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Dear Parent,

I write to outline how plans for the delivery of the next two years' GCSE maths courses will progress.

As you may know GCSE Maths has two tiers: Foundation (grades 1 – 5) and Higher (grades 3 – 9). There is considerable overlap between Higher and Foundation but the Higher has more content and contains some harder topics and requires a faster pace to ensure it is completed. Although the Foundation Tier allows a maximum grade of 5, the GCSE certificate will simply state the grade achieved and not which tier was taken. At Ellesmere the examination board is AQA.

Foundation is most appropriate for pupils who simply want to pass Maths GCSE as a stepping stone to the next phase of their education. For a wide range of degree courses the requirement is to have passed GCSE Maths which is a grade 4/5 and so Foundation is perfectly suited for such courses. For pupils wishing to study degree courses with a mathematical content, then clearly a higher grade is required even if the pupil does not take Maths at A Level, in which case the Higher Tier would then be essential. To take A Level Maths at Ellesmere a pupil will need a minimum of a grade 7 in the GCSE exam.

This gives the choice to pursue the Foundation route or the Higher route. The overlap topics for the two courses will be taught in Year 10, with the Higher topics being covered in Year 11.

For the majority of students, the Higher/Foundation decision is likely to fall at the end of Year 10, once a good variety of the topics have been covered and examined at the end of the year. For others, it will be a more nuanced choice which will need to be considered carefully with reference to future aims and plans a student may have. It is important to stress at this point that no firm decisions have been made, simply that the courses will reflect the fact that a decision is necessary at some point. The final decision for entry is February/March of Year 11 as required by AQA.

We therefore expect to arrange maths classes for year 10 into two rough groupings at this stage: those who are likely to aim for Foundation and those who are likely to aim for Higher. We anticipate the cut-off between these two groups to fall at around the grade 5 mark, based on performance in maths so far. The aim is to ensure each pupil is taught at his/her level of ability and motivation.

Once Year 10 study has been completed and examined, the intention is to revisit this process to consider more specifically the following categories:

- Students who are clearly working at Foundation level. These students will benefit from studying the Foundation topics in greater depth during Year 11 for more time to achieve the best possible results with the aspiration of gaining that pass grade.
- Students who are working around the borderline between Higher and Foundation. These students will likely be taught some of the Higher topics and will be supported in doing so.
- Students who are clearly working at Higher level topics (consistently achieving grades 6-9). These students will follow the Higher course in Year 11 covering topics in as much depth as possible.

At the end of year 10 it is possible that for some students a change of class/teacher may be necessary, in order to ensure they remain in an appropriate group but our intention is always to try to minimise these. Indeed, the current process of grouping for the beginning of Year 10 is aiming to keep these movements to a minimum in the future.

I hope that this outline is sufficiently clear to you, but as always if you wish to discuss these plans with reference to your son/daughter, please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address above.

Yours sincerely,



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