



# The Castle School

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Dear Parents/Carers

January 2020

## CHOICES GUIDANCE – JANUARY 2020 YEAR 8 CHOICES PROCESS.

### Rationale

As you know, Year 7 and 8 students follow a very broad range of subjects, far greater than most schools, so that they experience a breadth of interesting subjects. In a consultation last year, Year 8 parents told us they wanted their children to have more time in subjects they were really interested in so that they can explore these subjects in greater depth. As a result, we introduced the Choice and Engagement curriculum for Year 9, which has been very successful. Year 9 students have given feedback that this has also helped them to make decisions about which options to take for GCSE in Year 10.

### Compulsory subjects:

In Year 9, all students will continue to study:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- RE
- PSHE
- PE

### Choice and Engagement curriculum:

In addition to the compulsory subjects above, students will **choose a further five subjects** from the list below. By giving you and your child choice about what they study in Year 9, we can give more time to those subjects which your child finds engaging, therefore deepening knowledge and understanding in subjects they might later go on to take at GCSE. It also means that we can reinstate the FOUR options for GCSE with some/most students able to take one GCSE early at the end of Year 10, (The First GCSE). This is designed to spread the pressure on students and avoid the intensity of doing everything in Year 11 whilst still giving them the breadth and choice they have wanted.

Details of the subjects are in the curriculum guide, see attached. This guide gives you information to help make decisions. We are changing the process for Year 8 choices this year by using an online system. Students will receive an email to register. This will be done under the guidance of their form tutor during form time. They will then be able to make their choices online from Thursday 6 February, after the information evening. You, as a parent/carer, will also receive a link via email to approve your child's choices. Please see guidance on back page. The deadline for choices is **Monday 10 February**. If you have any difficulty accessing the online system, please contact the school.

Once we have the returns we will construct 'choices' blocks. This 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. If this situation arises, you will be informed and we will work together to find the best solution.

There are basic, common sense rules to follow when making choices. It is most unwise to choose a particular subject because a friend is doing so, or because of a particular teacher. There is no guarantee 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 ambition (if known);
- preferred assessment style (ie balance between non-examined assessment (NEA) and terminal exams).

It is essential for the students to find out about the subjects they are considering through discussions with their tutor and class teachers. In addition, we will be holding various taster sessions and talks especially in those areas that are new to the students.

Finally, I would like to stress the need to make decisions very carefully. If, during the summer term, your child has second thoughts about their choice of subjects, please contact me as soon as possible. The later this happens, the more difficult it will be to make any changes. **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.**

**Key dates:**

Thursday 9 January – Year 8 Choices launch.

W/C Monday 13 January – Year 8 Curriculum Guides sent home.

Friday 31 January – Year 8 Choices Assembly (follow up).

Monday 3 February – 6.00 pm – 8.15 pm **Year 8 Choices Evening**, opportunity to talk to teachers and students for all subjects, this is an essential fact-finding opportunity.

Thursday 6 February – Optional meeting for those having difficulty making choices.

Monday 10 February – Deadline for choices returns to Form Tutor.

Yours sincerely



Mrs F Gormley  
**Head of School**

## CHOICES – YEAR 8 LEAVERS 2023

You need to choose at least <u>one</u> subject <i>in bold italics</i> from <u>either</u> box 1 or box 2.	
1. Choose 1 subject from the list below that you wish to take as a first GCSE. You will study this for 3 hours in Year 9, and 3 hours in Year 10. The majority will take this GCSE at the end of Year 10.	
Art, Craft and Design GCSE	Art, Craft and Design GCSE is only available as a first GCSE studied in Year 9 and Year 10. This will not be available as an option in Year 10. The route through art in Year 10 options will be a GCSE course in either Fine Art, Textiles or Photography.
BTEC Sport	BTEC Sport is only available as a first GCSE studied in Year 9 and Year 10. This will not be available as an option in Year 10. In Year 10 you will be able to choose GCSE PE.
Child Development OCR Cambridge Nationals	Available Year 9 first GCSE and again in Year 10 options
Design & Technology GCSE	Available Year 9 first GCSE and again in Year 10 options. Year 10 options will also include the opportunity to study Engineering Design OCR Cambridge Nationals
Food Preparation & Nutrition GCSE	Available Year 9 first GCSE <b>and again</b> in Year 10 options
<b>Geography GCSE</b>	
<b>History GCSE</b>	
Information Technologies (IT) OCR Cambridge Nationals	
Philosophy, Ethics and Religion GCSE	
<b>Spanish</b>	

2. Choose <b>4</b> subjects from the list below to study in Year 9 plus a reserve. (at least one of which must be a subject in <b>bold italics</b> unless chosen above). Put a number by them to show your order of preference – 1 most favoured. RES reserve. These are not GCSE courses; the subjects here are about choice and engagement in Year 9. You may opt to take GCSEs in these as you move into Year 10 through the options process.	
	Qualifications you might opt for in Year 10 having followed these courses in Year 9
Art & Design	Could lead to GCSEs in Fine Art, Textiles or Photography
Computing & ICT	Could lead to GCSEs in Computer Science or ICT
Dance	BTEC Performing Arts
Drama	GCSE Drama
<i>Food</i>	GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition
<b>French</b>	GCSE French
<b>Geography</b>	GCSE Geography
<b>German</b>	GCSE German
<b>History</b>	GCSE History
<b>Mandarin</b>	GCSE Mandarin
Music	BTEC Music or GCSE Music.
<b>Spanish</b>	GCSE Spanish
<i>Technology</i>	GCSE Design Technology or Engineering Design Cambridge Nationals