

Dear Students,

At this stage of your education you have to make some choices about the courses you will study in Years 10 and 11. This is an important decision to make because the qualifications you gain at the end of each course will help you decide what to do in the future. As you will see from this booklet, there is a broad range of subjects to choose from; it is very important that you choose to study the courses best suited to your individual ability and skills because then you will have the greatest chance to be successful and achieve the best possible grades.

Read the course details for each subject carefully before considering your choices; it will help you understand what is required for each subject and to make informed choices. There are many reasons why a particular subject might be chosen and good advice can be gained from your subject teachers. In making your decision, it is important to consider the following points:

- A broad and balanced education at this stage is essential whatever career you may choose in the future.
- Choose subjects because you think you'll be good at them and that they will interest you.
- If you're not sure what you might want to study after Year 11, ensure you've got a good mix of GCSE subjects – you could follow the English Baccalaureate model.
- Don't choose subjects because you want to be with a best friend or a particular teacher - your friendship may not last and the inspirational teacher may leave!

In making your choices it may be helpful for you to understand the English Baccalaureate. The English Baccalaureate suite of subjects is accomplished if you achieve a grade 5 or better in **all** of the following GCSEs: English, maths, two sciences, a language (Spanish) and either history or geography. The breadth of academic study achieved by studying the English Baccalaureate subject combination is increasingly recognised by some of the best Universities and employers. In view of this, we would strongly recommend that you consider selecting courses that will lead to achieving the English Baccalaureate.

The Academy is committed to ensuring that you are well supported in your course selection and in achieving your best. You and your parents/carers will be invited to a Pathway Evening, to find more information about your GCSE choices. You and your parents/carers will also be invited for an interview with a member of staff. This interview is very important; it will be at this interview that the final decisions will be made about which subjects you will study at Key Stage 4.

I would advise you to read this booklet carefully and gather as much information as possible for the courses that interest you before your interview.

Miss K Tzoganakou
Vice Principal

English Baccalaureate

The English Baccalaureate is not a qualification in itself but it recognises pupils who have secured a GCSE at a grade 5 or better across a core of academic subjects – English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences and a language. The English Baccalaureate is intended to give pupils greater opportunity to study in and beyond the vital core of English, mathematics and the sciences and thus equips students with an important range of knowledge and skills.

While students may not have decided on their future career path yet, choosing the EBacc at GCSE gives them access to a full range of employment options when they leave secondary school and the broad knowledge that employers are looking for. Studying the EBacc suite of subjects ensures that all students have the opportunity to study a broad core of subjects, ensuring that doors are not closed off to them in terms of future progression. If they are thinking of going to university, the EBacc is also recommended by Britain's most prestigious universities. The Russell Group guide on making informed choices for post-16 education identifies 'facilitating subjects' at A-Level. 'Facilitating subjects' are the subjects most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses and ones that will keep the most options open. The subjects they identify are those included in the English Baccalaureate. In view of this, the Academy feels that it is important to encourage students to pursue the EBacc.

The study of a language is an important part of EBacc. Studying a foreign language can be extremely rewarding and exciting because it provides an insight into other cultures and can open the door to travel and employment opportunities. Languages can also broaden pupils' horizons, helping them flourish in new environments. If a student finds languages difficult, they shouldn't forget that they will have been studying them for much less time than their other subjects and, while it can be a challenge, learning a language will greatly enhance their future opportunities. What's more, we know that employers value languages, as they are increasingly important to make sure we can compete in the global market. Because of this, languages are increasingly becoming a requirement for many graduate schemes.

Raising of the participation age

The Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) means that all young people will continue in education or training until the age of 18. Continuing in learning until 18 does not mean staying on at school. Young people will be able to choose one of the following routes:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education;
- work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship; or
- part-time training, alongside working or volunteering for over 20 hours a week.

Whilst sounding like quite a dramatic change, annually, more than 98% of students in the Academy already follow one of these routes at the end of Year 11.

Making smart GCSE choices

In making your choices of subjects, check that you have used all the information possible:

- ✓ Read this booklet carefully for information about the courses available.
- ✓ Ask your teachers about your suitability for different courses.
- ✓ Talk at home about the decisions to be taken.
- ✓ Think about your future career plans and which subjects will best lead towards your aims.
- ✓ Ask your form tutor, s/he can advise you on getting the balance right.

Good reasons for choosing a subject:

- ✓ I do well at this subject.
- ✓ I enjoy this subject.
- ✓ This subject will help me in the future.

Do not choose a subject for the following reasons:

- ✗ I like the teacher I have for this subject. (You may have a different teacher next year).
- ✗ My friend is doing this subject, so I'll do it too. (Your friend will have different abilities, interests and future plans from yours).
- ✗ This subject is an easy option. (It won't be and you should choose subjects for positive reasons).

Most GCSEs will be good general preparation for further learning and work so it's not crucial to choose specific subjects to fit with a specific career, at this stage. However, there are a few things you do need to take into account:

- Choose subjects because you think you'll be good at them, and that they will interest you.
- If you're not sure what you might want to study after Year 11, ensure you've got a good mix of GCSE subjects – studying the English Baccalaureate combination of subjects is highly recommended.
- Don't choose subjects because you want to be with a best friend or an inspirational teacher – your friendship may not last and the inspirational teacher may leave!
- If you're already thinking about a particular type of course, take a look at the entry requirements for specific courses at university and work back from there.

Some subjects are compulsory at GCSE level and have to be taken by all young people. The compulsory subjects are...

- English Literature and English Language
- Maths
- Sciences
- Either History or Geography or Spanish

There are also further subjects to choose from including Art, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Textiles to name a few. Remember that studying a range of subjects at this stage is useful, so that you have a wide range of options for later study and career choices.

It is essential that you think your choices through before your interview. When you arrive at the Academy next September, your timetable will reflect your choices and you **will not be able to change your courses at that time**.

Your interview

- ✓ We will arrange for an appointment with your family at some point during the second half of the summer term. It is important that you tell us of any changes in your contact details.
- ✓ You and your family will meet with a senior member of staff to talk about your choices. You must arrive to this meeting prepared:
 - Read the booklet and identify courses you may wish to study.
 - Know what subjects you wish to study at GCSE. We cannot always guarantee that you will study the subjects you have chosen, so it will be sensible to have a “back-up”. There is a chance that you may end up studying your back-up subject, so make sure this is a subject you want to study if you cannot study your first choice.
- ✓ Arrive to your appointment promptly. You and your family must attend this appointment; if you cannot attend you need to let the Academy know.
- ✓ If no appointment has been arranged by the end of June, this is most likely because we have not been successful in reaching your family. In this case, your family must contact the Academy to arrange for an appointment.

There may well be things you want you know that are not covered in this booklet - you should make a note of any questions you may have and bring them with you to your pathway interview.