



Bishop Wordsworth's School

Exeter Street, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP1 2ED

Telephone: 01722 333851

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E-mail: admin@bws.wilts.sch.uk

Website: www.bws-school.org.uk

Head Master: Dr S D Smallwood BSc (Hons) PhD NPQH

7 January 2016

Dear Parent/Guardian

Year 11 Parents' Evening – Science Session –Thursday 21 January 2016

As you know the Science Faculty are keen to ensure that boys in year 11 achieve as highly as possible in their final IGCSE Science examinations. We have now evaluated the achievements of the boys in both the CIE and AQA papers. It is felt that Chemistry and Biology would be wise to stick to CIE whilst Physics feel that a move to AQA would be more advantageous.

To clarify the impact of this decision to change for the Physics IGCSE Mr Bannister has written an overview of the plans to facilitate this change which is attached here. I am sure that you will have questions about the impact of this decision to change to AQA for Physics specifically and the year 11 Parents' Evening will give you the opportunity to meet individually with each of your son's Science teachers. Mr Bannister does not have a year 11 teaching group so will be available for the evening should any parents wish to discuss any specific questions regarding the move to AQA. In addition, on the same evening there will be a Parent Information Science talk between 4.30pm and 4.55pm in the Chapel. This session will outline the following:

- the features of the remaining weeks of science lessons leading up to the IGCSE examinations;
- how lessons will focus on exam technique, use of past paper questions and revision skills;
- how parents can support their sons to achieve their potential in the science IGCSE examinations
- what the boys themselves should be doing to take responsibility to ensure that they achieve their potential.

Parents will be given an information sheet outlining useful information, although if you are unable to attend the session this sheet can be obtained from your son's science teacher during your consultation and will also be available on the website.

In order for us to gauge numbers and plan effectively, would you be kind enough to let me know whether you wish to attend. This can be done by email at eeb@bws.wilts.sch.uk or by return of the slip below via you son.

Yours sincerely

Dr Emma Baker
Director of Science

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To Dr E E Baker - **Year 11 Parents Evening – Science Session –Thursday 21 January 2016**

I/We (delete as appropriate) would like to attend the Year 11 Parents' Evening – Science Session

Son's Name: Form:

Signed: (Parent/Guardian)



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Move from Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) to AQA Physics

Rationale

As a department we are always striving to improve results at GCSE Physics. The first cohort to sit CIE IGCSE Physics did so in 2013. In subsequent years there has been a significant improvement in the average mark that our candidates have achieved but frustratingly this has not been reflected in the grades. The grade boundaries have continued to inflate to such an extent that it is increasingly difficult for boys to achieve the grades that we believe their hard work warrants.

The table below highlights the issue:

Year	Minimum mark for A*(200)	Minimum mark for A (200)	Minimum mark for B (200)	Average score at BWS	Percentage of BWS boys achieving A*/A	Percentage of BWS boys achieving A*-B
2013	150	130	110	143	73.6	86.0
2014	155	135	115	148.5	66.4	93.1
2015	165	144	123	155.5	66.7	88.3

As illustrated there has been a steady and significant rise in the grade thresholds and the marks our boys obtain yet the overall percentages of A*/A grades awarded by the board each year has remained roughly constant. I am concerned that as well as the grades potentially not reflecting our boys' ability and hard work in 2016, some boys are avoiding doing A' level Physics in the Sixth Form as they perceive it to be too 'hard' when in fact, the majority of our boys are capable of studying Physics at A 'Level and doing well at it.

The table below shows the overall percentages of each grade awarded by CIE and AQA in June 2015:

	A* grade	A grade or better	B grade or better
CIE	23.4 %	46.9 %	64.1 %
AQA	49.4 %	75.3 %	90.8 %

In the recent mock examinations held at BWS at the beginning of December we were able to award relatively few top grades on the CIE board. Upon return to class they all sat an AQA mock under test conditions. I am pleased to be able to report that they did significantly better, over a grade higher on average. Therefore I and the rest of the Physics staff believe that it is highly likely that the boys are best served by sitting the AQA IGCSE rather than the Cambridge International Examinations IGCSE.



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Changes to teaching and differences between syllabuses

The vast majority of the content is identical between the two exam boards. The one significant difference is that rather than studying electronics and logic gates as our final topic after the Christmas holidays the boys will now study evolution of the universe and stars. Other differences are minor. The intention is that we will complete all of the taught content as originally planned by February half-term. The boys will then move onto a guided revision program immediately afterwards which they will then continue up until the examinations start in May. The plan is essentially as before; revision and past paper practice are the key to success.

One other positive difference between CIE and AQA is that on the AQA exam, boys have access to a list of equations. On the CIE exam, boys have to commit all of the equations to memory. AQA will still be an excellent preparation for boys wishing to progress on to A' Level Physics. Part of our rationale for doing IGCSE Physics in the first place was that it is excellent preparation for further study. This is true regardless of which exam the boys sit. I believe that rigour comes from the teaching and course content rather than the test the boys sit.

Please rest assured that the Physics staff will continue to work hard in guiding and encouraging the boys to reach their potential on the AQA examination.

If you have any further questions then you can contact me via the email address at the bottom of this page or alternatively I will be available on the year 11 parents evening for any parent who wishes to meet me in person.

Yours sincerely

M A Bannister

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