



The Sixth Form

November 2024

Dear Year 11 Parents, Carers and Students

It was great to see many parents, carers and students attend our Joint Sixth Form Open Evening on 6th November to find out what the Joint Sixth Form can offer. Departments, and our Sixth Form helpers, were kept busy on the evening giving advice about options, possible subject combinations and future plans.

6th Form application forms have already started coming in, and taster lessons can be organised for students wanting to try out specific A Level lessons. I appreciate that some students were unable to attend the Open Evening so another application form is attached. The new 6th Form Prospectus and application form can also be found on our website and copies will be available in the Hall on Academic Monitoring Day.

Students are also very welcome to pop into the Sixth Form Unit to ask any questions or to collect a Prospectus and application form during morning tutor time. Please return application forms to Reception as soon as possible, and by the deadline Friday 13th December at the latest.

If applicable, please complete the section asking about courses '*That you would like to take but are not included*' in our current offer as we will monitor these responses carefully.

Following on from the evening, a few questions have arisen. Most of the answers can be found in the Prospectus, but I am happy to take this opportunity to clarify.

Q: What happens next?

A: An assembly will be given to Year 11 after the mock exams, repeating some of the key messages from the information evening and answering questions.

Students can arrange 'taster lessons' if they would like to try out an A Level lesson. This is especially useful if considering a 'new' course (for example, Psychology, Sociology or Photography). Students should see me and I will organise this. Once students are happy with their choices, they should complete their application form and return to me or Reception by the December 13th deadline. Don't worry if undecided - the **choices made on the application form are not final**. We will interview all students about their provisional choices and discuss the options open to them.

In the Spring Term, we will generate 'option blocks' that will be organised to allow as many students as possible to choose the subjects they indicated on their application form. Priority will be given to combinations from students who have indicated that they definitely intend to return to the Joint Sixth Form. Students will then make their final choices and conditional offers will be made. Please be aware that courses will only run subject to appropriate student numbers and again, students can change their minds later on.

Q: What about vocational courses?

A: Students can apply directly to Yeovil, Weymouth or other local colleges. The Joint Sixth Form vocational offer is BTEC Sport. BTEC Sport comes in two versions equivalent to either 2 or 3 A Levels. Our new Professional Cookery qualification is equivalent to 1 A Level. These courses can be blended with our A Level offer.

Q: What is the difference between A Level and vocational courses?

A: A Levels are academic courses that are two years in length and are largely exam based. Some courses have coursework, but this is rarely more than 20% of the qualification. A Levels *usually* lead to higher education (but not always).

Vocational courses are generally *not* exam based. These Level 3 courses are equivalent to A Levels in terms of qualification 'weight'. All Level 3 students can progress to university with their qualifications if they wish.

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Q: Can I still go on trips?

A: Yes! We run a biannual trip to New York and others to Rome and Iceland. Many subjects also offer day trips and fieldwork to support learning. In addition, we run a programme of speakers to widen students' knowledge of current issues and support career progression.

Q: How many courses should I take?

A: Following interviews and GCSE results, students will decide (with advice from school staff) on how many courses to start. Most students will study 3 A Levels. All students are expected to opt for an 'enrichment' option, too (see below). Some students will start 4 subjects and drop to 3. A few students will continue to study 4 A Levels all the way through to completion.

Q: Why do I have to pay for transport?

A: When making decisions about which course, school or college to attend, parents must consider how students will travel to school or college.

The Joint Sixth Form offers a free link bus for students to travel between Colfox and Beaminster.

All transport to Dorset Schools that have Sixth Form provision is provided by independent bus companies under contract to Dorset Council. If you wish to purchase a seat on one of these services, you are required to contact the bus company directly. The availability and charges are at the discretion of the relevant bus company. You can contact First Bus customer service for school travel on 0345 646 0707 or by email at dorsetschools@firstbus.co.uk

The Joint Sixth Form runs a **discretionary bursary** that can be used to recoup some (or all) of the costs involved in transport.

Q: What are enrichment subjects about? What is Core Maths, EPQ, Ancient History, Financial Studies and Professional Cookery?

A: Students studying 3 A Levels are required to 'top up' - or *enrich* - their timetable with an additional qualification.

Core Maths is a Level 3 qualification worth 40% of a full A Level and is designed to improve students' mathematics after GCSE. It will be taken by students opting for Science subjects, Business Studies, Geography and Psychology where 'full' Maths is not being taken alongside.

EPQ is an Extended Project Qualification worth 50% of a full A Level. This subject requires students to work independently towards successful completion of a research-based essay of 5000 words or an artefact with supporting report.

Ancient History (worth 40% of a full A Level) is an excellent supplement for students taking History or any other subject.

The Certificate in Financial Studies (CeFS) is designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to personal finance.

The Level 3 Extended Certificate in Professional Cookery is a recognised professional qualification designed to give students the confidence and grounding to work in the catering industry or cook for themselves promoting healthy eating and independent living.

Further details for all courses can be found in the Prospectus.

Q: What if I don't get 5 GCSEs at grades 9 – 5?

A: You can still join the Sixth Form with vocational courses through the school (Sport). The school enjoys a dedicated Careers advice service that can be accessed at any time – students should see me, speak to their Tutor or Mr Donovan to book. We are always available to offer support and guidance about vocational pathways and employment and apprenticeship opportunities.

Thank you again for your continued support. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further queries.

Mrs Sarah Walters

Head of Sixth Form and Director of Learning and Achievement (Key Stage 5)

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