 to do their GCSE courses. We have decided not to choose this route, but have chosen in doing GCSE and vocational courses over three years, I think it is appropriate to give you an explanation of our decision making here.

To fit the teaching of the exam courses into 2 years, we would need to reduce the number of Options that students choose, which we believe narrows their options for Post-16 learning and prevents them from doing more of the subjects they would like. By having more Options to choose, we can offer a wider range: courses stand a greater chance of attracting sufficient numbers to run if students have more choices to make.

Within each subject, teachers have time over three years, to go beyond the exam course and enrich the subject by teaching other interesting and important things that are not on the exam syllabus but which helps give students the background, context and up to date, real life examples/applications of what is on the exam syllabus. Furthermore, because there is more time to teach students their courses, the teaching is not rushed and the learning not crammed.

I hope this letter provides you with a clear understanding of the options' process. We will be in touch again in the coming weeks, with further information about the Options' evening and the Online options' information.

With best wishes

Mr Rule

Headteacher

Mr Stocks

Deputy Headteacher

