



The Castle School

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OPTIONS GUIDANCE 2017-2019 COHORT – JANUARY 2017 OPTIONS PROCESS.

STUDENTS WILL NEED TO BRING CURRICULUM GUIDES BACK TO SCHOOL TO WORK ON DURING ENRICHMENT DAYS ON 17/18 JANUARY.

Important Dates

Thursday 5 January – Year 9 Curriculum Guides sent home.

Friday 6 January – Year 9 Options Assembly.

Monday 9 January – 6.00 pm – 8.15 pm **Facing the Future – Options Evening**, opportunity to talk to teachers and students for all subjects, this is an essential fact-finding opportunity.

Tuesday 17/Wednesday 18 January – Options talk to Year 9 on Curriculum Enrichment Days.

Thursday 26 January – individual option interviews – parents and students.

Tuesday 31 January – Deadline for options returns to Form Tutor.

Dear Parents

Year 9 students are now at the stage where they need to choose an appropriate course for Years 10 and 11. Between us, we must help them make this important choice.

Traditionally students have left school often concentrating on achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths. This collection of qualifications has then opened the door to further and higher education opportunities. The Government is now ensuring that students study a wider breadth of subjects. Instead of measuring schools on the number of students who achieve five GCSEs, schools are now measured on the progress and attainment in **eight** subjects. This does not mean a student will only study eight subjects, but the best eight grades will be used to measure the progress for each individual.

The new national measures for Year 9 will recognise success in either English Language or English Literature, Maths, **then 3 more subjects** out of Science (for many this will count as 2 of the 3), History, Geography, Computing, or a Modern Foreign Language (Spanish, German, French or Mandarin). **It is a national expectation that students will study at least three of this particular mix of subjects.**

How does this affect students in Year 9? The Government's intention in promoting this is to encourage and facilitate what they describe as a more rounded educational experience. In four years' time, if you are considering making university applications, your GCSE choices may influence the application; you will be competing for places

at University and in employment against other students right across the country; we want you to be in a position to secure the success that is right for you. An important message is that you choose a broad range of subjects within the guidance we have given. The subjects that facilitate entry to some Universities are English, Maths, Science, a Modern Foreign Language and either History or Geography.

All students will be expected to take GCSEs in:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science (most will take two GCSEs in Science known as Double Award Science)

In addition, all students will study RE, PSHE and will also take part in Physical Education.

It should be noted that all students will have **5 GCSEs** within their core curriculum.

In addition to the compulsory courses mentioned above, the majority of students will choose **4 further subjects**. Some students will be advised to choose 3 subjects only; we will talk with each individual to ensure we plan for the most appropriate pathway to secure success for you. All subjects chosen will require a terminal exam covering the majority of the syllabus in the summer term of Year 11 – 2019.

The majority of the courses offered will lead to GCSE qualifications with the exception of BTEC music and ICT Technical Award/ECDL, these are vocational qualifications equivalent to a GCSE.

The choice of Modern Foreign Languages at The Castle School includes Spanish, German, French and Mandarin. Students must have studied the language they opt for in Years 8 & 9 in order to secure GCSE success.

Details of the option subjects are printed in the Curriculum Guide. This Guide gives you as much information as possible to help you and your son or daughter to make your decision. When you have made your decision you will need to return the form attached to the form tutor. One form is to be returned to your child's form tutor by **Tuesday 31 January**, the other may be kept by you for reference.

At this stage we have not built the option blocks. Our reasoning behind this is to maximise the potential to give everyone as many of their choices as possible, clearly not everyone is going to get everything they ask for. We will work hard to ensure that as many as possible get three out of four choices, ideally many will get four out of four. Once I have the returns I will construct option blocks, which will allow the greatest number of students to study their preferred subjects. Unfortunately, this may mean that there will be a small number of students whose particular combination of subjects cannot be accommodated. In addition, if a subject does not attract a minimum number of students, usually 15, we may not be able to put this on. If either of these situations arise, the students will be informed and will have to make new choices.

You will see from the options schedule that time is spent in school talking to the students about the choices available. There is also an information evening – **Facing the Future** - on **Monday 9 January** when you will be able to talk to students and staff, and consult with colleges and our Careers Adviser to obtain more information on possible career routes post 16. The evening will begin at 6pm and end around 8.15pm; this is a key evening for students and families to attend. Individual appointments for you and your son or daughter to discuss their option choices will be held on **Thursday 26 January**. **Please can you ensure that you sign up for a meeting before you leave school on 9 January, the boards will be in the main reception area.**

There are basic, common sense rules that you need to follow when making your choices. These are obvious, but nevertheless worth stating. It is most unwise to choose a particular subject because a friend is doing so, or because of liking or disliking a particular teacher. There is no certainty at all that friends will be allocated to the same teaching group, nor that they will be with the teacher of their choice.

