



The New Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q Which students will be doing the new curriculum?**
Current Year 8 students (Year 9 in September 2009) and current Year 9 students (Year 10 in September 2009)
- Q When will it all start?**
During the summer term this year. There will be some transitional issues to overcome in the first year of the new model but the intention is that the school year will move to a mid-June to mid-June academic year. This will allow students a full academic year of study before they sit their examinations in late May or early June. Obviously the whole school will roll over into a new academic year at the same time.
- Q Does this mean that year 8 students will need to change their uniform in June?**
No. We expect students to return to school in September of year 9 wearing the green Hunting Stewart tartan.
- Q When do year 7 & year 12 students start their studies?**
These students will start their studies in September as usual. They will be involved in an induction programme in the summer, as before.
- Q Will the students change Form Tutors and Heads of Year?**
Only if they would normally be changing in September anyway. Otherwise students will remain with their tutor and Head of Year.
- Q Will the students be getting a new planner?**
Yes. We intend to give all students the same information as at the start of any new academic year.
- Q Does the new curriculum mean students study less subjects?**
Currently the maximum number of GCSE passes a student can achieve at King James's is 12. In the new model the maximum number of GCSE passes a student can achieve is also 12. All Local Authority and Government targets consider only the best 8 GCSEs (including English and Maths). This model allows a more personalised approach for those students who wish to take examinations early and embark on additional studies.
- Q Surely mixing together year 10 and 11 students in the same teaching groups is going to cause problems?**
This is not what the evidence suggests. Students will be set work to their ability rather than according to their year group. In some cases students may actually only vary in birth date by a few days. The older students will also be able to mentor those students who are newer to the rigours of

GCSE studies. When students know that a course is being examined at the end of the year there is a sharpening of focus. Mixing of students from different years should have a positive effect on student learning.

Q Will you be offering a sufficiently broad range of subjects?

We will actually be offering a broader range of subjects to the students. In addition to the compulsory areas of study students can choose from at least 24 different subjects.

Q But will my child be able to do the options she/he wants to do?

With this model there will be greater flexibility as subjects will not be blocked on the timetable against each other. We may need to adjust whether a student takes a subject in year 10 or 11, but assuming a subject has sufficient numbers, we expect it to run as normal. With two year groups selecting subjects, it is more likely that the minority subjects will now have sufficient numbers.

Q Can they really do a GCSE in a year, especially when they're only in year 9 or 10?

All the evidence suggests students not only enjoy this, but attain well. Other schools have successfully run one year courses for younger year groups and students have risen to the occasion. From talking to the current year 9 students they are very positive about the prospect of starting and completing a GCSE course in one year. Students will receive the equivalent amount of teaching time, instead of 2 hours a week over two years they will receive four hours over one year.

Q How will the new curriculum be more personalised?

In the old curriculum almost all of our students followed the same diet of GCSE's. This model allows for some students to complete courses early such as Maths and Science. In addition those students who need greater support can take only 5-8 GCSE's and receive extra support with subjects such as ASDAN, Study + or Supported Study.

Q Does the model work for those students wishing to study a new diploma?

Yes. As our options days (chosen subjects) are on the same days as the Harrogate area is running the diplomas, the structure has been designed with the diplomas in mind.

Q If my child studies an option in Year 10 will they still be able to pick it up at A level? If so, won't they have forgotten everything they learned and then struggle at A level?

They will certainly be able to study such subjects. We often have students pick up subjects at AS level which they have not studied at all at GCSE and there is no evidence of them underachieving compared with peers who did study the subject at GCSE. Students of this age do not forget things as we adults perhaps do, and quick recapping at the start of AS courses will soon have everybody up-to-speed.

Q What are the reasons for some lessons being two hours long?

Longer lessons are intended to allow staff greater flexibility in the way that they teach. It makes it easier to invite a speaker into school or go out of school to see a topic that is being studied at first hand. It also allows practical subjects to spend a greater proportion of the lesson time on task rather than preparing and "tidying up". Movement time will also be reduced which should mean greater time spent in front of teachers.