

14th December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: GCSE Options Process – January 2021

In the new year, Year 9 students will be completing the process of choosing their Option subjects for study at Key Stage Four. This is an important moment in their time at The Dean Academy as they have the opportunity to reflect on the subjects they wish to study and take ownership of their next steps towards their future. For many, these choices come naturally and seem clear from the first discussion, but we recognise that for many others this process can seem daunting and slightly overwhelming.

Please be reassured that we will support students every step of the way, and of course you as well. Further information will be sent home after Christmas and all Year 9 students will be focussing on options choices and careers education in tutor time in the run up to the decision-making process. We will be holding our Options Evening on Thursday 21st January online, but you will be given the opportunity to speak to subject teachers directly the following week during Year 9 Consultation Evening on Thursday 28th January. Further details of both will be sent out in the new year.

Over the Christmas holidays, I would ask you to speak to students regarding their upcoming choices and the importance of being an active part of the decision. We will be encouraging them to be aspirational in their choices, to dream big and to think carefully about their choices post-16 as well as for GCSE study. Please encourage them to discuss with you the subjects that they enjoy, that challenge them, and which will allow them to achieve their true potential.

A detailed course booklet will be available on the website after the holidays and I will communicate with you regularly when important documents are being sent home. All students in Year 9 will receive a presentation about the options process from myself to fully explain their next steps early in the new term and we will also ask them about their initial thoughts, so we know where we need to guide them.

In your discussions with students, please take account of the following advice and guidelines:

- Each student's choice must be 'broad and balanced', as this allows them the widest choice when they come to further studies Post 16. Choosing a subject because you like the teacher, or your friends are choosing it are not good reasons and should not be used to make choices!
- As part of the push on EBacc subjects and the government's drive to ensure that all students have a rigorous education, there is an expectation that the majority of students will study a humanities subject (Geography or History), a language or Triple Science
- Each student will be asked to make four preferences and four second choices. It is essential that they are happy to study any combination of these subjects as we cannot guarantee that every student will get their first choice in all option columns, although we will do our absolute best to ensure the majority do

Once again, we will work closely with all young people to support them as they make good decisions. Thank you for all you will do to support and encourage them over the coming weeks as I know you, too, will play an important role in this important decision.

Yours sincerely

Emily Smith
Deputy Headteacher