



30th January 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

Please find below a very important letter about significant changes to our curriculum offer, Options and Careers.

Mission statement

- “We are an inclusive Community school, proud to be valued citizens serving the borough of Rochdale.”
- “We provide a captivating learning experience and foster a culture of the highest expectations for all.”
- “We ensure every individual is challenged, motivated and inspired to be the absolute best they can be in all that they do.”

Values

We expect everyone to do “our best always everywhere”. Each subject has defined what that means and teaches those values through an appropriate curriculum designed to best meet the needs of all students.



Our mission statement and values underpin all that we do as a school and we work to ensure that the curriculum that we offer all students ensures that they have a broad and balanced education that will obviously provide opportunities to achieve the highest examination results, but also one that provides our students with the wealth of knowledge, skills and experiences needed in the 21st Century.

Key Stage 3 (KS3) is a vitally important part of this curriculum. We are justifiably proud of the wide range of subjects that all students study at Key Stage 3 including the EARTS (Art, Dance, Drama, Music), Technology, Computer Science, Modern Foreign Languages and Humanities as well as the core curriculum (English, maths and science). We believe that it is important for all students to study this broad curriculum and to experience the full range of subjects and experiences both within and beyond the classroom. However, what has become clear over the last few years is the time constraints of just 2 years of KS3 study have

led to some areas having a lack of *depth* of study e.g., not enough time for students in History to explore why there was a Cold War and the dangers of nuclear war. We believe all students should have these curriculum experiences as part of their education for life not just those choosing to follow it as a GCSE. We have now had 2 years of the reformed 1-9 GCSEs and are very confident of delivering the new courses in years 10 and 11 only (as most schools do now) to the same high quality you would expect of a good school like ours. Therefore, to ensure we deliver on our mission statement and provide the best curriculum experience for your child, we will be returning to a model of a three year Key Stage 3 from September 2020.

What does this mean for Year 8 students?

It means that these students will not choose their options for Key Stage 4 (GCSE and BTEC) in Year 8. They will have the opportunity to continue to study a wider curriculum, developing their wider and deeper knowledge, skills and experiences, so that they are better informed for when they take their options in Year 9. Our student and parent voice increasingly tells us that students and parents feel that Year 8 is still rather young to make what is sometimes a *difficult decision* about which subjects to choose to continue to study. Some of them are still only 12 years old when that decision is made. A three year Key Stage 3 will allow us to continue with our robust programme of Careers Education, Information and Guidance. It will also allow us to provide a wider range of opportunities for students to experience before they have to make final decisions which can sometimes impact on post-16 choices.

I know that all of you are currently making appointments for Year 8 Parents' evening on February 6th and this evening will continue and provide you with important information regarding the progress that your son/daughter is making. However, the Options Evening on March 12th will not now go ahead this year. All members of the Leadership Team will still meet with Year 8 students on an individual basis at the end of March to discuss their progress and aspirations for their futures.

We do not make changes to the school without a significant amount of research, discussion and planning and we always put the students' best interests at the heart of all that we do. We firmly believe that this is the right change to make at this moment in time to ensure that all students leave Oulder Hill Community School with the best possible experiences and qualifications to enable them to be the absolute best they can be in all that they do.

Yours sincerely



John Watson
Headteacher