



January 2020

Dear Bennett Parent,

As students make their way through their secondary education, so they become increasingly aware of their particular areas of interest and where they are also performing well in the subjects that they study. At the same time students become more mature and so capable of making informed decisions. In this context then, I write to inform you about the curriculum that your child will be studying in year nine from September. Students in year nine will have the opportunity to personalise their curriculum in a limited way, which I have set out below.

It is important to note that further decisions will need to be made for year 10, when the curriculum is further refined. In all likelihood, the year 10 curriculum for the current year 8s will be the same as for the current year 9s, as shown on the school website.

At GCSE, students will study English literature, English language, mathematics, 3 sciences, RE, either history or geography, a modern foreign language plus one more from a range of possible courses. Computing can be chosen as one of the three sciences but this needs to have been studied in year 9.

This will mean that it will not be possible to study both music and drama for example, or both art and textiles, so the decisions made now are an important part of the process of helping refine a student's curriculum to arrive, in time, at a final combination of GCSEs.

## Guidance

There are three reasons to select a particular subject in year 9: firstly, simply because you want to do another year of it - you see the value in it. Secondly, because you want to continue a subject you already study because it is on your shortlist of subjects you might wish to take at GCSE. And thirdly, you want to broaden your curriculum by exploring whether a new subject might be suitable for further study at GCSE.

If you decide to pick up something new, it is important not to do this at the expense of a subject that you also feel you may continue to study: if I am interested in perhaps continuing product design, I should not discontinue this whilst exploring the potential for drama. If, however, I was adamant a qualification in music was not applicable to me, I might pick drama up and let go of music without having taken any uncalculated risk concerning my eventual GCSE curriculum.

When solving dilemmas *between* subject choices it is important to prioritise the idea of which *qualifications* are best suited for students. Enjoyment is clearly a motivating factor here, but it is also important to realise that enjoyment cannot be the driving factor. If I love chess for example, it does not follow that I must get a *qualification* in chess.

It is also worth giving computer science serious thought. We all know the increasing influence of IT on career pathways and as a resource in much of modern life. It is important to both understand this and to be able to contribute to the debate around areas such as AI, from an informed position. It is also worth stating that the Government recognises computing as a science alongside the natural sciences and so computing can take the place of physics or biology in triple science at GCSE. This enables a student to achieve the English Baccalaureate, which is a suite of subjects the Government esteems and which Higher Education destinations rate most highly.

### **What decisions need to be made now?**

- All students will continue to study most subjects in year 9. These will include all the core subjects of English, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, history, geography, their current modern foreign language, religious education (students begin their GCSE course to be examined at the end of year 10) and physical education.
- Students then have two further subjects to study from: art and design, drama, French - beginners, German - beginners, food studies, computer science, Latin (if currently studied), music, product design and textiles. The curriculum decision making form that comes with this letter will show you how different subjects can be combined.
- If you choose to start a new language in year 9 the course will be fast paced so that in year 9 you will lay the foundations for a GCSE in the language.

### **What is the significance of these decisions for progression into GCSE?**

**GCSE and equivalent courses in any of the languages, computer science, music, drama, product design, food and nutrition, textiles or art cannot be followed in years 10 and 11 unless they have been studied in year 9.**

### **Support with making curriculum decisions**

Enclosed with this letter is a form that we will ask you to complete. **All forms must be returned to the school office by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020.** The form includes instructions about how it should be completed. Please do not hesitate to contact the school if you need any help in completing the form.

Also attached is an information pack giving more details about the courses that they can choose to study in year nine and the key features of the GCSE courses that they lead into.

The year eight tutor team will be working with students to help them consider these choices and their implications over the coming week.

If you should feel that you require more information and support in making these decisions we would ask that you contact Miss Williams ([williams@bennett.kent.sch.uk](mailto:williams@bennett.kent.sch.uk)) and we will arrange an appointment with you so that any queries can be worked through.

### **What if I change my mind?**

We do always attempt to offer flexibility but parents and students need to be aware that this is not always possible and may take time to resolve. Being conscientious about the deadline and studying

these documents carefully together reduces the likelihood of decision wavering later on. If a change is proposed after the deadline, this will need to happen through your year manager.

Our experience is that a year 9 curriculum designed in this way enables us to match what students will study to their needs and interests, whilst balancing this with a guarantee that they will study such subjects as are critical to their future chances and personal development.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Chris Woollett', written in black ink.

Chris Woollett  
Assistant Head  
Curriculum and Communication.