

Options Overview

March 2020

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

First of all, I hope that you are in good health during this difficult time. The situation has, of course, made the choosing of options more difficult as we are unable to conduct the face to face meetings which are usual when making choices. It is my intention that this document goes some way to answering your questions. With this in mind, I have put together the typical questions that are asked each year and a response for each one:

How many qualifications will each pupil gain at the end of Year 11? The vast majority of pupils will gain nine qualifications at the end of Year 11. These are broken down as follows: English Language, English Literature, Maths, two grades for Combined Science, RE, Option 1, Option 2 and Option 3. As you will note, the majority of qualifications are taken as part of the core subjects rather than options. Subsequently, this means the majority of pupil time during the course of a school week is spent in core subjects.

Do pupils have to take PE? Yes, all pupils have to take Core PE. This is non-examined and fulfils the statutory guidance as laid out by the government. Core PE lessons are practical lessons only. If pupils wish to gain a qualification in PE, they can opt for this as part of the options process.

Are there some subjects that pupils must opt for? This year pupils will make three selections. Of these three selections, one of them must be either Computer Science, French, Geography or History. This ensures that the curriculum that pupils are following is broad and balanced and in line with government expectations. There will be a tiny minority of pupils who will be exempt from this. Those pupils will be contacted directly.

What is the EBacc route? This is the name given to a suite of subjects that increases a pupil's chances of securing a place in a university of their choice. There is no certificate but simply a recognition that a pupil has gained qualifications in the following subjects: English Language, English Literature, Maths, Combined Science, a language (French at St Antony's) and a Humanities subject (Geography or History).

Do pupils have to follow the Ebacc route? Government expectation is that more pupils should follow this route each year. With this in mind, we shall indicate those pupils who we believe should be following this pathway. It will not be compulsory for all pupils but it is certainly recommended and all pupils will be welcome to take Ebacc subjects whether or not this has been indicated by us.

What restrictions are placed on option choices? If a pupil enjoys a subject then we strongly believe they should opt for that subject regardless of ability. There are, however, some

practical considerations which may impact on pupil choice. The list below details some of the main restrictions/issues:

- Pupils can only take one subject from the following to maintain a broad curriculum: Fine Art, Art Graphics, Art Textiles, Engineering, Food and Nutrition.
- Class sizes vary a great deal in the options in accordance with practicality. For example, a class size in Food is limited to eighteen in contrast with History which may reach as high as thirty.
- If too many pupils opt for a particular subject some may have to select a reserve choice
- Not all option choices will be granted. We shall endeavour to grant all choices but putting option blocks together is a complex process and mathematically it will not be possible to make the three option blocks suit everyone's choices.

What next? Please read through the option sheets which have been placed on the school website. Once you have done this please can you indicate three subjects that you wish to opt for using the Options survey sheet. **Please note that this is not the official options form, it is simply a survey to indicate the likely popularity of subjects.** Once this information has been returned it will allow me to establish the three option blocks from which pupils will make their choices. Contact can be made with me through Show My Homework or by using the following email address: p.giblin@st-antonys.com. If you require any further information please can you email the nature of your question and either I or a subject teacher shall get back to you as soon as possible. Finally, further on in this document you will find guidance on how to make selections. I hope you will find this useful.

As you will appreciate, the situation we find ourselves in is likely to prolong the process of putting options together. With this in mind, I will keep Parents, Carers and Pupils regularly posted with updates.

Kind regards

Mr P Giblin
Deputy Headteacher

How to Make the Right Option Choices

- Think about what subjects you like and enjoy at the moment – you are more likely to be successful in a subject if you enjoy what you are doing
- Find out about the skills you are going to need for the option subject – do you have these skills? Are you willing to learn them?
- Look at how the subject is assessed – will you cope with that?
- What kind of learner are you and will the option choices you have made help you be more successful?
- Know what your choices might lead to after St Antony's and how they might help you in the future – College? Apprenticeship? Employment?

Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing Options

- You are not the same as your friend so do not pick an option because your friend is doing it – do not follow the crowd
- Do not worry too much about your option choices being relevant to a job – you are very likely to change your mind about what job you want to do in the next few years
- Don't pick a subject if you haven't given it some proper thought – do not make last minute choices
- Don't pick an option because you think it will be an easy choice
- Whether you like or do not like a teacher is not a good way to choose an option
- Avoid the trap of thinking that a course is designed for girls only or boys only