QEGS
BLACKBURN

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Dear Parents and Carers,

GCSE courses have changed considerably over the last few years and are now containing higher order thinking skills and advanced problem solving techniques. These take time to fully develop and embed and are, in many cases, subject specific. It is only right, therefore, that we begin these courses in Year 9 to enable our pupils to achieve their very best.

This decision has not been taken lightly and has been discussed several times with governors at both Committee and Full Board level. Our aim is to ensure that pupils have a full and balanced curriculum which allows for some pupil choice but also does not close any future doors. It also allows pupils to focus on those subjects that they prefer or perform better in a year earlier. By starting the GCSE courses in Year 9, we are also able to increase the number of GCSEs our pupils will take. We have judged that **TEN** subjects should be the maximum that most pupils take at the end of Year 11, although a few will take more; this more than adequately qualifies all pupils for all possible university choices.

We have set our curriculum to include **Compulsory** subjects, **Compulsory Limited Choice** subjects and **Optional** subjects.

The **COMPULSORY** subjects are English Language, English Literature and Mathematics.

The **COMPULSORY LIMITED CHOICE** subjects are Humanities (choice between Geography and History), Language (choice of French, German, Latin and Spanish) and Science (choice between Triple and Trilogy(Combined Science) (This choice will be dependent on recommendation by the Heads of Science Faculty).

Pupils will then choose three **OPTIONAL** subjects. (If pupils choose to study Triple Science then this will form one of their option choices). The optional subjects do include the option to take more than one Language or Humanity.

Optional subjects; Art, Business, Classical Civilisation, Computer Science, Design Technology, Ethics and Philosophy (Religious Studies), French, German, Geography, History, Latin, Music, Physical Education and Spanish.

PSHE, PE and Games continue to be compulsory elements of the curriculum in Years 9, 10 and 11.

The teaching of English, Mathematics and Science will be in sets, which are chosen by ability across the year group.

As a rough rule of thumb, our experience is that pupils do best when they opt for subjects they are good at and enjoy, though there is a case for having a reasonable balance at GCSE. As

a school we are quite flexible as to combinations of subjects – more so than many schools – but we are prescriptive about those subjects which we believe are essential components of a good academic profile, so English Language, English Literature, Humanities, Languages, Mathematics and Sciences remain core curriculum here until GCSE, after which we are happy to encourage the right sort of specialised further study.

When we return to school in the Trinity term, all Year 8 pupils will start the Options process. This involves:

- Year 8 Options Talk Day. Year 8 will listen to talks from Heads of Faculty and Subject Leaders covering all option subjects apart from English and Mathematics on Tuesday 17th April. At this event pupils will also be given a copy of the Year 9 Choices booklet which contains both information regarding the options process and subjects.
- Year 8 Parents' Evening Tuesday 17th April. This will give you a chance to talk to your son/daughters subject teachers regarding their progress and suitability for GCSE study.
- Year 8 Options Evening Thursday 26th April, 18.00 in the Main Hall. This will give you a chance to meet with Heads of Faculty and Subject Leaders to ask any further questions and to finalise choices. You will be given an 'options slip', to be completed at home and returned to School.
- Completed options slip to be handed to Dr Farmar by **Thursday 3rd May 2018** showing your son/daughters choices together with a reserve. Please ensure that the slip is returned promptly; late submissions cannot always be accommodated. The timetable and staffing for the next academic year will be decided on the basis of the option choices submitted. This means that late changes may not be possible.

I am absolutely confident that your son/daughter is in good hands here, and will be supported throughout the course and given good advice on planning workload and revision techniques. If you have concerns, either at this stage or during the next three years, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We want to work with you for the benefit of our pupils.

Please note that while we aim to offer all the courses advertised in the Year 9 Choices booklet, in the event of a group being extremely small, in common with other schools, we cannot guarantee that course will run. We will, of course, inform you on an individual basis if we foresee this once you have made your choices.

Yours sincerely,

C Gammon

Mrs CY Gammon