Choices should be made according to these principles:

- ability in the subject;
- interest in, and liking for, the subject itself;
- relevance of the subject to the student's future career (if known);
- balance of the student's chosen course overall; and
- preferred assessment style (ie balance between non examined assessment (NEA) and terminal exams).

We hope you will read the details to enable you and your child to make up your minds and take the opportunity to talk to your teachers, on the evenings as well as in lessons. It is essential for the students to be proactive in finding out about the courses they are considering. Where a student does not have any definite career ideas as yet, it is wise to aim for a **balanced course** which would ensure good all-round education as well as flexibility for future career choices.

Finally, I would like to stress the need to make decisions very carefully. If, during the summer term, you have second thoughts about your choice of subjects, please contact me as soon as possible. The later this happens, the more difficult it will be to make any changes. **No changes will be made after the first week of the autumn term and only before then if there is a significant reason for changing, which is supported by a parental request.** Each subject chosen carries a commitment to a two-year course, whether or not the student eventually takes an examination in that subject. **If you do not hear anything, you can assume that 'no news is good news' and that we have been able to accommodate the mixture of subjects.**

All the best, please make good use of the support and guidance that is available to you.

Yours sincerely



Fran Gormley, Deputy Headteacher

YEAR 9 OPTIONS OFFER - CURRICULUM 2017-19 – THE CASTLE SCHOOL

Nos of GCSEs	COMPULSORY CURRICULUM	NEA	Exams 2019	NATIONAL EXPECTATION – You need to select 1 of these subjects. There is an opportunity in the ‘Open Choices’ to select more.	NEA	Exam 2019	Open Choice – you need to select 3 subjects from the list below.	NEA	Exam 2019
1	English Language GCSE		2x50%	GCSE Computing	1x20%	2x40%	GCSE Art & Design – Fine Art OR Photography OR Textile Design.	1x60%	1x40%
2	English Literature GCSE		1x40% 1x60%	GCSE French		4x25%	GCSE Computing	1x20%	2x40%
3	Mathematics GCSE		3x 33.3%	GCSE Geography		2x35% 1x30%	GCSE Dance	2x30%	1x40%
4 & 5	Double Award Science GCSEs (2)* Or 3 single sciences see below.		6x16.6%	GCSE German		4x25%	GCSE Design Technology: Graphic Products	1x60%	1x40%
	Religious Education GCSE Short Course		End of Year 10	GCSE History		2x40% 1x20%	GCSE Design Technology: Resistant Materials	1x60%	1x40%
	Single Sciences – Chemistry, Biology and Physics – top sets only, core curriculum time.		2x50% (for each Science)	GCSE Mandarin		4x25%	GCSE Drama	2x30%	1x40%
		GCSE Spanish			4x25%	GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition	1x50%	1x50%	
<p>All students will follow 5 GCSEs in the core time, with the exception of those students taking triple science who will follow 6 GCSEs in the core time. A further 4 subjects will be followed through option choices. The total GCSEs studied will be 9 for the majority of students and 10 for the students taking triple science.</p>							GCSE French		4x25%
							GCSE Geography		2x35% 1x30%
							GCSE German		4x25%
							GCSE History		2x40% 1x20%
							ICT Technical Award or ECDL (Still to be approved by DfE.)		
							GCSE Mandarin		4x25%
							GCSE Music OR	2x30%	1x40%
							BTEC Music	3x25%	1x25%
							GCSE PE	1x40%	1x60%
							GCSE Philosophy, Ethics and Religion		2x50%
GCSE Spanish		4x25%							



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OPTION FORM – to be handed to the Form Tutor by **Tuesday 31 January 2017**.

Name of student: Tutor Group:.....

Please fill in below your choice of subjects, **in order of preference**.

If you are selecting an ICT qualification – please clearly specify your choice. Either GCSE Computing OR ICT Technical Award/ECDL, unless you are considering both, in which case specify your order of preference.

Choice 1 – National Expectation Subject. (Shaded column)
Open – Choice 2
Open – Choice 3
Open – Choice 4
Reserve Choice(s)

Has your son or daughter any ideas about possible careers? If so, please give us details:

Any other comment:

I understand that each subject chosen entails a commitment to follow **the full two-year course**, and to do homework as a necessary part of the programme. Changes to option choices after the form has been handed in will only be possible if there is room in the new group. **Changes will not be possible after the first week of the autumn term and then only in exceptional circumstances and with parental request.**

I also understand that if it is in the interest of my son/daughter, the school may suggest a different course than that chosen by me, and consult me in the event of any change.

Signed: (Parent/Carer)

Please be reassured, no news is good news! You are unlikely to hear any more for several months, however we will be working hard to allocate as many students as possible to their choices. The vast majority should get three of the four choices, and many, but not all will be successful in their fourth choice. However, please also bear in mind that not everyone will get everything.

Please tick appropriate box below:

a) Choices finalised during school 1:1 interview.

b) Choices finalised without 1:1 interview. Student and family confident with choices made and guidance already offered.



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OPTION FORM (COPY) - please complete and keep for your own reference.

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