

NF/MG

October 2009

To: Parents of Students in Year 8

Dear Parents

The purpose of this letter is to give you information about the curriculum that your son/daughter will be following in Year 8 and, in so doing, assist your involvement in the learning partnership. The subject descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to give a flavour of what will be covered over the coming three terms.

Art

Students have the opportunity to develop their art skills further in Year 8. In Unit 1: 'Material world' they look at contrasts and develop a mixed media piece based on observations of natural and manufactured form, using abstract painters such as Georgia O'Keeffe to inspire their work. Unit 2 looks at the Myth of the Green Man and includes opportunities for research and developments in clay. Links with other subjects will be forged throughout the year to enable students to explore themes broadly and there will be a chance to investigate the designs of other cultures following multicultural week.

Specialist equipment is provided but students are expected to come to each lesson equipped with basic stationery as listed in their dairies. The department runs a lunchtime club on Wednesdays to provide students with the opportunity to experiment further and develop their class work.

Dance

Lessons will develop skills acquired in Year 7 focusing on the students' ability to appreciate others' work and self-assess their own. Schemes of work will focus on performance, contact/trust, musicals, street dance and professional dance works.

Boys wear Performing Arts T-shirt and PE shorts. Girls wear Performing Arts T-shirt and PE cycling shorts and leotard (optional). Dance Club is on Friday lunchtime. Boys' street dance club is on Monday lunchtime.

D & T – CDT

Students have the opportunity to continue to develop their D & T skills through projects which combine their designing and making skills with a knowledge and understanding of safety, use of tools and equipment, technical processes and the nature and properties of materials.

During this year students will work on Designing and Making tasks in the form of projects. Projects will include: Graphics and 3 dimensional drawing, Sports Trophy, and a Biscuit cutter.

Students should ensure that they have a pen, pencil, ruler and basic equipment for each lesson.

D & T – Food Technology

Students study Food Technology for 2 hours a fortnight for half of the academic year. Aprons, dishcloths and tea towels are provided. For a nominal sum (on average 70-90p) the basic ingredients are provided; occasionally extra ingredients are required. Notice is always given of these requirements and will be recorded in the students' diaries. A suitable container will be required to carry the completed products home. Homework is set when necessary and is completed on A3 paper or in an A4 exercise book, both provided by the department. Each module will include a spelling test and an end of module test.

Students are encouraged to develop an awareness of the world's staple foods. The students analyse food products using examples of packaging and are taught about food labelling legislation. Students will research bread making and healthy eating principles are reinforced. The practical tasks include pasta salad, risotto, potato bake and cheesecake. The module ends with the students being entered for the Silver Award which is a practical task set by Sainsburys.

D & T – Textiles Technology

Students study Textiles Technology for two hours a fortnight for half of the academic year. All materials are provided; occasionally an extra material may be required. Notice is always given of these requirements and will be recorded in the students' diaries. Homework is set when necessary and is completed on A3 paper or in an A4 exercise book, both provided by the department. Each module will include a spelling test and an end of module test.

Students will be introduced to a range of techniques used to embellish fabric, for example, Tie and Dye, Batik and Printing. The students will be made aware of the history associated with many of these techniques. They will build upon their practical skills introduced in Year 7 and design and make a cushion.

Drama

In Year 8 the students maintain and improve on their Year 7 work. They learn additional drama strategies including Hot Seating, Forum Theatre, Narrating and Cross-Cutting. The topics they cover are: Script writing, The Supernatural and Atmosphere, Physical Theatre, Soap Opera and Mask Work. They record their work in Drama Diaries. There is a Year 8 Drama Club every Wednesday lunchtime.

English

All students in Year 8 follow a genuinely exciting programme, which includes the study of popular culture and the media as well as more traditional learning activities such as responding to classic texts like Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. Specific skills are targeted at the beginning of many lessons, allowing the students to develop the level of accuracy they will need to progress through the levels of the National Curriculum.

French

Students continue to build on material covered in Year 7. There is more emphasis on written French with grammar being taught systematically. The Perfect Tense is introduced early in Year 8. Topic coverage expands on Year 7 and introduces daily routine, the cinema, family, illness, food and drink, a visit to Paris and accommodation. All students will visit the Europa Centre in the Autumn term. Students will use the internet to research France. Assessment will take place each term in two skill areas. Students will continue to work with a correspondent in France.

Geography

Students will continue to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. We are working in ways that promote geographical and thinking skills and also make learning more motivating and engaging. Students will visit Tilbury Power Station and Environment Centre in the Winter Term.

