



Mr D Cooper
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Dear Parent/Carer

As you will already be aware from my previous correspondence, the school has been carrying out a thorough review of our current curriculum provision. The review has included looking at other curriculum models, discussion with other school leaders, reviewing the new GCSE courses and rigorous debate with subject leaders, senior leaders and governors.

This review has been stimulated by the following national changes:

- New GCSEs contain approximately 30% more content than the previous courses, a significant amount of this content has been moved from the old A level courses. This means that there is more knowledge to learn which requires more teaching.
- Staff feel that there is insufficient time to teach the new GCSE courses in as much depth as they would like to.
- Analysis of the 2017 examination results for the new GCSEs in Maths and English reported that Level 7 students (A grade equivalent) achieved 50% of the available marks. Level 9 students achieved 80% of the available marks. Therefore additional teaching is required for all GCSEs to enable our students to achieve higher grades in each qualification.
- Scientific research is having a greater impact upon how we teach students, in particular how knowledge and skills are committed to our long term memory and subsequently be used by our working memory during learning. This approach to learning requires additional teaching time.
- There is less controlled assessment/coursework, subsequently there are more and longer exams for each subject. Typically the new GCSEs now have three written papers instead of two. Consequently, the exam period is going to be far busier than previous years.
- Increase in the number of marking grades and greater differentiation between them means that it will be harder for students to get the highest grades.
- Post-16 institutions have entry requirements of a maximum of seven GCSEs to do A levels. Hills Road – 6 GCSEs, Long Road 7GCSEs, Comberton 5 GCSEs

Due to changes with A level qualifications – level 4 university / apprenticeships / other courses are relying more heavily upon GCSE grades (rather than the number of GCSEs) to judge the merit of student applications.

Following a recommendation from the senior leadership team, Bassingbourn Village College governing body has agreed to proceed with the following changes.

1. Students at BVC will choose one less GCSE option, meaning they will now take 8-9 GCSEs rather than 9-10 as before
2. The GCSE curriculum will start in Year 9, meaning that students will take their GCSEs for three years rather than two, an implication of this being that students will decide their GCSE options in Year 8 rather than Year 9.

This means that:

Current Year 10 and 11 students – there will be no changes.

Current Year 9 students will make three option choices from a wide selection of courses. These will be studied over a two year period, each option subject will have an **additional 100mins** a fortnight. The options process will be very similar to previous years.

Current Year 8 students will make three option choices from a wide selection of courses this academic year and will start their full GCSE programme of study from the beginning of year 9 (September 2018). Each option subject will have an **additional 100 mins** a fortnight and the extra year.

For **current Year 7 students** the arrangements next year will be as for the current Year 8 students– they will make three option choices from a wide selection of courses in the spring/ summer term of year 8 (2019).

The school leadership team and governors believe that this new model will have the following positive benefits

- This will lead to the best possible academic and personal development outcomes for our students and increasing their chances of future success.
- This new model provides the largest increase in curriculum time and therefore best addresses the reasons for change set out above.

We are also very committed to reviewing this decision over the next three years as our understanding of these national changes becomes better developed through a richer evidence base. This process will also include us evaluating the thoughts of our students, parents and staff.

Key dates

As a consequence of these changes the options selection process will be different this year. The key dates are as follows:

Year 9 Options process

8th February – Planning for the future evening (parents and students)
19th – 2nd March –Taster lessons fortnight (students)
5th – 16th March – Guidance meetings (parents and students)
23rd March –Deadline for option choices

Year 8 Options process

5th February - Yr Year 8 Assembly (students)
14th March – Planning for the future evening (parents and students)
16th – 29th March – Taster lessons fortnight (students)
16th – 27th April – Guidance meetings (parents and students)
4th May – Deadlines for option choices

If you would like to discuss these changes further with members of the leadership team please contact office@bassingbournvc.net to make the necessary arrangements.

I hope you will agree that these proactive changes will support our young people to achieve the highest grades possible and help to prepare them well for future success.

Yours sincerely


Mr D Cooper
Principal