

The preferences process for Year 9 students

Dear parent/carer,

Your child will soon begin the next important stage of their school life. Over the next two academic years (Year 10 and Year 11), they will be following a range of examination courses that will provide them with their first set of school certificates and, hopefully, lead to further successes as they leave Heworth Grange to follow their post-16 education or training.

Up to now, students have been studying a wide range of subjects at Key Stage 3 as part of a balanced curriculum that has provided them with a firm foundation for their next steps. In fact, they have followed a range of subjects that has met all the requirements of the National Curriculum, and more.

In September your child will progress to Key Stage 4, where each of the subjects taught have a specification which takes a certain amount of lesson time to get through. This makes it impossible to study an unlimited number of subjects in Years 10 and 11; your child needs to make some choices. This is what the preferences process is for.

To reach the best possible solution we make sure that students follow courses that are necessary to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum, and then we give them a choice of subjects to fill the remainder of their curriculum time in school. Therefore, some of subjects will be compulsory (we call them the 'core' subjects), and some are optional. The optional subjects may be traditional GCSE and/or vocational qualifications. Further information about each of the courses on offer will be shared with you and with students next week. This will be in the form of a printed preferences booklet for each student, as well as online information for parents and carers. There is also a brief overview of information on the back of this letter.



You are invited!

Preferences Information Evening at Heworth Grange School
Tuesday 5th March 2024, 16:00-17:30

To help you to support your child in making positive decisions for their future in school, it is important that you are able to familiarise yourself with the different courses on offer. Therefore, I strongly encourage you and your child to attend the preferences evening next Tuesday afternoon. This will be a good opportunity for you to find out about all of the courses on offer from the teachers and leaders of different subjects in school.

Once the information has been shared with you, I will be in contact again about how to begin choosing subjects formally. In the meantime, the objective is to learn about each of the subjects and start to have discussions with your child about what they might like to study.

This is an exciting time in your child's education where they get to make some choices, please encourage them to take note of all the advice and guidance that is given to them so that they make positive choices.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Hulse
Deputy Headteacher (Quality of Education)

Making the Right Choice

We are asking your child to make choices about which subjects to study in Years 10 and 11. They may not have decided on a career path yet. Do not worry about this; your child will not be alone in this. Even if they have a good idea now about a future career, they may find that they change their mind in the months and years to come. Remember that there is lots of support in school in terms of careers advice.

In our school we help students through this time in two ways. Firstly, we have designed the preferences system in such a way that it will give them a balanced choice of subjects that will allow them to take different career paths in the future, even if they do change your mind. Secondly, we provide all of our students with ongoing careers education throughout Years 9, 10 and 11.

Students should choose a subject because they really want to do it and not just because their friends have chosen it. Your child may not be put in the same class as their friends, and so this should not influence their subject choices. Also, please be aware that we cannot guarantee who will be teaching a class, so do not pick an option purely because your child likes their current teacher. It is the subject that matters.

The core subjects

The courses that all students at Heworth Grange follow in Years 10 and 11 are:

- GCSE English Language
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Mathematics
- GCSE Combined Science
- Core PE*
- PSHE*

** These courses are non-examined courses that form part of the National Curriculum*

In addition to this, there are several optional subjects available which allow students to follow courses aligned to their interests and aspirations. Each student gets to select **three** additional subjects to study alongside the core subjects. The information about these courses will be outlined in the preferences booklet.

What happens next?

When students have made up their mind about which subjects to take, they will need to complete an options form. This will be shared with them soon, and a clear deadline will be set for its return.

Sometimes there is a situation where too few, or too many, students choose a particular subject. If we do not have enough resources to put on extra classes, we may need to use a backup choice. This happens on very few occasions, and we try as far as possible to give our students what they ask for. We will only use backup choices if we really need to. If this happens, we will speak to students about the change.