Topics covered will include "Kenya"; "Work", "Rivers", "Flooding".

We expect students to bring the correct equipment to every lesson and to work hard both in class and at home. Student progress will be assessed regularly, according to the school policy.

History

Students will study the Making of the United Kingdom. Students will learn the answers to such questions as How did the Tudors take control of England? Why was there conflict over religion throughout Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries? Why did Henry VIII establish the Church of England? How did Henry's marriages affect the succession to the throne? Why did England see-saw religiously under the rule of Henry VIII's children? How did the Stuarts gain the throne of England? Why did Guy Fawkes try to blow up Parliament? How did England gain control of Wales, Ireland and Scotland? Why were the Stuarts removed from the throne of England? Why was there a civil war in England between 1642 and 1648?

ICT

Students are taught skills in the use of a selection of the following ICT solutions:- Internet, Email, MS Word, MS Publisher, MS Excel, MS Access, MS PowerPoint, MS FrontPage, Paint, Logo, Windows Moviemaker, Flowol, Macromedia Studio, digital photography, webcams and scanning. Once these skills are learnt, students go on to integrate the use of them in order to find solutions to given problems.

There are five main themes of study that give the students the knowledge and understanding needed to become capable users of ICT. These are:

1. Public Information Systems
2. Publishing on the Web
3. Information – reliability validity and bias
4. Models and presenting numeric data
5. Creating an ICT system

Students agree to use the school computer network and Internet in an appropriate manner. Failure to adhere to the agreement results in the student being removed from the network and being given written work to complete.

Mathematics

Students will be studying a range of topics within Mathematics such as place-value, percentages, ratio, sequences, expressions, formulae, generalizing, graphing, properties of shapes, angles, probability and data-handling. All equipment is required for every lesson. Listening to instructions and asking for help is key. Parents can help by involving their children in household activities. Students have access to help on basic Maths in their diaries.

Music

The curriculum involves students in performing, composing and listening/appraising, using keyboards, percussion instruments and music ICT. Areas for study through the year include: African drumming, reggae, Indian classical music, Bhangra and Salsa.

PSE

All students will follow a course in Personal and Social Education. This will be delivered during allocated PSE days during the course of the year. We shall use outside speakers to deliver some topics and others will be delivered by school staff.

The PSE programme for this year will cover the following topics: disability, alcohol abuse, immigration, asylum, relationships, careers education, the environment.

PE

The curriculum includes swimming and gymnastics for both boys and girls. The girls will then have the opportunity to improve their netball along with being introduced to basketball. Boys will be taught the traditional sports of rugby and football but also have the opportunity to try their hand at volleyball and some orienteering. The Summer term will include a variety of sports including rounders, athletics, tennis and cricket. There is a wide and varied extra curricular programme during lunch times and after school should students wish to participate.

RE

In Key Stage 3 all students follow the Heinemann “Think RE” course which provides a challenging and inspiring look at comparative world religion.

In Year 8 units include: “How do people put their belief and faith into practice? (including depth studies on Moses, Daniel, John Wesley, Gladys Aylward and Maximilian Kolbe)”, “What does religion teach about poverty?”, “Why are people prejudiced? (including depth studies on Gandhi, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement in the USA)”.

Science

Year 8 builds upon the concepts introduced in year 7, and focuses on ‘How science Works’ as well as the central concepts of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Again, creative thinking, problem solving, experimentation and modelling are encouraged throughout. All students are taught in sets according to their ability. Progress is monitored through end of unit tests, assessment tasks and an end of year test.

Assessment

All subjects will assess students against National Curriculum levels on a half-termly or termly basis, depending on how frequently students have lessons in the subject. We use a system of level subdivisions whereby each National Curriculum level is divided into three sub levels, a, b and c. For example, a level 4a is a high level 4, 4b translates as a secure middle level 4, and 4c is a low level 4.

Between these summative level assessments, major pieces of work will be marked thoroughly, with teacher comments focussing on how students can improve their work whilst recognising what they are doing well. Student effort will be rewarded with Credits, in line with the school’s rewards policy. More minor pieces of work will be acknowledged with the teacher’s initials, corrections being noted where necessary.

All subjects use student self-assessment and peer-assessment as vital ways of students developing their understanding of what is required to improve their work.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have any queries regarding our assessment policy, please contact Mr Holland, Deputy Head. Any queries regarding specific subject content should be addressed to the relevant Head of Department.

Yours sincerely

N Franceschi
Deputy Head