



ROSSETT SCHOOL

CHANGES TO YEAR 9 BTEC COURSES – DECEMBER 2011

Over the summer a government consultation has taken place into an independent review of vocational education in schools which was published in March 2011. On 27 October 2011 new guidelines were published which change the nature and tariff of the vocational qualifications which can be included in the headline performance targets (5 @ GCSE grade A*-C including English and Maths) from summer 2014. These changes affect the vocational qualifications which our year 9 students have started and which they will be including in their CV at the end of year 11.

Hopefully the following “Frequently Asked Questions” will outline the rationale behind, and detail of, the changes we are making:

What course did my child start in June 2011?

Last June your child began a BTEC First Diploma vocational course. The course was equivalent to 4 @ GCSEs at grades A*-C, was to be taught for 5 hours/week over 2 years and hence was due to finish in June of year 10 (2013).

Why does the school need to make changes?

You may recall that last March the press and TV/radio news bulletins were full of “The Wolf report – a review of vocational education in schools”. The government has considered this report and, at half term, issued new guidance to schools. The guidance applies to all students who will complete year 11 from the summer of 2014 onwards, which includes your child. The course your child is following will no longer count as 4 GCSEs towards their headline target of achieving 5A*-C GCSE grades including English and Maths. Their BTEC Diploma, if completed in its current format, will only count as 1 GCSE towards that headline figure!

Haven't the Government “moved the goalposts” after the students have started their courses!”?

The Government have made it clear for some time that they feel the current system, whereby vocational qualifications can be worth up to 6 GCSEs, is unfair. They feel that it is easier, for example, for a student to achieve a distinction in a BTEC First Diploma (worth 4 @ GCSE grade A) than to achieve 4 @ grade A in 4 separate GCSEs. To be honest, our data over a number of years shows that the Government are correct in their belief. The Government were keen to implement changes from the Summer of 2014 which, unfortunately, means changes are necessary for our year 9 students.

What can the school do about this?

Realistically we can do nothing to change the new rules now but we can change our curriculum to give your child the best possible chance of reaching the headline target of 5@A*-C including English and Maths.

What is the school proposing?

1. Your child continues with the BTEC First course which they are doing but we re-register them from the Diploma to the Extended Certificate which is currently worth not 4, but 2 GCSEs. This contains only half the quantity of work when compared with the planned Diploma and the course could therefore be completed by the end of this academic year, by June 2012. Under the new guidelines it will still count as 1 GCSE towards the headline target figure at the end of year 11 (summer 2014).
2. In February 2012 your child then selects another subject as their option for year 10, to start at the end of June 2012. This could be a further GCSE but will probably be one of a new suite of vocational qualifications which can be done in a year (at 5 hours/week) and which count for a full GCSE. Vocational subjects we are hoping to offer include Art and Design, Business, Health and Social Care, Performing Arts and Sport (including an Outdoor Pursuits option). They will not be able to choose the same subject as they have done this year but will have to choose a new subject.
3. In Spring 2013 your child will choose a final optional subject (GCSE or new vocational Award) to study in year 11. This is not a change – your child would have done this anyway under the old curriculum model.

How will the qualifications my child will have at the end of year 11 be different from those we expected?

Your child will have 2 fewer optional GCSEs which can count towards the headline figure of 5 @ A*-C including English and Maths. They will now have 4 counting GCSEs in optional subjects instead of 6 but there will be no change to the GCSEs they can achieve in the core subjects of English, ICT, Maths and Science (anywhere between 5 – 8 depending on how well they are doing in their core subjects). They will therefore have a minimum of 7 subjects from which to achieve 3 higher grade passes to add to their English and Maths for the headline figure (5 @ A*-C including English and Maths).

Are there any advantages to the new structure?

1. Your child will have a broader Key Stage 4 curriculum. As things were they would have studied 3 optional subjects (2 GCSEs and the BTEC First Diploma), whereas now they will study 4 (the old vocational subject and then either 3 GCSEs or 2 GCSEs and one of the new vocational Awards).
2. Your child's qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 will all be to the new guidelines with the exception of the proposed Extended Certificate which they will finish next June and which will still count as one GCSE under the new arrangements.
3. The additional vocational subject on your child's cv will provide for more progression opportunities post-16.