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# READING SCHOOL

## KEY STAGE FOUR OPTIONS GUIDE FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS

2021

# 'Academic Excellence and Building Good Men'

Our purpose in giving you choice of subjects at the end of Year 8 is to allow you to spend 3 years studying a broad programme of subjects in great depth. Making these options choices now allows us to reduce your class sizes, to offer you new programmes of study, to give you further time for character education through your Floreat programme and to enable you to specialise in a range of subjects that most provoke your curiosity.

We offer a wide range of courses at Key Stage 4 (GCSE) ensuring that there is an excellent quality of curriculum provision. The subjects we offer are intended to ensure that you acquire a breadth of knowledge and skills that are crucial in terms of future progression. It is therefore important for each Reading School pupil to choose a course programme that is balanced and meets their individual needs, rather than there being any singular 'best' combination.

Over the last few years, all subjects across the country have been radically overhauled. The old A\*-G grading system of your parents' era is no more, being replaced with a 1-9 grading system. The GCSE examinations are more difficult, and access to the top grades of 8 and 9 is more challenging than ever before. Your teachers are exceedingly well-placed to enable you to achieve your potential.

In the following pages we explain a little about the options ahead of you, though full written details of each course will be given to you before the Easter holidays, with your final decision required by April 21<sup>st</sup>, and your option choices made via an online form.

1. You discussed your progress with your teachers at the Parents' Evening on **February 4<sup>th</sup>**.
2. Discuss potential options with parents, form tutors, Careers Adviser and subject teachers.
3. Watch the virtual presentations from options subjects in **w/c March 15<sup>th</sup>** (details TBC)
4. Review carefully the full KS4 Curriculum guide when it is published in the w/c **March 22<sup>nd</sup>**.
5. Complete the Options Form online (further details to follow) with parents by **April 21<sup>st</sup>**.

We ask you to choose those subjects which you enjoy most, which inspire curiosity and present you with a healthy challenge. We recommend that you choose a programme that keeps your options open and broad, rather than narrowing too early. The **academic curriculum** is of crucial significance because of the very nature of Reading School as an academically selective school. However, the **character curriculum** is equally important in order to produce active, responsible citizens through the nurturing of integrity, citizenship, bodily/mental health and leadership.

During Years 9-11, you should continue with a broad and balanced range of new and existing co-curricular activities both within and beyond the school gates. Not only do these give you a well-deserved break from your academic studies, but they endow you with virtues such as determination and teamwork that, at Reading School, we believe to be equally as valuable for your future as academic results.

Good luck with all the adventures that lie ahead!

Mr G Fairchild  
Assistant Headteacher

## MAKING CHOICES

You should not immediately have a fixed idea of what you will choose, but instead consider different combinations. There is time for you to go through several iterations before settling on your final choices.

We aim to support you through this key process. Listening to advice is a vital part in the decision-making process and therefore you need to talk through your ideas with as many people from school as possible.

If you are unsure about what choices to make, it is important to realise that help is available:

- Your Form Tutor or Head of House have gained valuable insight into your character and talents over the past 18 months. They would welcome being included in discussions about your direction.
- Dr Evans and Mr Fairchild oversee the Curriculum and would be happy to discuss your queries.
- Clare Desai, the School's Careers Adviser, will be available to meet online with you to discuss future pathways during the school week. You can contact Clare to make a virtual appointment via the email address [careers@reading-school.co.uk](mailto:careers@reading-school.co.uk)
- The Careers section of the Learning Resources Centre can be utilised on request by emailing Mrs Kesteven for a timeslot.

Other than Medicine/Science/Engineering routes (all of which are covered by the Core Curriculum), there are very few careers for which you need to have studied specific subjects at A Level (and therefore at GCSE).

Our Careers Adviser, Clare Desai, highlights a few things you might not have realized:

*"You don't have to be the best at **Art** to choose it for GCSE. If you enjoy Art, and you'll commit to working hard, the Art department will support you no matter what your individual ability. If you are keen on Architecture, Animation or Games Designing then you'll want to take Art for GCSE."*

*"The interpersonal skills developed through studying **Modern Foreign Languages** are crucial for effective communication in English, and give you the opportunity to study abroad at University. **Latin** teaches your mind to think in a way that lends itself to problem-solving."*

*"You do not have to be able to code to take GCSE **Computer Science**; just have a good appreciation of logic and a desire to extend your knowledge of technology and computer hardware/software."*

*"You don't need to choose **Economics** for GCSE in order to study it at A-Level! In fact, evidence suggests that students entering A-Level Economics with a wider range of skills from other subjects may bring as much to the subject."*

*"**History** at GCSE is not simply remembering dates and writing long essays. It is a subject that develops your ability to argue, justify your views and analyse sources."*

*"**Drama** at GCSE isn't a 'soft' option. It's challenging intellectually and personally: you evaluate your own and others' performance skills: you work collaboratively to create your own play: you develop concise and clear writing skills: you learn to justify your own opinions."*

*"**Geography** at GCSE is not about remembering capital cities and flags. It is a facilitating subject that enriches other subjects, builds skills of evaluation and deepens your critical understanding of the world's big issues."*

*"With the UK Sports industry worth £20bn, the depth of anatomical and physiological knowledge gained in GCSE **PE** are an ideal stepping stone for a future in elite sports medicine, nutrition or sports psychology."*

*"You don't need to have reached a high grade on an instrument to study GCSE **Music**. The requirement for performance is that you have reached Grade 4 in Year 11, which is easily done. Love music? Continue!"*

