

16th January 2017

Dear Parent/ Guardian

I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and a restful break.

It is now time to think about the subjects your son proposes to take for G.C.S.E. commencing September 2017. Included with this letter is the application form which is to be used to indicate the subjects your son would like to select. Please discuss the options available as set out on the form with your son, taking account of his strengths and interests, the information contained in his College reports along with the advice that you will receive at the forthcoming J3 Options Evening and Parent Teacher meeting. To help you and your son make informed choices a G.C.S.E. Options Booklet is also available.

Subject choice at GCSE is very important in terms of accessing A Level subjects and in turn certain university courses. As a result I encourage you to attend the **J3 Options Evening** as you will have the opportunity to hear about all aspects of the options process from College staff. You will also hear from a number of speakers about certain BTEC and other courses that we offer.

During the **J3 Parent Teacher Meeting** you will have an opportunity to talk to your son's teachers. They will advise you further about his progress in specific subjects and his potential to achieve at GCSE and beyond. You will also have an opportunity to talk to Mr O'Hare Head of Careers and Careers Officers from Careers Service N.I. regarding the implications of the various choices that your son might make.

Parents and students should be aware that they have the responsibility for ensuring that they make the appropriate selection of subjects for those university courses that have specific requirements. Your son has already been given a substantial amount of information regarding implications of subject choices but if you require further guidance, please seek information from university websites and from Mr O'Hare.

The Vice-Principals and I will be available both on the Options Evening and at the Parent Teacher Meeting should you wish to discuss any aspect of your son's GCSE options. All of the information available should be carefully considered before final commitments are made.

For reference the:

J3 Options Evening is on Thursday 26th January 2017 @ 7.00 p.m. in the Assembly Hall

J3 Parent Teacher Meeting is on Thursday 2nd February 2017 from 4.00 – 6.30 p.m. in the Sports Hall.

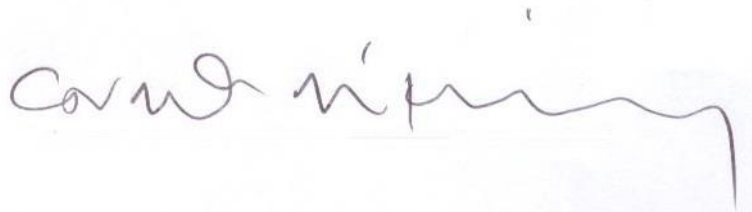
Following these meetings the completed subject application form must be returned to your son's Form Teacher no later than **Wednesday 8th February 2017** after which time a member of the SLT will discuss your son's options with him. It should be appreciated that the choices made by your son are subject to satisfactory performance in the KS3 examinations, acceptance that the choices made are most suitable for your son and normal rules and regulations governing progression from KS3 to KS4.

Please note that a subject will only be offered if the numbers of students choosing it are sufficient to form a class. Please also note that if demand exceeds the number of places available in certain practical subjects including DT/ ICT/ Art, KS3 performance, application and aptitude will be used as a discriminator.

The GCSE timetable will be constructed on the basis of the information collated from the choices made. We will try to accommodate all the students' subject options, but if a particular subject has a smaller uptake than expected and cannot be offered, or if the particular selection of subjects that your son has made is considered inappropriate for him, or is not viable in the context of time-table structure, he will be asked to make alternative choices. It will not be possible to accommodate late changes outside of the timetable blocks that are created, so I ask you to seek all possible information and advice before you submit your son's application form.

I look forward to seeing you on Thursday 26th January at 7:00pm. Students are expected to attend in uniform.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cormac McKinney', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mr Cormac McKinney
Principal

Guidance on completing accompanying GCSE Application Form

Parents please note that the accompanying application form is structured in such a way as to ensure that the resulting curriculum will meet the current statutory requirements.

1. All students will be automatically entered for Religious Studies and English, (step 1 on the application form).
2. Your son's choice of a Mathematics option (step 2) will be extremely important and decisions should be taken in accordance with his teacher's advice as to his aptitude and ability. If a student wishes to select Further (Additional) Mathematics the entry requirement for this subject is a grade A/A* in the Y10 summer examination 2017 along with a recommendation from his teacher.
3. Your son's choice of a Science option (step 3) will also be extremely important and decisions should be taken in accordance with the teacher's advice as to his aptitude and ability. Your son will need to consider whether he is best suited to studying single science subjects (Biology, Chemistry or Physics) or Double Award science, which covers all three science subjects but not in as much detail as in a single science. Double Award Science results in the student achieving two GCSE grades. Both the Double Award and single science options are suitable for A-level dependent on the grade achieved. It is expected that a student should attain an **AA** grade in Double Award Science to follow an A level science subject or a **B** at GCSE in an individual science subject. A student can therefore take one, two or three single science subjects or double award science to fulfil his science requirement.
4. Students are required to study at least one language to GCSE level at St. Colman's College (step 4). The GCSE modern language requirement for 3rd level courses will be an important consideration in this regard. In the very small number of cases where a student is failing to achieve the standards necessary at KS3 for progression to any of the GCSE modern languages available, the College will consider a request to waive the language option and replace it with another subject from step 5.
5. Please complete steps 1 – 8 of the form according to the instructions. Only complete the permitted number of subjects per step.
6. Applications to study the programming option in Digital Technology will normally only be considered if you are also applying to and accepted for Further (Additional) Maths.
7. Students can either study Digital Technology (Programming) or Digital Technology (Multimedia), *not* both.
8. Please note students must achieve at least a GCSE grade B in the subjects they wish to study for A level.

Choices made on the application form will always be subject to the conditions set out in the covering letter you have received.

Mr A. Henry
(Vice-Principal Curriculum)