

## **Year 8 Pathways Letter 2017**

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to outline a change to our 'pathways' process which will impact upon year 8 students and to outline the key reasons for this change.

You may be aware; GCSE examinations are currently undergoing a phased programme of reform. These new, reformed GCSE qualifications will be linear – this means that all examinations will be sat at the end of year 11. They will be more demanding in their content than current GCSEs. Non-examination assessments (controlled assessment and coursework) will be removed or reduced in the majority of GCSEs so the grade achieved will now be solely determined, in most cases, through examination at the end of year 11.

There will also be a new grading structure, with a 9-1 scale replacing the existing A\*-G scale. Within this new scale it is anticipated that only around 50% of those currently achieving an A\* will achieve the new grade 9 and the new 'good pass' grade of a 5 will only be achieved by around the top third of candidates currently achieving a grade C.

In order to address the increased demands of these GCSEs and to maximise students' chances of success, we have made the decision to move our GCSE pathways process to year 8 and to ask students to choose subjects the subjects which they would to study at GCSE at this time, rather than in year 9. This means that we will be operating a three-year Key Stage 4 programme for students currently in Year 8. This move is motivated by our desire to maintain the wellbeing of our students as well as to support their academic outcomes as they undertake these new courses.

### **The benefits of this approach include:**

- Students will benefit from an increased allocation of lessons across all of their GCSE option subjects, including Science, to better prepare them for the increased demands of the new qualifications.
- Year 9 will be used as a "foundation" year across all subjects seeing a move into GCSE content in most courses. This means that students will be able to learn and develop subject-specific skills without the implicit pressure that can sometimes be associated with what can be seen as a 'cliff-edged' start to the GCSE courses.
- Students will spend less time studying subjects which they will discontinue.
- The additional skills and knowledge developed over the three-year GCSE programme will also aid the preparation of students for the reformed and more demanding A Level courses which many of them will go on to study.

Please be assured that both parents and students will be fully supported as we introduce this change. A full programme of advice and guidance on option choices will be delivered to Year 8 students through assemblies over the course of the term. Additionally, further details of options choices will be given to students and parents via the Year 8 Pathways Booklet which can be viewed and downloaded via the school website.

<http://www.westleighhigh.co.uk/parents/curriculum>

Information and support for parents will be offered through the Year 8, Pathways Evening which takes place at 4.00pm-6.00pm on Tuesday 7 March 2017.

There will be a short presentation taking place in the drama study at 4.00pm and 5.00pm from Mr Kearns. You only need to attend one of the presentations.

In the following weeks, students will then have a one-two-one interview with their form tutor or a member of the senior leadership team where they will pick their subjects. When choices are finalised you will be sent a letter confirming the subjects your child will be completing for their GCSE's.

If you have any queries in advance of the above dates, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr T Kearns  
Deputy headteacher