

25th February 2020

RE: Changes to the KS3 / KS4 Options Process

A robust, broad and rigorous core curriculum, enriched with additional personalisation, leading to well-rounded, resilient and confident young people.

Dear Parent / Carer

Following a comprehensive review of the Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) sections of The Cottesloe School's Curriculum, we are making some changes that will impact on your child's learning from Year 9 onwards. The changes will ensure our curriculum offer is more closely aligned with the school's new mission statement and vision, Prepare, Aspire, Succeed; supporting the 'Cottesloe Journey' that combines learning about and from the world we live in, where students experience a sense of fulfilment through educational and personal achievement.

You may be aware that from September 2019, Ofsted have been inspecting schools under a new inspection framework, which places much greater emphasis and focus on the Quality of Education, to make sure that all learners receive a high-quality education that puts them on a path to future success. There is much less focus on exam results and test data, and more consideration of *how* a school, college or other education provider has achieved their results. That is, whether they are the outcome of a broad, rich curriculum and real learning, or of teaching to the test and exam cramming.

The new Quality of Education Ofsted judgement considers a school's curriculum model; what is taught, when and how. Ofsted describes this as the curriculum intent, implementation and impact. Ofsted have been careful not to prescribe a specific one-size fits all curriculum model, allowing schools to make changes that suit their context. Whilst the changes we are implementing are not in direct response to Ofsted's new framework, this change of focus has afforded us the opportunity to look carefully at our students' experiences to implement changes that will broaden and improve their learning further. Many education leaders and commentators believe this shift in focus within the educational landscape, to look in depth at intent, implementation and impact, is the right direction of travel. At The Cottesloe School, we believe this too; our curriculum will have a positive impact on outcomes for all our students.

During the curriculum review, we looked at when students make decisions about their future learning opportunities. We spoke to current KS3 and KS4 students to help inform our thinking. We concluded that making choices too early narrows the curriculum students are entitled to study. Previously Year 8 students were asked to select GCSE options in readiness to begin their KS4 studies in Year 9. From this academic year, Year 8 students will now make some



choices about their learning in Year 9, however Year 9 will be part of KS3 rather than KS4. This means that whilst these choices will influence decisions for KS4, there is still opportunity to make changes if needed, prior to making GCSE options.

GCSE options will be made mid-way through Year 9, with KS4 starting in the summer of Year 9, rather than at the beginning of the academic year. In the spring term of Year 9, students will undertake the curriculum options process for GCSE, where they will select up to four subjects to study in KS4, from a choice of around 14 subjects. We will write to you again about this process in January 2021.

What will the KS3 Year 9 Choices process look like?

In Year 8, students will be offered a number of choices for their Year 9 Programme of Study, alongside a suite of core subjects. Year 8 students are able to make three choices about their learning in Year 9 from a range of subjects within the Creative Arts, Technology, and an Enrichment choice such as Business Studies.

This process has two key aims:

- To enable students to begin to specialise in areas of the curriculum they particularly enjoy, or are particularly successful in.
- To provide a 'practice run' at the GCSE options process. The Options process takes place midway through Year 9.

We believe the KS3 Year 9 choices process is a key point in a student's secondary education. The process allows students to begin to take ownership of their learning. We are also aware that not every student will get things right first time around; therefore, students who feel they have made a mistake, or who change their mind as they move through Year 9 will be supported to transfer their choices to more appropriate subjects. We are all allowed to make mistakes!

We believe that Key Stage 3 is a crucial stage in a student's education; it provides an opportunity to develop deep and powerful knowledge in a wide range of subject areas which, in many cases, will not have been studied as discrete subjects at primary school. Cutting KS3 short can stifle these opportunities and the love of learning new things.

Our Key Stage 3 programmes of study are designed to develop a rich and diverse knowledge base from which to form coherent viewpoints and arguments, and to develop understanding of ever-more complex subject matter; to provide opportunities to experience cultural, educational and sporting experiences both inside the classroom and beyond; and to develop a love of learning which will become embedded into our students' approaches to education at Key Stage 4 and beyond. Ultimately, we want students to progress on from Key Stage 3



with self-confidence, excited about their own education, and having developed resilience, independence, and great aspiration for the future.

KS3 Year 9 Choices Process:

1. **KS3 Year 9 Choices PSCHE Presentation – Tuesday 25th February Period 2** for all Year 8 students.
2. **Choices Booklet and Form issued – Friday 6th March 2020.**
3. **KS3 Year 9 Choices Presentation – Wednesday 11th March 2020 at 6.00pm.** We look forward to welcoming you to the presentation which will explain the process in more detail. Your child is welcome to attend. The presentation will last no more than an hour.
4. Between now and the deadline to submit the form, spend time with your child and decide, considering all the support and guidance available, which subjects they would like to choose to continue with in Year 9, based on their future career and education plans, the subjects they enjoy, the subjects they don't enjoy as much as well as their areas of strength. The **most recent Year 8 report issued at the end of January 2020**, available via Go4Schools, will help with the decision making.
5. There is no rush to complete the form – choices are *not* allocated on a first come, first served basis.
6. **Deadline for completed KS3 Choices forms to be returned is Friday 27th March 2020.**

Yours sincerely



Mrs L Baldwin

Deputy Headteacher – Curriculum

