

LANCASTER ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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Andrew M Jarman MA Headmaster



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Dear Parent,

As your son enters the Upper Sixth, and what will clearly be the key year in his career at LRGs, he faces a number of important decisions.

The first of these is to finalise exactly what his curriculum will be in this U6 year. There are a number of possible changes and different options available to the boys, which were presented to them at a special assembly on Wednesday morning. I thought it might be useful to pass details through to you so that you are best placed to assist him, if necessary.

This yeargroup is now the ninth to pass through the system of AS in the L6 and A2 in the U6, and we now have some very well established principles and data available from previous years to offer guidance. I have encouraged the boys to think carefully and personally about the issues, and to talk with the many colleagues able to offer advice: Mr. Hirst (Head of Sixth Form), Mr. Reynolds (Sixth Form Coordinator), heads of departments and senior subject teachers.

The GCSE results in 2008 demonstrated that this is a capable year. Their AS results were not quite as strong as we had anticipated and there is a lot of hard graft ahead, but there is considerable promise for a set of excellent results next summer. The immediate choice for the boys is to decide whether to continue all four AS subjects into the A2 work in the U6 or to drop one, continuing with three A2 subjects.

For some, the decision to drop to three is already clear. Many boys have already followed a simple confirmatory procedure with Mr Hirst, and the change has been made. For any who are unsure, however, our best advice is to continue with four subjects, at least in the short term. There are several reasons for this.

Many will wish to continue with four to set themselves apart. The most popular universities and courses are becoming ever more competitive, and boys may wish to give their application an 'edge', even though the offers made by the universities will almost invariably be based on only three subjects.

Secondly, the best can cope with four subjects, and indeed excel, as was proved last year. For the whole year-group, the grade A/B success rate was 77%. For those doing four or more subjects, the corresponding figure was nearly 98% (both figures omit General Studies, which will be taken automatically by all our boys). There is of course an element of self-selection in these statistics, but they confirm that the best can and do achieve very well on a full programme.

Thirdly, in some subjects there appears to be a wide gulf between the standards of work at AS and A2 levels. Boys may wish to experience more of the A2 style before making a decision – the obvious temptation to drop the subject with the lowest AS grade proved misguided for a few last year.

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It may be that a change to three subjects comes later in the year, after module and/or mock results or on receipt of UCAS university offers, for example. The transfer can be made at any time.

I hope that all the boys will want to stretch their intellectual talents to the full. A good proportion of LRGS boys in each year took four subjects under the “old” arrangements and about one third of last year’s U6 did the same. It is no coincidence that most of the academic schools in the country offer four subjects (at least!) as an appropriately rigorous academic challenge.

In conclusion, it may be worth noting that whilst AS grades seem to be a reasonable predictor of eventual A-level success, some major advances are possible with concentrated effort in the Upper Sixth year. Some of the boys will need to resit particular AS modules. This should also be discussed with the relevant Head of Department. Please note that, with very few exceptions, our strong advice is that any resits should be taken at the end of the course next summer rather than during the U6 year, when the more demanding A2 work should assume the priority.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of my colleagues if further information is required. These are important decisions, which must be made in full consultation with all parties, including you as parents.

I look forward to meeting you at the Upper Sixth Parents evening from 6.00 pm on Monday 28th September. Please be prompt as there will be some important updating given in my introductory remarks.

Yours sincerely,

A. M. JARMAN