



Heathfield School Ascot

September 2018

Dear Parent / Guardian

I hope this letter finds you well.

The Science Department is in the process of reviewing our provision for your daughter in GCSE Science in the light of experience with the new reformed 9–1 GCSEs in both separate Science papers and the Combined Science course.

It is clear to us that the purpose of the new separate Science papers is to stretch and challenge those pupils intending to go on to take one of more Science subjects at A Level with the expectation of attaining the highest possible grades (that is, A*–B) in those subjects. Such pupils would be expected to attain at least 7s at GCSE in the separate Science papers. This may apply to your daughter, however, it also may not.

We believe that Combined Science offers a better route at GCSE for many pupils, including those in the top set. Combined Science is worth two GCSEs rather than three for the separate Science papers. However, the advantage of Combined Science is that, while the skills taught in both separate Science and Combined Science are very similar and equally rigorous, the subject content is reduced in the latter to some extent. Given that the curriculum time for both separate Science and Combined Science is the same, this means that grades in Combined Science are likely to be higher than in separate Science papers for many pupils; there is less to learn while there is more time to practise skills and revise.

It should be noted that this does have implications for A Level option choices if your daughter is intending to take one or more Science subjects at A Level. Pupils from a GCSE Combined Science background can still take A Level Sciences successfully. They will, however, start at a slight disadvantage compared with those taking separate Science papers at GCSE since they will have covered less content. Therefore, it is likely that, unless pupils are attaining between 9–9 and 8–8 in GCSE Combined Science, A*–B grades in A Level Sciences will be an aspiration rather than an expectation. Nonetheless, as stated in our entry requirements, any pupil attaining a 6 in a separate Science paper or 6–6 in Combined Science at GCSE will be eligible to take A Level Sciences.

We will be making a final decision about whether your daughter takes separate Science papers or Combined Science at GCSE after their first assessment in the week beginning 8th October. We will take into account your daughter's most recent performance along with her work throughout the GCSE Science course since the start of Form III.

Incorporating St Mary's School Wantage

London Road, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 8BQ Tel 01344 898343 Fax 01344 890689 www.heathfieldschool.net
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We wish to assure you that any decision made will be done so in the best interest of your daughter and will be made entirely on an individual basis. We will contact you to notify you of which route your daughter will take and the reason for our decision. We will, of course, also discuss all of this with your daughter so that she is fully informed regarding this process.

If you have any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on cwells@heathfieldschool.net.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Clare Wells', written in a cursive style.

Clare Wells

Head of STEM Faculty, Subject Leader - Science & Assistant Director of Studies