



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to you to update you on the Year 9 Key Stage 4 options process. We are approximately half way through the options timeline and I have been majorly impressed with the engagement and conduct of the year 9 students.

Last Friday we had the Key Stage 4 taster event. This was a series of 30 minute tasters which allowed the students to get a feel for what the different subjects and qualifications on offer were all about. Students were given the chance to sign up for and participate in as many subjects (timetable allowing) as they felt would be needed to help clarify their options choices.

As all the sessions happened online, this allowed me to visit almost all of them. I was seriously impressed with the conduct of the students. Every session I visited, without exception, was well attended with students getting involved and asking appropriate questions.

The day ended with an assembly and an opportunity for students to provide some feedback. The overwhelming majority of students said the day had helped crystalize their thoughts and finalize their decisions. Three quarters said they now felt ready to make their choices. I hope you have found time to discuss the day with your child and they found it useful. Just a reminder, the subjects available can be found [here](#). It can also be found at:

<https://tinyurl.com/EmmSubject2021>

I am fully aware that for some, the options process remains as daunting as ever. We still have some online sessions to deliver which hopefully should help.

27/01/2021 – Where could My GCSE options take me?

03/02/2021 – Making my final choice

As well as these, tutors, Mr Baker and teaching staff are on hand to offer advice and guidance if needs be. If you or your child just emails their form tutor, they will be available to answer any questions. Although, as I said many times to many people last Friday, staff will not 'tell' students what subjects to take. They are there only to advise.

As I mentioned in my last letter, please may I remind you of two significant dates:

- Wednesday 3rd February – Online information event for parents – please click [here](#) for the link to the event. It can also be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/EmmOptions2021>. This is also the date that the application process goes 'live'.
- Thursday 11th February – Deadline for options submission

Please stay safe and should you have any questions around the options, please do not hesitate to contact me. Any questions around online learning should either be sent to individual subject teachers, your child's tutor or head of year.

Yours sincerely,

P Whitehouse (Assistant Headteacher)



FAQ's around the options process:

What subjects are compulsory and what are optional?

Subject	Optional/Compulsory	Qualification type
English	Compulsory	GCSE
Maths	Compulsory	GCSE
Biology	Compulsory	GCSE
Chemistry	Compulsory	GCSE
Physics	Compulsory	GCSE
Science	Compulsory	GCSE
Computer Science	Optional	GCSE
French	Optional	GCSE
Geography	Optional	GCSE
History	Optional	GCSE
3D Design	Optional	GCSE
Business	Optional	GCSE
Creative Media	Optional	BTEC
Design & Technology	Optional	GCSE
Drama	Optional	GCSE
Fine Art	Optional	GCSE
Hospitality	Optional	L1/2 Vocational award
Marketing & Enterprise	Optional	CNAT
Media	Optional	GCSE
Physical Education	Optional	GCSE
Religious Studies	Optional	GCSE
Sports Science	Optional	CNAT
Classical Civilization*	Optional	GCSE

*this course is offered as an additional qualification on top of the chosen allocation of 4. It is taught outside the standard curriculum.

How many choices do I have?

Students can choose 4 different subjects.

Are there any restrictions?

Students must choose at least one of the Ebacc subjects highlighted in grey. They can choose more than one.

There are some combinations which are also not allowed. These are:

GCSE PE and CNAT Sports Science

GCSE Business and CNAT Marketing and Enterprise

GCSE Media and BTEC Creative Media

GCSE Art and GCSE 3D Design

How do we submit our options choices?

All options choices are submitted through our online system. A 'How to...' guide will be made available when the system goes live.



How do I make sure my child makes appropriate options choices?

We will be working with every student to advise them appropriately. We will have an entire session dedicated to 'how to make good choices'. Every student is an individual, with areas of strength and interest. We will talk about subject type (GCSE vs BTEC for example), careers pathways as well as post 16 choices (A-Levels vs Apprenticeships for example). The best support you can give is to discuss options with your child and ensure they can explain to you the reasons for their choices. You could also discuss your own option choices at this stage as well as any other family members/friends who have been through this process. I would add that successful option choices come from information gathering and question asking. It often doesn't end well if students feel detached from their options choices, however, at this age, children do need support and advice (even they do not always realise it!)

Can options be changed?

We try and ensure that the options process is thorough and rigorous enough that changes are not needed. Once Key Stage 4 courses begin, time is precious and so swaps are rare and not really allowed.

What is The Ebacc?

The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers.

The EBacc is:

- English language and literature
- Maths
- The sciences – double or triple award
- Geography or History
- a language

What are the different qualifications available?

GCSE - GCSEs are the most common and popular 2-year courses of study taken during years 10 and 11 (KS4). Almost all GCSE's involve a two-year taught course, completed by sitting a series of exams at the end of year 11.

BTEC - BTEC courses focus on skills-based learning and are designed around themed units. Rather than testing everything together at the end, BTECs are tested throughout the course using assessments based on real-life scenarios. This practical approach allows BTEC learners to demonstrate ongoing application of the knowledge and skills required.

CNAT - Cambridge Nationals are vocational qualifications, equivalent to GCSEs, for 14–16 year olds. As well as an exam, students also complete practical tasks as part of the assessment. Assessment opportunities are available across the course. Cambridge Nationals have clear progression routes to A levels, Apprenticeships or further advanced vocational qualifications at Level 3.

L1/2 Vocational award - WJEC Vocational Awards and Certificates are level 1/2 qualifications that enable learners to gain broad knowledge and understanding of a specific vocational sector. It is assessed using a combination of internal and external assessment. In addition to the development of sector specific knowledge and understanding, these qualifications also support learners to develop the essential employability skills that are valued by employers, further and higher education.

What is the difference between double award science and separate science?

For GCSE Science, the old single-award "science" and "additional science" options are no longer available, being replaced with a double award "combined science" option (graded on the scale 9–9 to 1–1 and equivalent to 2 GCSEs). Alternatively, students can take separate qualifications in chemistry, biology, and physics. Please talk to your science teacher about your child's individual circumstances.