## KEY STAGE 4 CURRICULUM

**You will study ALL of these subjects as part of your core curriculum:**

GCSE English Language  
GCSE English Literature

GCSE Mathematics

GCSE Biology  
GCSE Chemistry  
GCSE Physics

AS Religious Studies (through Theology & Philosophy)

## CHARACTER CURRICULUM

At Reading School we recognise that each pupil has individual needs, abilities and potential. The PHSE programme aims to provide for each individual a broad spectrum of study, embracing academic, personal, social and moral elements. As well as individual classroom sessions, we invite a number of key speakers in throughout the year to assist with the delivery of the curriculum. Further information on specific topics studied can be found on the school website. **Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)** cover the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health. It should equip students with the information, skills and values to have safe, fulfilling and enjoyable relationships and to take responsibility for their sexual health and well-being; **Child Protection and Safeguarding** issues are covered extensively throughout the PSHE programme at Reading School. As well as supporting students to consider future pathways through **Careers Education**, many areas of the SMSC (Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural) policy are also covered in the delivery of PSHE.

The aim of the Key Stage 4 **Physical Education Core Curriculum** is to offer pupils an opportunity to specialise in selected sports as well as to provide an opportunity to develop skills in new sports. Please contact either Mr McGall or Mr T Evans, Assistant Heads or your current PE Teacher if you have any questions relating to the Physical Education Curriculum at Key Stage 4 at Reading School.

The **Floreat** Programme aims to empower you, the student, to become a thinking leader. Through a bespoke mix of theoretical and applied practical lessons, you will have the opportunity to develop the 'soft' skills of communication, decision-making, teamwork and problem-solving that are crucial for continued success both within and beyond the classroom. The programme ties in perfectly with the school's values of Leadership, Integrity, Excellence and Community, whilst also beginning to consider the challenges of life beyond Reading School through collaboration with our international partner schools, local companies and community groups. This dedication of regular curriculum time is, as far as we know, unique within the UK state school sector and we believe that Floreat provides opportunities for you to develop and demonstrate what makes you unique. Please contact Mr B. Miller if you have any questions relating to the Floreat programme.

It is perfectly normal for you at this stage to be unsure of what career you wish to follow. What is important is that you consider what you are passionate about, and what you enjoy doing.

# CURRICULUM OPTIONS

## KEY PRINCIPLES

### Do...

- Think carefully about the choices that keep a range of future options open.
- Choose subjects that you are interested in and in which you feel successful.
- Be realistic about your own strengths and weaknesses.
- Seek and follow advice from teachers, tutors, parents and other adults.
- Think about reserve subjects in case your first choice is not available.

### Do not...

- Do not choose a subject just because your friend has or you like the teacher.
- Do not fixate on post-GCSE requirements at the expense of enjoyment.
- Do not choose a subject because you think it is easy; every GCSE will be a challenge!
- Do not presume that your choice guarantees the subject! Some subjects may be oversubscribed and some options combinations may not be possible.

The English Baccalaureate is a compulsory element of the Key Stage Four Curriculum. It consists of English, Mathematics, History (Ancient or Modern) or Geography, the Sciences and a Language (Ancient or Modern). These are a minimum to fulfil the criteria; you are welcome to choose more than one of the options.

### **You must choose FOUR of the following subjects.**

**At least one of which must be Ancient History, History or Geography.**

**At least one of which must be French, German, Latin or Spanish.**

#### **English Baccalaureate Subjects**

GCSE Ancient History

GCSE Geography

GCSE History

You must choose **at least** 1 subject from this group

You are welcome to choose more than one.

#### **Ancient and Modern Languages**

GCSE French

GCSE German

GCSE Spanish

GCSE Latin

You must choose **at least** 1 subject from this group

You are welcome to choose more than one.

#### **Other Options**

GCSE Art and Design

GCSE Music

GCSE Economics

GCSE Computer Science

GCSE Drama

GCSE PE

GCSE Mandarin

GCSE Electronics

You are welcome to choose more than one from this group

Our online options form will also ask you to choose one reserve subject, in case the particular combination of subjects that most interests you is not possible. In the event of over-subscription of one or more subjects, discussion between Heads of House and Heads of Department, availability of reserve choice and prior CPRO grades may all be considered. Please note that whilst we will do our best to offer you all the subjects of your choice, we cannot guarantee to do so. Staffing constraints and timetabling issues may require the “reserve choice” to be used. However, there will be consultations with you should any issues arise.

## HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

The support of you, the parents, is valuable in giving your son the confidence to make the right choices. That said, the final choices must be theirs rather than yours. If, however, you feel that your son is not yet ready to make these choices, then the 'Making Choices' section above points them in the direction of appropriate support.

You could perhaps consider the following points to guide discussion with your son:

1. Which subjects does your son enjoy?
  - This is a good place to start as your son is more likely to succeed if he enjoys a subject. The subject will have changed dramatically since your time at school.
2. What are your son's interests?
  - Discussions with your son about his passions and interests will help to make the right choices.
3. Does he have a pathway in mind?
  - Your son should focus on the skills that potential pathways require, and therefore which subjects facilitate getting those skills, rather than fixating on one career.
4. For which subjects has your son shown an aptitude?
  - Previous reports, feedback in his exercise book and discussions at parents' evening should indicate whether or not he is capable of keeping up with the rigours of each subject's GCSE course. Realistic and appropriate choices at this stage will reap dividends in Year 11.
5. Remember that your son is unique!
  - What has worked for his elder sibling or for you might not be appropriate for him. Subjects and career pathways have changed since your time at school. His choices must be about what is right for him alone.

**The important thing is to keep options open by choosing a broad and balanced range of subjects at Key Stage 4.**