

An ambitious school at the heart of the community

HEADTEACHER Mr Emmanuel Botwe MA (Oxon)

01 March 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian

Re: AS Level examinations in reformed subjects

I am writing with important news relating to those students currently studying the following A-level subjects: **Art, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, English Language, English Literature, History, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Textiles**. This letter does not relate to any other subject.

As you probably already know, these subjects are running new, reformed A-level courses and the biggest change to these reformed courses is that the AS level has been 'de-coupled' from the A2 level. This means that, should a student choose to continue studying one of these subjects through Year 13, the marks gained in the AS examinations at the end of Year 12 will not count towards the overall A level grade.

This time last year, as with all schools and colleges, we had to make a decision as to whether or not to continue the requirement that all students choose four subjects and whether or not to enter students for AS examinations in the new subjects. In line with the great majority of sixth forms, we asked students to choose four subjects and told them that they would sit AS examinations in all of these at the end of Year 12. We still believe that, given the imperfect information available at the time, this was the sensible route to take – at a point of great uncertainty; this option appeared to offer the security of being closest to the existing familiar system.

From next year, most A-Level subjects will have been reformed. The demand for students will be significantly greater. To give students a better chance of success in the overall A-level examinations, and to provide time to fully prepare for the increased academic challenge, we will move to a system where examinations are sat at the end of Year 13.

We believe that to insist that students automatically continue on the path of sitting AS levels in all subjects at the end of this year, may not provide them with the best chance of getting the highest possible grade at the end of Year 13. This is primarily because of the time that they would have to spend preparing for an examination that will not count towards their final A-Level grade.

However, we are aware that there are some students in the current Year 12 studying reformed subjects who may wish to take AS examinations in the summer. We recognise the moral obligation to honour those pathways, should students and families still wish to do so.

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Therefore, we are proposing that the decision is left with students and parents, with plenty of opportunities to discuss the issues with us in person. The options available to any student studying a reformed A-Level are:

- a. Continue as before and sit AS examinations at the end of Year 12. If they continue with this subject, the marks will not count towards their overall A-level grade. If they choose to drop the subject, then they will 'bank' the AS grade as a separate, standalone qualification.
- b. Continue with the subject(s) but opt not to sit the AS examinations, instead using the time that would otherwise have been spent practising AS-specific examination technique and revising exams on consolidating knowledge revising for AS examinations in unreformed subjects.
- c. If you are studying three or four reformed subjects, you will have a meeting with a member of the 6th Form team to discuss the options available to maximise your chances of academic success.

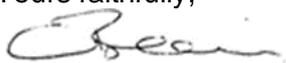
We appreciate that this is a complicated issue and we will, of course, be on hand to offer individual advice to all students and their families. We are also holding Information, Advice and Guidance sessions throughout this Thursday evenings' Parents Evening in the Refectory 4-7pm where we will outline the issues in a little more detail and there will be an opportunity to ask general questions.

The timeline for events:

Date	Event
3 rd March 2016	Year 12 Parents Evening
9 th March 2016 onwards	Individual meetings with any student/family who requires one before decisions are made
14 th March	Parent & Student A-Level Reforms Information Evening
17 th March 2016	Final decisions made in preparation for the Easter Holiday Revision Period

I would like to finish by reassuring you that this is nothing to worry about; any transition to a new system can seem complicated, but there is plenty of time to explore the issues and make decisions. We will be on hand to support you throughout. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Caroline Brennan
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(Sixth Form & Curriculum).

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