



Dear Parent or Guardian,

When I was first appointed as Director of Studies almost exactly two years ago, my primary brief was to undertake a full review of the structure of both the school day and the curriculum. After a great deal of work, this has now been completed and is ready to put in place for September 2010. I realise that the timing of some of these changes may seem unfortunate, but I would like to assure you that there are sound reasons for all of the decisions that have been made. Below is a brief summary of key changes; if you would like to discuss any of these in more detail I would be happy to meet with you and do this in person.

There are three main areas on which we have been concentrating, as follows:

Lesson length

Firstly, we have felt for some time that our lesson length is too short, and so we are going to move, in September, to forty-five minute lessons, which we feel will enhance the delivery of our curriculum. We have also adjusted the registration arrangements to make much better use of contact time with tutors, and slightly adjusted lunch arrangements to deliver a more efficient service. Please note, however, that this does not mean that the actual length of the school day has changed; normal school will end at 4:00 as it does now, although some staff will continue to run clubs and sports practices beyond this time.

Year 9 curriculum

Secondly, we have looked in detail at our year 9 curriculum and have made some significant changes, as parents who attended the Year 8 parents' evening will already know. In summary, all Year 9 pupils will begin their GCSEs one year early in all of the core subjects whilst maintaining a broad and enhanced curriculum in all other subject areas. We believe that the provision of a broad curriculum with exciting targets will give pupils a better understanding of the world and the basis to make a more informed choice for GCSEs at the end of the year. We will therefore be offering a languages programme, a humanities programme, a creative programme, a citizenship programme and a sporting programme to all students alongside their core subjects.



GCSE choices will then be made at the end of Year 9; however please be assured that the full range of subjects currently available will still be on offer, and we are in fact looking to increase this range by September 2011. We will, as always, offer detailed advice, support and guidance throughout the options process and will maintain our aim of tailoring each year's subject combinations to the requirements of that particular cohort. Our small class sizes and flexibility will continue to allow us to offer each pupil the opportunity to study their first choice of subjects. Further, we have increased the amount of time allocated to each subject in years 10 and 11 in order that we can continue to maximise the achievements of all pupils and maintain our excellent record of GCSE results. Current year 9 and 10 pupils, moving into years 10 and 11, will not be affected by these changes.

Bilingual teaching

Finally, we have been looking in detail at our bilingual provision in close consultation with M Teurnier, our Head of Section. The Bilingual section will continue to be available from Year 4, and offers a number of significant advantages. The following is a brief extract from the Bilingual Brochure, which is currently being updated but will be available in full next term,

“Research has shown that Bilingual teaching

- Improves Foreign Language competence and increases pupil motivation
- Improves meta-linguistic skills
- Results in better mental flexibility
- Results in better fluency and interactive skills
- Results in better range of vocabulary
- Improves initiative and independent learning
- Helps pupils to seek connections between ideas, take multiple perspectives and take responsibility for learning
- Helps to prepare students for life beyond school in today's employment market, where it is necessary to multi skill in a variety of contexts

The specific skills developed by our pupils following the bilingual programme at Bolitho were identified as follows by the bilingual teachers and also Dr Carol Morgan from Bath University who followed the progress of the Section Bilingue Department :

- Greater confidence
- Good interactive skills
- Good concentration
- Good spontaneity
- Good persistence and risk-taking”

The main difference, next year, is that the primary subject taught (other than French) will be ICT, and humanities topics will now be delivered in English as part of the core curriculum but will also form the basis for extended project work within bilingual lessons. Although ICT lessons will be conducted in French, the structure of the schemes of work as stipulated by the English National Curriculum will be followed. The teaching of ICT through the medium of French also enables more areas of cross-curricular study to be incorporated, particularly the humanities, where Francophone Internet sites can be used as a current and up to date living resource.

In addition to the three main changes detailed above, I would like to briefly mention the addition (for all pupils from year 3 upwards) of our exciting new ALPs (Accelerated Learning Programmes). These courses are designed to support, broaden and enhance pupils' core study, and are broadly divided into three areas: sporting activities, world languages, and enrichment. Courses include accelerated learning in a variety of subject areas and the opportunities to acquire new skills. We are still developing many of the ALPs in readiness for September 2010, and will be sending out more details of the final programme during the summer term.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

With best wishes

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