



Fulford School

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Headteacher: Ms. L. Savage, BA, NPQH
Deputies: Mr D. Bodey BSc, Mr. T. Johnson, BA

Friday 25 September 2015

Dear Parents/Carers of Year 8 Students,

I am writing to outline a change to our options process which will impact upon current and future Year 8 students and to outline the key reasons for this change. As you will probably be aware, GCSE examinations are currently undergoing a phased programme of reform. These new, reformed GCSE qualifications will be linear, which means that all examinations will be sat at the end of Year 11. They will be more demanding in their content than current GCSEs. Non-examination assessments (controlled assessment and coursework) will be removed or reduced in the majority of GCSEs so the grade achieved will now be solely determined, in most cases, through examination at the end of Year 11.

There will also be a new grading structure, with a 9-1 scale replacing the existing A*-G scale. Within this new scale it is anticipated that only around 50% of those students currently achieving an A* will achieve the new grade 9 and the new 'good pass' grade of a 5 will only be achieved by around the top third of candidates currently achieving a grade C. The attached sheet illustrates how these two scales will compare to one another.

Students who are currently in Year 8 will be the first cohort to sit reformed GCSEs across all of their subjects.

In order to address the increased demands of these reformed GCSEs and to maximise students' chances of success, we have made the decision to move our GCSE options process to Year 8 and to ask students to choose the subjects which they would like to study at GCSE at this time, rather than in Year 9. This means that we will be operating a three-year Key Stage 4 programme for students currently in Year 8. This move is motivated by our desire to maintain the well-being of our students as well as to support their academic outcomes as they undertake these new courses.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Students will benefit from an increased allocation of lessons across all of their GCSE subjects, including English, Maths and Science to better prepare them for the increased demands of the new qualifications.
- Year 9 will be used as a "foundation" year across all subjects seeing a gradual move into GCSE content in most courses. This means that students will be able to learn and develop subject-specific skills without the implicit pressure that can sometimes be associated with what can be seen as a 'cliff-edged' start to the GCSE courses.
- Students will spend less time studying subjects which they will discontinue.
- The additional skills and knowledge developed over the three-year GCSE programme will also aid the preparation of students for the reformed and more demanding A Level courses which many of them will go on to study.

Please be assured that both parents and students will be fully supported as we introduce this change. A full programme of advice and guidance on option choices will be delivered to Year 8 students through the Personal Development programme over the course of the next term. Additionally, further details of options choices will be given to students through assemblies and via the Year 8 options booklet which will be sent home later this term.

Information and support for parents will be offered through the Year 8 Parents' Information Evening which takes place at 7pm on Wednesday 13th January 2016 and through the Year 8 parents'

evenings. Please note that we have increased the time available for parental appointments this year this in the light of this change and we will now run two parents' evening sessions on Tuesday 26th January 2016 (E half) and Wednesday 3rd February 2016 (H half). Additionally, Year 8 Progress Reviews take place on Thursday 3rd December 2015.

If you have any queries in advance of the above dates, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Mr T Johnson
Deputy Headteacher
Curriculum and Achievement