

March 2022

Dear Student



Preparing for Success at Key Stage 4

This is an important and exciting time. You are at the point in your school career when you can start to take ownership of the next stage of your education. Now is the time for you to be thinking about your future plans for studying at University, colleges or following a route into an apprenticeship. It may seem early, but the choices you make for the next two years can affect what you can choose to do in the future. You need to think carefully not only about what you choose to study but also why you want to study it, and where it will take you. I cannot emphasise this enough "Choosing your options for the next two years plays a very important role in your future pathway through education".

The options process offers the chance to study new subjects and experience new ways of learning, as well as extending your learning in subjects you already study. It is important to remember that the right choice is different for each student - working with your teachers and with the advice of your family, you need to be sure that you are making the right choices.

At Shirley High School, we believe in a broad, modern, diverse and balanced curriculum. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is divided into two parts: the Core Curriculum (courses that all students must follow) and the Options (based on suitability and interests). We are committed to delivering a curriculum which enables all of our students to develop their talents and make outstanding progress. To achieve this, we have developed a curriculum at Key Stage 4 which offers students the opportunity to study a wider range of subjects, with fewer restrictions, than in most other schools. We offer two types of qualifications:

GCSEs:

GCSEs are General Certificates in Secondary Education - they are considered general qualifications and are the most common type of course that student's follow at Key Stage 4. Students with strong GCSE passes will usually go on to study A Levels and then have the opportunity to obtain a degree from a university or other Higher Education institution. The main characteristic of GCSEs is that they are assessed by exams at the end of the course. GCSEs are graded 9-1, where Grade 4 is described as a "standard pass" a Grade 5 is described as a "strong pass" Although this information is important at Shirley High School we value progress and every student making their expected progress in all subjects and achieving their Shirley Target.

Vocational Qualifications:

These qualifications are more directly linked to specific job sectors and employment. They are ideally suited to learners with a preference for practical learning. Vocational qualifications often focus on the practical skills and are assessed through a combination of external examinations and internally assessed units. The internal units may be assessed through a controlled assessment and/or practical assessment. Vocational qualifications are graded Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*.

I would advise that you do some research into the courses that you may be interested in when you leave school at 18, this will give you some indication about which subjects are the best for you.

Remember, keep as many doors open as you can at this stage - not many people of your age know what they want to do in 2 or 4 years' time.

This booklet contains a wealth of information that you will need to consider through the options process, but it will also be necessary for you to listen carefully to the information and advice that has been provided and to speak with your teachers and parents / carers so that you can be sure that the choices you make will be the best ones to support your success and your future. Ask as many questions as you like (no question is a silly one) and make sure that you are active in this process - remember, they are your choices!

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Powders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 's'.

Mr K Powders

Assistant Principal