



5th June 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing with regard to our three-year Key Stage 4 pathway. In 2016 we began to run Key Stage 4 GCSE and BTEC courses over three years. Year 11's who sat exams from summer 2018 have had the opportunity to have 3 years to follow their GCSE courses programmes of study in Year 9. The rationale for this decision was linked to a desire to prepare students for the new GCSE syllabi that were being introduced and offering students more time to focus on their qualifications.

After 2 years of students completing the three-year Key Stage 4 we have had an opportunity to review the impact of this change. Although some staff, particularly those teaching or studying practical subjects, value having longer to develop skills, others feel that the longer period studying GCSE and BTEC qualifications detracts from a more focused, concentrated approach. Subject leaders feel that spending three years studying a two year GCSE course stretched courses out for too long. In addition, students often have to be retaught the topics studied in year 9, in Year 11 which takes time away from valuable revision. For many students, the options process was also challenging as they had to make decisions which had a long term impact on future choices very early and would not have made the same choices if they had waited an extra year.

Our review has also taken into consideration current views on a longer Key Stage 4. In recent months Ofsted, academics and other government bodies have been particularly critical of a three-year Key Stage 4 believing it narrows student opportunity to follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Ofsted have stressed that the key point for schools to consider is how they can ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects – at the very least in line with the national curriculum. Schools should also avoid the worst-case scenario of a three-year KS4, where GCSE teaching is pulled forward, stretching a two-year course over three. As a school, other concerns raised link to the restrictions the three-year structure placed on the timetable and also the restrictions it created for students to transfer between teaching groups. Given these views, we have taken the decision that Cox Green School will revert to a two-year Key Stage 4 from September 2020.

The implications of this decision are:

- Our current Year 8 students will begin their GCSE choices in September 2020.
- Our current Year 7 will not complete their option choices during the 2020-2021 academic year. They will then choose their options in Year 9 like in the majority of schools nationally.
- All our current students in Years 9, 10 will continue on the three-year Key Stage 4 and complete their courses as planned.

Please be assured that these changes will enable us to continue to deliver the very best education for all of our students

Should you have any concerns or questions please contact us at school.

Yours sincerely

Frances Walsh
Headteacher

Andrew Shields
Assistant Headteacher