



# **Hardenhuish School KS4 Options Policy**

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Manager**



## **Hardenhuish School Key Stage 4 Options Policy**

**The aim of this policy is to support pupils to make well informed option choices so that they study a Key Stage 4 curriculum which is engaging and challenging and leads to pupils achieving the best possible range of qualifications to enable their future aspirations to be fulfilled. This can be achieved by providing pupils and parents with:**

- impartial and accurate advice and guidance to inform their choices. Hence the publication of the comprehensive 'Key Stage 4 Options Information' booklet, and inviting parents to an Options Evening to find out more about the different courses on offer; and
- an up to date report on progress, so that choices can be based on a realistic assessment of their potential.

The options process occurs over a number of weeks in Term 3 and consists of two special Year 9 assemblies to launch the process, a Parent and Pupil Consultation Evening, tutor time activities, the Options Evening and finally the deadline for completion of the option form.

1. Using our knowledge of each individual pupil's prior attainment, aspirations and learning preferences, the School places pupils on one of three curriculum pathways to maximise their achievement, engagement and enjoyment during Key Stage 4 and best prepare them for progression post-16. Each pathway is designed to offer an appropriate number and type of qualifications that meet the learners' needs. Pupils receive a personalised options form that states which pathway they will follow. The three pathways are:
  - i) Vocational+ Pathway – for pupils who often learn best through a mix of vocational and GCSE courses and may enjoy a practical style of learning.
  - ii) 5TEAM Pathway– for pupils who, with additional support and capacity, have the potential to **Target** at least **5** GCSEs at grades 9-5, including **English and Maths**.
  - iii) 5TEAM+ Pathway – pupils who will confidently **Target** at least **5** GCSEs at grades 9-5, including **English and Maths**.
2. Many pupils value the opportunity to choose what they will study. Pupils should be encouraged to choose subjects which they will do well in and enjoy. It is also very important that pupils are encouraged to seek advice from their tutor and Learning Manager so that they choose a combination of subjects which will equip them with the skills and qualifications needed to secure their desired progression after Year 11, be that further education, an apprenticeship or employment with training.
3. In general, advice to pupils regarding a suitable combination of subjects to choose should be based on the School's longstanding principle of following a broad and balanced curriculum which keeps future progression routes and options open to them. The English Baccalaureate combination of subjects is not compulsory at Hardenhuish, but studying a modern foreign language and a humanity at GCSE, in addition to the compulsory core subjects of English, maths and science, is strongly recommended for the majority of pupils who are aspiring to go to university. However, it is compulsory for all pupils on the 5TEAM and 5TEAM+ pathways to study at least one subject from French, Spanish, geography, history and computing. This is to ensure pupils on these pathways study a curriculum with a broad academic core that together

with their other option subjects will give them a strong portfolio of qualifications. The number of options available to pupils and the full range of courses on offer are detailed in the 'Key Stage 4 Options Information' booklet published to all pupils in Term 3 of Year 9. The small number of restrictions on the permissible combination of subjects a pupil may choose are also explained in this booklet, for example pupils may study only one subject from product design, food preparation & nutrition and catering, one ICT/computing course, one PE (GCSE)/sports studies course and up to two expressive arts subjects.

4. Subject staff should limit their conversations with pupils to their own subject. If they are asked about other subjects particularly in relation to a future career, they should refer the pupils to teachers of those subjects and/or careers staff. Conversations with pupils may cross subject barriers when they are choosing within a faculty, e.g. why a pupil should continue with one language as opposed to another, why a pupil should take one kind of computing/ICT or PE/sports studies course rather than another.
5. Each faculty should give the same information to all pupils about the courses they are offering. It is not appropriate to target individuals or groups of individuals. For example, pupils in lower sets should receive the same presentation of information as pupils in top sets. However, it is appropriate that pupils should be invited to contact individual subject specialists if they require further information about courses.
6. Staff offering Key Stage 4 courses which are not taught in Year 9, (e.g., Business Studies, Dance etc) may wish to use Year 9 assembly time to give a presentation about their subject.
7. If pupils require information from subject teachers about how well they are likely to do in their subject, it is acceptable to give this information to individuals, based on their effort, interest, and prior attainment in the subject. It is not acceptable to use past GCSE examination results as a way of making pupils feel that they have a better chance of doing well in one subject rather than another.
8. The Year 9 Learning Manager and tutors have a key role in the options process because of their knowledge of the pupils and their capabilities and interests. For example:
  - If a parent says it is a question of whether the pupils should choose one subject or another, the Learning Manager or tutor should talk about this choice bearing in mind what he/she knows about the pupil. If the Learning Manager or tutor is happy that both choices would be suitable, then it is best to point them to the subject teachers involved and then leave it to the pupil and parents to decide. If one subject seems more appropriate than another, based on what the Learning Manager or tutor knows about the pupil, then the Learning Manager or tutor should put these matters to the parents/pupil for them to consider. If future career intention is the issue, then the advice should be to seek out the Careers and Transition Manager.
  - The Learning Manager or tutor may want to comment on the pupil's combination of choices, bearing in mind their knowledge about the pupil. For example, if a pupil who finds written work a chore has chosen subjects that will involve lots of extended writing, then this will need to be pointed out.
  - The Learning Manager or tutor may repeat what he/she knows to be the pupil's strengths and interests as a way of indicating possible course choices they should consider.
  - The Learning Manager or tutor should avoid saying anything that suggests his/her personal preference for one subject rather than another.

In all of this, the Year 9 Learning Manager and tutors are doing what they should be doing, which is supporting parents, pupils and colleagues.

9. Hardenhuish operates an options system where option pools are constructed to give the optimal fit to enable as many pupils as possible to study the subjects they wish to choose. If sufficient pupils request particular courses and combinations of courses, then the School will aim to provide those courses. If a course is under/oversubscribed and there are too few/many pupils for the viable running of a course or combination of courses, pupils and parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity and asked to alter

the pupil's option choices with support from the Year 9 Learning Manager and the Deputy Headteacher responsible for the curriculum. The minimum/maximum number of pupils needed to make a course viable is not fixed and may vary between subjects and resources available, for example staffing and accommodation. In cases where it is not possible for pupils to study their chosen combination of subjects, every effort will be made to provide pupils with their reserve option choice stated on the pupil option form.

10. Once pupils have made their choices and it is confirmed that these courses can run, they will be encouraged to understand that altering their option choices will be very difficult and may not be possible if classes are full or the certain combination of subjects is not offered. Requests for course changes will only be considered up to the end of September in Year 10, after consultations between the Learning Managers for Year 9 and 10 and the Deputy Headteacher responsible for the curriculum.