

Dear Year 9 Parent / Carer,

The Year Ahead and Key Stage 4 Course Options process

Soon we will commence the 'Options process' whereby Year 9 students decide their Key Stage Four courses. We appreciate it is an exciting and daunting prospect for students and parents, and have put together this helpful guide to the year and the support and processes involved. All students in Wales study **Core courses**, including English Language and Literature, Mathematics and Numeracy, Science, Welsh, Physical Education, Well Being and the Welsh Baccalaureate. Additionally, students have some choice to select **non-core** qualifications, so need to consider how they best study as well as what they study, having the opportunity to opt to study their passions and interests. Students can select a large number of GCSEs and choose only GCSEs, if that is appropriate for them. Alternatively, students can combine GCSEs with Level 1 or 2 vocational qualifications.

At Monmouth Comprehensive, we believe in offering a wide range of non-core course options. Some subjects are more "applied" or more practical than others, and are assessed in a different way from more traditional exams. The process of choosing courses is in two steps:

Step 1 is to take part in the **Free Choice** Survey: students select FIVE non-core courses from the survey.

Step 2 is to complete the **Block Choice** Survey: students select FOUR courses from the Option blocks.

Details of all our subjects will be given in our Year 9 Options booklet, published on the 7th November. Information on further communication points and key dates across the remainder of the academic year are outlined below.

Publication of Year 9 Options e-booklet on the MCS website

Friday 7 November

Publication of the Year 9 Options e-booklet available to view from this date through the MCS website. Click:

Year 9 Parent Information Meeting: Course Options process

Monday 10th November, 5-6pm

There will be a parent information meeting in the school hall on Thursday 10th November, 5-6pm. This is to support students and families in choosing options. Faculty Leaders of non-core qualifications (i.e. subjects which students can choose to study further) will give brief presentations on course content and structure. There will then be opportunity for some Q and A and bespoke conversations afterwards. This will be of particular value to students considering opting for a new subject not offered at Key Stage 3.

Decision Making skills workshop with Careers Wales

beginning Tuesday 11th November

Each Year 9 form group will be involved in a workshop with Career Wales during the next 3 weeks. The workshop will build decision making skills and support students in understanding the value of getting the right advice and guidance before making decisions that will shape their future.

Publication of online 'Free Choice' Survey Form

Thursday 20th November

The Year 9 online 'Free Choice' Survey course selection process goes live. Both the booklet and Free Choice Form will be available to view and complete through the MCS website. Click:

Year 9 Options Assembly for students

Thursday 20th November

Students will have an assembly from staff in school to reinforce how and why to choose the right Key Stage Four courses for them, based on their strengths, interests and ability, as well a reminder of the key processes and dates in this guide.

Year 9 Parents' Evening appointment with the Form Tutor on School Cloud

Thursday 20th November

Parents can make an online appointment with their child's Form Tutor to discuss overall progress in Year 9, ideas for course choices at Key Stage Four and suitability. More information on making School Cloud appointments will follow in a separate communication.

Non-core subject Taster Sessions.

From Monday 24 November

Taster sessions will take place during lessons this fortnight for non-core qualifications, allowing students to sample what learning is like.

Deadline to submit the online Year 9 Free Choice Survey Form

Friday 12th December

Parents and students have until this date to submit the online google form to have their combination of courses considered by the school when timetabling. Staff will review courses and their appropriateness for students and contact parents accordingly.

Year 9 mid-year Student Progress report

Friday 16th January

A summary of your child's progress across their Year 9 subjects will be emailed to parents, which will support with consideration of Key Stage Four course choices.

Year 9 Block Choices Form Launch

Monday 19th January

The Curriculum Blocks Form will be given to students to bring home on this date; students will choose their FOUR non-core qualifications from the combinations presented on the paper form.

Year 9 Assembly Block Choices explained.

Tuesday 20th January

Assembly for Year 9 students explaining the block Choice process and how to complete the Form.

Year 9 Parents' Evening on School Cloud

Thursday 23rd January

This online Parents' Evening provides an opportunity to book appointments with the full range of your child's subject teachers, to review learning in the individual subject areas in advance of option choices which need to be finalised in February. It is another opportunity to discuss particular, subject-based questions about Key Stage Four courses.

The MCS Careers and Higher Education Fair

Wednesday 4th February

This is an in-person event held in school. A large number of higher and further education institutions and employers exhibit at MCS and are able to field questions from students and their families about future applications and potential career paths, and what qualifications therefore may be helpful to select for Key Stage Four.

Block Choice Form Submission Deadline

Friday 13th February

Deadline for the submission of the final course choices, via paper form. Staff will review courses and their appropriateness for students and contact parents accordingly.

Key Stage 4 lessons begin

Monday 1st June

Key Stage Four courses begin for students in Year 9. Students will follow their new GCSE timetable and meet their GCSE teachers.

Annual Summary Report

Monday 14th July

These reports are emailed home. The report summarises Year 9 performance, attainment and wellbeing (it will not contain data on new Key Stage Four courses as they will have only just begun).

Yours sincerely,

Mrs C Tamplin

Head of Year 9

Miss C Edginton

Associate Assistant Headteacher