



Wycombe High School

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Dear Year 8 Student

Key Stage 4 in 2010-13

At the end of this academic year you will have successfully completed Key Stage 3. In September 2010 you will be starting Key Stage 4, studying a variety of subjects leading to your GCSE examinations.

The core subjects

In the compulsory core subjects, you will begin GCSE study immediately, at the start of Year 9. These subjects include English, Maths, the Sciences, and ICT. You will also study Citizenship from the start of Year 10. Based on ability, entry for the GCSE exams in the core subjects will be staggered. In some cases, you will take the GCSE exam at the end of Year 10; in other cases you will take the exam at the end of Year 11.

For example:

- Some students will take the Maths GCSE at the end of Year 10, and then do an Additional Maths course in Year 11. Everyone else will do a three-year Maths course.
- The Science course is a three-year course for everyone, leading to Biology, Physics and Chemistry GCSEs or, in a few cases, to Science and Additional Science GCSEs. Exams are staggered over Years 9, 10 and 11.

The non-core subjects

The non-core subjects are slightly different. In the past, Year 9 students have chosen four options, one of which must be a language, and then embarked on a two-year GCSE course in each of them from the start of Year 10. Year 8 does seem a little early to have to make such major decisions!

We would like to invite you to opt for *two* subjects where you embark immediately on a two-year GCSE course. You will take the GCSE exams in these two subjects at the end of Year 10. For a small minority of students, however, taking just *one* early GCSE may be more appropriate, in order to release time to focus on the core subjects.

Simultaneously, all students will follow pre-GCSE Enrichment Courses in Art, Dance, Drama, and your second language (German, Latin or Spanish) and *three* other subjects. Your choice is largely free, though you must study RS to at least the end of Year 9, as an Enrichment Choice, unless you have chosen to study RS as an Early GCSE.

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Committed to Excellence



During Year 9, we will invite you to decide finally on your remaining two GCSE options. You can choose from: your three Enrichment Course choices, Art, Business Studies, Dance, Drama, and your second language (German, Latin or Spanish).

To help you ...

We have designed this information booklet to support you and your parents in discussing your options, and to enable you to make your final choice with confidence. You should read all the information that departments have provided about both compulsory subjects and option courses, to help you gain an idea of what is involved.

During the next four weeks you should continue to discuss GCSE choices with your tutor during registration time. You should also discuss your choices with your subject teachers, and with Mrs Hayward, our Pathways Adviser, and Mrs Griffiths, if necessary. You can also visit web sites or go to the careers library to find out information about possible careers and the qualifications you might need. Half of the Focus Day on Wednesday 10 February is also devoted to the issue.

Hitches ...

We try very hard to accommodate everyone's choices. Occasionally we are not able to run a particular course, perhaps because only a very small number of students have chosen that subject. If this happens you will be told as soon as possible, and we will discuss the best alternative for you. We might think that the choice of subjects you have made is not in your best interests, and we may therefore want to suggest a different set of options to you. If, at a later date, you change your mind about a subject you have chosen, you should talk to your tutor or Mrs Griffiths, who will advise you what to do.

Please remember that we are here to help and support you through this process.

The information in the booklet should be self explanatory but, if you have any concerns, do ask your tutor or Mrs Griffiths for clarification. At the back of the booklet is a form for you to detach and return - this should be returned via your form tutor by **Thursday 11 March 2010**.

Yours sincerely

Mrs B Griffiths
Head of Middle School

Miss H Brash
Assistant Headteacher