

Re: The Options Process

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to introduce you to the options process and outline the key events that will take place to support you and your daughter. I appreciate that some of you may have been through this process before or attended the recent Engagement Evening where this process was outlined, but please do read all the following carefully and go through it with your daughter.

Pathways:

We offer two pathways:

- Pathway one – Humanities: Approx 60 students: select either geography or history and no longer continue with a language.
- Pathway two – Languages: Most students continue with the language they are currently learning. They have the opportunity to take either geography or history to achieve the Ebacc qualification.

We take great care to place each student on the pathway which will enable them to achieve to their full potential. Students will be aware of their pathway by mid-November. **ALL students**, regardless of pathway, have **two option choices** to make, one from each option block. The option blocks are created using the January dry run information which aims to give as many students as possible the chance to choose their preferred subject combinations.

Triple science:

We have listened to feedback from previous year groups and as a result have introduced triple science. It is being offered as an option choice as one of two choices for students who have been involved in the triple science programme which was launched in Year 7. Students can only opt for triple science if they have been told they meet this criteria. Students should check with Mr Try (Director of Science) or Miss Gowrikanthan (KS3 science lead) if they are unsure.

Support:

Students will have information assemblies with me to explain the options process, along with a number of form time activities that will generate discussion and provide additional guidance and support. I will deliver an introductory assembly to Year 8 on Monday 25th November in the main Hall and will put the powerpoint in the Year 8 Google Classroom and email it to all parents/carers. I will be available every lunchtime on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in my office from 12.50pm to talk to any students who would like help with options. Parents/carers will be able to book Zoom appointments with me for Year 8 Parents Evening on Thursday 16th January if you would like to discuss options.

Subject information:

Course descriptions for all option subjects will be given to students on Thursday 28th November. Students will then have the weekend to read these in detail. From Monday 2nd December Year 8 will have the chance to sign up for January taster lessons in subjects they may be considering but do not currently study and would like to know more about. This will be via a Google Form which will close on Friday 6th December at 4.00pm.

Options and careers focus weeks:

As soon as we return in January we will have a two week focus on options and careers from Monday 6th January to Friday 17th January. All key stage 3 subjects will run a GCSE taster lesson and a careers lesson as part of the timetable. Taster lessons in new subjects will also occur during these two weeks and will all be held in the canteen.

Furthermore, all Year 8 students are offered an options interview with Mrs Mmireku (our school Careers Advisor) to support their choices, in addition to the guidance given throughout all of the above events.

We fully appreciate that this process can be very daunting and I hope that this letter has provided a clear overview of the steps involved and support offered. On the reverse of this letter you will find a summary of all of the key dates mentioned above and also FAQs – please take time look through this and discuss it with your daughter. Information will be posted regularly in the Year 8 Google Classroom, parent texts and emails will keep you up to date and information will also be available on our website at: <https://swakeleys.hillingdon.sch.uk/curriculum>.

Yours sincerely,



C. Devereux (Mrs)

Deputy Headteacher: Achievement and Curriculum

Options Pathways

HUMANITIES pathway:

Approx. 40 pupils

3

- No MFL
- Must choose either Geography or History (a Humanity)
- 2 other choices

LANGUAGES pathway:

Approx. 200 pupils

3

- With MFL
- 2 other choices
- Can choose either Geography or History to achieve **Ebacc**
- **Triple science as an option choice for those identified**

Date/timing	Actions
Week comm. 4th November	Introductory letter home to all families
Monday 25th Nov	Introductory assembly to Y8 in main hall with Mrs Devereux
Thursday 28th Nov	Issue all option course descriptions (Options Book) to students
Monday 2nd December	Students can sign up for taster sessions in new option subjects
Monday 6th – Friday 17th January	Two week focus: taster lessons & careers lessons in KS3 options subjects, careers lesson in PSHCE, drop down taster lessons for new subjects in the canteen
Monday 13th January	'Dry run' of option choices on a Google Form. This is to help me create two option blocks which fit the most common choices – these are not final choices,
Friday 24th January	Issue option forms to all Y8 – <u>includes subject option blocks</u>
Tuesday 4th February	Deadline for handing in options forms

Options – Common questions...and the answers!

1. Does my pathway affect the set I am in for English, maths or science?
NO - core subject sets are all set separately and this is not part of the options process.
2. If I am on the Languages pathway, do I have to do history or geography?
NO, but you can choose either as an option. If you do then you have the **Ebacc** subjects.
3. What is Ebacc?
It is an academic set of 5 subjects Eng, maths, science, MFL and a humanity. Achieve a grade 4 or 5 (or higher!) in all to achieve Ebacc.
4. Why can only some students opt for triple science?
It is very content heavy and puts a real pressure on exam performance. Students need to have been involved since year 7 to ensure they are fully committed to the high demands of the course.
5. What is the deadline for option forms and when will we know which courses we have?
The deadline for handing in options forms is Tuesday 4th February and choices will be confirmed in May. We have to check we can staff and timetable all courses and this takes time.
6. Why do we need to pick back up subjects?
Unfortunately you may NOT get your top two choices – we sometimes have to use back-ups if courses are full or not running so pick these carefully too!