

01 July 2010

Dear Parents

I am writing to you about the curriculum that your son or daughter will be studying in English over the next few years.

As you may know, as a result of the Government review of the 14-19 curriculum, most subjects have undergone a change of GCSE specification, which we have been implementing with our current Year 10 pupils this year. Under the timetable of the reforms, English Language, English Literature and Mathematics are due to change for first teaching in Year 10 next year. We use the IGCSE (International GCSE) exam in Mathematics, so our teaching will remain unchanged in this area.

The English department have undertaken a thorough review of the specifications available for teaching next year and have concluded, as the Mathematics department did some years ago, that our pupils will be best served in their education by following IGCSE courses in both Language and Literature. IGCSE courses are gaining in popularity among independent schools – at PGS, we also offer IGCSE Physics. You may have seen that the new Government has recently announced that IGCSE exams may be taken in the maintained sector from next year.

The Language course is Edexcel IGCSE English Language. This retains a 30% coursework element, which the GCSE no longer allows, which gives teachers a freedom in task setting to differentiate for all abilities. Speaking and Listening are still a core element of the Language course, representing 10% of the final mark, which will develop all pupils' communication skills and confidence. The course will allow our full ability range to be stretched to their potential.

The Literature course is Cambridge IGCSE English Literature. It offers a broad range of Literature for study, in contrast to the narrowing focus of the GCSE course. Key analytical skills will be developed over the two year course, preparing for the assessment which is done by examination at the end of the course – 75% on prepared texts, with open books allowed, and 25% on analysing an unseen text.

We believe that this combination will ensure that pupils have the opportunity to benefit from coursework in their language, whilst gaining a maturity benefit in their literature work which will be assessed terminally, mirroring the approach that we have in our sixth form.

More information about these two assessments can be found at (this letter is available electronically via the school website)

- <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/igcse/igcse09/eng/eng-langa/Pages/default.aspx>
- http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/middlesec/igcse/subject?assdef_id=853

If you have any questions which are not answered here, then please do not hesitate to contact me at n.weaver@pgs.org.uk.

Yours faithfully

N J Weaver
Deputy Head (Academic)