

The Blue Coat School Liverpool

Non sibi sed omnibus

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Dear Parent

Following a thorough curriculum review and consultation with parents, staff, and external specialists, the Trustees have agreed to move from a two-year to a three-year Key Stage 3. GCSE study will therefore return to a two-year Key Stage 4, beginning in Year 10.

This change reflects national research and best practice, including guidance from the Department for Education, which highlights the importance of curriculum breadth, strong foundations, and sufficient time for deep learning before exam specialisation. A longer Key Stage 3 allows pupils to study subjects in greater depth, supports wellbeing, and ensures full access to the National Curriculum before GCSE choices are made. It also ensures that pupils are better informed and more confident when making the important decision about their GCSE subject options.

In addition, extending Key Stage 3 provides greater opportunity for pupils to develop higher-order skills, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and evaluative writing. These are essential foundations for success at GCSE and beyond, and their structured development in Key Stage 3 will strengthen academic readiness across all subjects.

Staff strongly support this approach, noting benefits for curriculum coherence, reduced pressure to rush content, and stronger preparation for GCSE and A-level study. It also helps ensure a broad curriculum for all and supports pupils with SEND more effectively.

Parental feedback showed a range of views, with many welcoming the return to greater breadth, reduced early exam pressure, and more time for pupils to mature academically. Trustees recognised that most concerns related to timing and transition rather than the educational principles behind the change.

This structure is well established in many high-performing grammar and independent schools and does not disadvantage high-attaining pupils. We will continue to offer a broad and ambitious range of GCSE subjects, ensuring our pupils remain highly competitive.

In summary, the Trustees are confident that a three-year Key Stage 3 provides the strongest foundation for academic success, pupil wellbeing, and long-term achievement, while enabling pupils to make more informed, mature, and confident choices about their future pathways.

Key points for current year groups:

Year 8:

GCSE content will begin in most subjects during Year 9. These arrangements are explicitly designed to *support transition* into Key Stage 4, ensuring pupils are well prepared for the demands of GCSE study



without losing the breadth and developmental focus of Key Stage 3. Options for Key Stage 4 will be taken in January 2027. Pupils will sit 10 GCSEs in Year 11.

Year 11:

Pupils are currently choosing their Year 12 subjects and will have 10 lessons per subject in the Sixth Form.

Year 12:

Teaching time will increase to 10 lessons per subject in Year 13.

Kind regards,



Mr K Sexton
Headteacher

