



GCSE OPTIONS AMENDMENT POLICY	
Reviewed by:	Oliver Rose – Director of Teaching & Learning
Review Date:	September 2025
Next Review due:	September 2026

GCSE Options Amendment Policy

Dropping or changing GCSE Options and Alternative Provision

At Ballard, we believe in fostering a well-rounded education that equips pupils with the skills and knowledge needed for a successful future. With a rigorous options process in place and high-quality inclusive teaching provision, all pupils should be able to achieve their potential in their chosen GCSE option subjects.

In Years 10 and 11 pupils will usually study 9 or 10 GCSE subjects. On rare occasions some pupils may be advised to study a reduced number; others may pick up additional qualifications.

It is worth noting that pupils will be expected to be able to access the curriculum independently, without in-class 1:1 support, unless an EHCP is in place.

Using all available information, the school will make a judgement on whether potential pupils are able to access our curriculum independently.

Changing a GCSE option subject

Pupils will be able to change a GCSE option subject up until the October Half Term of Year 10 if it fits within the timetabled option blocks.

Pupils can only change into a course after both Heads of Department and the pupil's parents have been consulted. The Head of Department of the new subject must agree that it is feasible for the pupil to catch up on the work missed.

Pupils who change GCSE option subjects must agree to catch up on the work within the given timeframe set by the Head of Department.

Requests to change a subject should be made to the Director of Teaching and Learning who will then process the request and notify pupils, parents and relevant staff of the decision.

Dropping a GCSE option subject

Dropping a GCSE option subject should be considered only as a last resort and should not happen until all the following steps have been completed.

Criteria to justify the dropping of a GCSE subject and creation of an alternative curriculum.

Pupil must meet at least **one or more** of the following criteria to be considered for a reduced programme of study:

- There is significant and evidenced communication between the Head of Department/ teacher and parents regarding the progress of the pupil in question and that subsequent interventions have not had the desired impact. This will be supported by the available data. (Such as department tracking data and formal assessments)
- Continuing with the pupil's full selection of option subjects would have a significant impact on the pupil's wellbeing and likely overall academic outcomes.
- The pupil in question has a documented ongoing medical/pastoral issue. A doctor's letter will be required.

If a pupil meets one or more of the above criteria a request to drop a subject should be made to the Director of Teaching and Learning.

Step 1 – Pupil Reflection and Consultation

A discussion with the **pupil** takes place which should address the following questions:

- How is the pupil feeling about their GCSEs?
- What challenge is the pupil facing in the subject(s)?
- What are their reasons for requesting to drop a subject?
- What support/intervention has been offered?
- What are the barriers to intervention being effective?
- Does the pupil understand the wider implications of the reducing their subjects on future academic and career plans?
- Does the pupil agree to the likely provision that will replace their dropped option subject and to the expectations regarding independent study and work completion.

Step 2 – HoD, HoS and Head of DEL Consultation

It is vital that before the request is taken any further both the HoD and HoS are consulted about the pupil in question:

- What is the perspective of the HoD?
- Has the HoD got a record of pupil and parent communication?
- What support has already been put in place?
- What are the perceived barriers to success?
- Have all options of support been exhausted?
- What is the perspective of the HoS?
- Are there pastoral concerns which need to be considered?
- What is the perspective from DEL?
- Are DEL able to support/house the pupil in question?

Step 3 – Parent Consultation

Communication must take place with the parents of the pupil in question to ensure that they are aware of the concern/request to drop an option subject.

Parents must be advised on what provision will be put in place if the decision is carried through (see Appendix 1) and they must agree with the expectations regarding independent study and work completion.

It may be necessary to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

Questions to ask parents should include:

- How is the pupil feeling about their academic performance?
- What is the parent's perspective?
- What support can the parents offer?
- Do the parents agree that dropping a subject is the best course of action?
- Do the parents understand the implications on future academic and career plans?
- Do parents agree to the proposed provision and expectations for the pupils gained time.

Step 4 – Decision making meeting (Leadership Team/Academic Team meeting)

In the weekly LT/Academic Team meeting any pupils put forward to drop a subject will be discussed.

The Director of Teaching and Learning will present the information gained from Steps 1-3.

Alternative provision and timetable implications will be discussed and confirmed. In most cases the pupil in question will need to remain in the original class and will complete work independently by being added to the Alternative Curriculum Team.

The LT and, ultimately, the Headmaster will then approve or decline the decision.

Step 5 – Implementation of Decision and Follow Up Actions

Once the decision has been made the following actions will take place:

- Pupil and parent will be notified via call or email.
- HoD, Subject Teacher and Form Tutor will be notified via email.
- ALO will be informed so the timetable can be updated.
- New timetable is printed and given to the pupil via Form Tutor and Teams.
- Pupil will be added to the Alternative Curriculum Spreadsheet and Teams Group.

Monitoring

The progress of pupils who are on a reduced programme of study will continue to be monitored via communication with the pupil, teachers, Head of Departments and parents.

This will be cross-referenced with the available data.

Oliver Rose
Director of Teaching and Learning
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Appendix 1: Provision for pupils on a reduced programme of study

In many cases, pupils dropping a GCSE option will continue to attend the timetabled lesson to ensure that they are always supervised by an adult.

They will sit at the back of the classroom and complete independent study.

The pupil will be added to the Alternative Curriculum Team and, as a result, will be able to access specific instructions from their remaining teachers/HoDs regarding work to complete during gained independent study sessions.

In some cases, pupils who already receive 1-1 support may be housed in DEL. DEL staff have also been added to the Alternative Curriculum Team to enable them to support pupils with independent learning when appropriate.

Expectations for independent study

Pupils who have gained time for independent study because of dropping a GCSE option are expected to:

- Continue to engage fully with their remaining GCSE subjects.
- Commit to meeting all NEA deadlines.
- Use all independent study time purposefully and to complete work outlined by their teachers on the Alternative Curriculum Team or as otherwise advised.
- Focus during independent study sessions and not distract the learning of others.
- Be proactive in asking for additional guidance on additional work to complete if they have finished all work set to date.