

23 February 2021



**Holderness Academy**  
& Sixth Form College

Dear Parent/Carer,

I write to inform you of a decision that we have taken which will affect your child's study programme and options process.

After long and careful consideration, we have decided that all students currently in Year 8 or below (including Year 7) will not undertake an options process until they are in Year 9.

This is a decision that we have been considering for some time but has now been accelerated due to the current Covid situation. There are several reasons for this, which I will set out below.

- The Importance of Key Stage 3 as preparation for GCSE

Because of the current lockdown and the previous Covid restrictions, we do not feel that our Year 7 students will have had the Key Stage 3 experience that we had hoped for them.

During Key Stage 3, students study a wide range of subjects which build up a core base of knowledge, which is drawn upon when studying GCSEs. Without this grounding, students can struggle with more challenging topics later on.

Key Stage 3 also develops skills, some of which are subject specific and others which are more general. Again, without these skills, students are less likely to prosper with more difficult subjects later.

- The Importance of Key Stage 3 in its own right

Students study a fascinating range of topics in Years 7 and 8, which broaden their horizons and develop their understanding of the world around them. Without this experience, we do not feel that students have had the rich breadth of education that we all want for them.

- Lack of time for students to experience a range of subjects before making an informed choice

While we have made every effort to deliver our curriculum online during lockdown, it has not been possible to provide students with a typical 'hands-on' experience in the practical subjects such as Art, Music and Technology; extending Key Stage 3 will provide them with this breadth.

With this in mind, we are now planning for a revised programme of study for our Year 7 students as they return to school and for their study in Years 8 and 9. This will ensure they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills that will be required before they can choose their option subjects and begin to study them.

**They will then make their option choices in the Spring of 2023, when they are in Year 9.**

Explorer • Scholar • Leader • Collaborator



This decision will mean that students will then have a two-year KS4 programme in which to study their GCSEs. I recognise that some students and parents may have concerns about this length of time but we believe that this is still an appropriate amount of time, for the following reasons:

- Most GCSEs are designed to be taught within 120 guided learning hours (GLH). Our planned delivery model will give all students a minimum of 175 learning hours over the two-year period.
- The majority of schools have begun the transition towards a two-year Key Stage 4 following a range of recommendations from Government and Ofsted. As a consequence, most resources provided by examination boards now also support a two-year Key Stage 4.
- Students will be well-placed to study GCSEs over two years as they will have greater maturity and will also have benefited from a longer Key Stage 3

I recognise that this is a decision that may not please all students and parents; however, I can assure you that it was taken only after extensive discussion. As always, all decisions are taken in the best interests of our students.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Wilson', written in a cursive style.

Mr S Wilson  
Headteacher