

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022**

**Re: Year 9 Options Process**

Dear Parents and Carers of Year 9,

I am really pleased to be writing to you to update you on the upcoming options process for our Year 9 students.

Year 9 is an incredibly important year as students choose the subjects they wish to study at GCSE, during Years 10 and 11 at the academy. We recommend students choose subjects that they enjoy, are good at, and have a keen interest in studying further. When students select their GCSE options it is very important to consider which A-Levels they may wish to study at Sixth Form or college, or the types of apprenticeships they might want to undertake in the future. We will have a strong emphasis on university progression and careers throughout this options process, and I encourage you to continue these conversations with your child at home.

This letter will outline the key information you need about the options pathways available to your child, as well as key dates and information about how the options process will work.

**What options does my child have?**

Walthamstow Academy students will study one of three KS4 pathways. The three different pathways and the options within them are detailed below. We will make individual recommendations to all students before the Christmas holiday as to which pathway we believe they are best suited to. This recommendation will be based on their academic attainment and future goals for A-Level, university, apprenticeships, and careers. All the pathways contain the same compulsory subjects, and then students will be able to make choices within their pathway about their remaining options.

All Year 9 students will study the following compulsory subjects: English Language GCSE, English Literature GCSE, Maths GCSE, Combined Science GCSE (unless they choose Triple Science) and RE GCSE.

Students will also study PE and PSHE but will not sit GCSEs in these subjects (unless they choose PE GCSE).

The optional subjects students choose will depend on the pathway they follow. The three pathways (and the optional subjects within them) are outlined below:

**Pathway A (English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) plus one other subject)**

The EBacc pathway is suitable for students wishing to enter further education and consists of the following GCSE subjects: English Language, English Literature, Maths, Combined Science, Geography **or** History and French **or** Spanish.

A study by the UCL Institute of Education shows that studying subjects included in the EBacc provides students with greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that a student will stay in full-time education. Research conducted by Sutton Trust, an educational charity in the UK, has found that studying the EBacc subjects can also help improve a young person's performance in English and Maths, and the EBacc combination is highly desirable to top UK universities, including Oxford and Cambridge and the other Russell Group universities.

To follow Pathway A, your child will need to choose Spanish **or** French and History **or** Geography. They will then choose one additional subject from the list below:

- Art GCSE
- Business GCSE
- Business BTEC
- Computing GCSE
- Drama GCSE
- Health and Social Care BTEC
- Media GCSE
- Music GCSE
- PE BTEC
- PE GCSE
- Photography GCSE
- Product Design GCSE
- Psychology GCSE
- Sociology GCSE

*(Please note – these optional subjects may be subject to change, as a subject needs a minimum number of students to run.)*

### Pathway B

This pathway is suitable for those not studying an EBacc pathway and for those wishing to undertake an apprenticeship or study vocational subjects at university in the future.

To follow Pathway B, your child may choose one subject from each of the blocks below. At least one of their choices must be one of these subjects:

- Computing GCSE
- French GCSE
- Geography GCSE
- History GCSE
- Spanish GCSE
- Triple Science GCSE

Block 1	Block 2	Block 3
Computing GCSE Drama GCSE French GCSE Geography GCSE History GCSE Music GCSE PE BTEC PE GCSE Spanish GCSE	Art GCSE French GCSE Geography GCSE History GCSE Photography GCSE Product Design GCSE Psychology GCSE Sociology GCSE Spanish GCSE	Business BTEC Business GCSE French GCSE Geography GCSE Health and Social Care GCSE History GCSE Media GCSE Spanish GCSE Triple Science GCSE

### **Pathway C – EBacc with Triple Science**

The EBacc Triple Science pathway is the perfect choice for students wishing to study medicine, pharmacy, or engineering at university, and for students wishing to study Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths or Economics at A-Level.

To follow Pathway C, your child will study Triple Science and then choose two other GCSE subjects:

- French **or** Spanish
- Geography **or** History

Please note that to successfully gain a place on this pathway, your child must achieve a Grade 6 in their January Science PPE.

### **What are the key dates in the options process?**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November – Options Assembly:** Year 9 will be introduced to the options pathways explained in this email during assembly on Thursday this week. We will then start to meet students individually or in small groups to discuss their early thoughts about the options process, make our recommendation for their options pathway, and answer any questions they may have.

**January 16<sup>th</sup> – January 27<sup>th</sup> – Subject Assemblies:** For two weeks in January, Year 9 will have assembly every day, and each day they will hear from two subject leaders of the optional GCSE subjects. These subject assemblies aim to give students the information they need to make an informed choice about their GCSE options. Students will also be given their options booklet before these assemblies, which will contain an overview of the options process as well as information about the optional subjects. The booklet will include reflection pages for students to make notes during the subject assemblies.

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Year 9 Parents Evening:** Year 9 parents evening will be a vital opportunity for you and your child to discuss their options with their teachers. Teachers will be able to update you on your child's progress in their subject this year and make recommendations and answer questions about studying their subject at GCSE.

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February – 'Straw Poll' Assembly:** Year 9 students will complete an online form indicating what they are planning to choose for GCSE. This isn't students' final choice and changes can be made after this point, but we will use the numbers generated from this poll to build the options blocks.

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March - Year 9 Options Event:** All Year 9 students and their parents/carers will have a meeting with a member of the Year 9 Team to finalise their options. We will ensure the options chosen fit within the option blocks and school timetable, and sign off on your child's subject choices for KS4.

I hope you have found the information in this letter helpful, and you feel able to discuss the options process with your child. If you have any questions or concerns about the options process at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me at [harriet.jackson@walthamstow-academy.org](mailto:harriet.jackson@walthamstow-academy.org).

Kind regards

Harriet Jackson

**Head of Year 9**

**Walthamstow Academy**