



26 May 2023

Dear Parents/Carers of

Year 11 Science - Separate Sciences and Combined Science

As part of the Year 10 assessment week in June, students will complete assessments in all three science subjects. Following these assessments, we will make recommendations to parents about whether students continue to follow the Separate Sciences course or change to the Combined Science course from the start of Year 11. This enables us to rearrange the current 5 Science classes to create 4 parallel Separate Science groups and 1 Combined Science group from September, and ensure that all students are given the best opportunity to maximise their attainment in Science at GCSE.

If we make the recommendation that your child changes to the Combined Science course from September, there are many advantages to this route which are summarised below. In our experience, students who have made the decision to change to the Combined Science course in the past have found this to be a very positive step in helping them to achieve their academic goals, both in Science and in their other GCSE subjects.

What is Combined Science?

The Combined Science GCSE qualification covers all three science disciplines; Biology, Chemistry and Physics. However, the content covered in each Science is reduced.

Students are awarded two grades for Science based on their overall performance across all three science subjects. These grades could be the same, e.g. 6-6 or 7-7, or different, e.g. 6-7 or 7-8. Two different grades simply signifies a student who is at an intermediate point between the standard required for a 6-6 grade, and the standard required for a 7-7 or higher grade.

All entries for Separate Sciences and Combined Science students are for higher tier. This means that Combined Science students can still achieve two grade 9s (9-9) and we have had students achieve this in recent years.

What are the advantages to my child following the Combined Science course?

They would have less content to learn and revise for each discipline than if they continued with Separate Sciences. This means that, in Year 11, teachers of the Combined Science group will be able to cover the remaining course content more slowly and spend more time on revision in

lessons. Because of the increased content of the Separate Science courses, revision in lessons is not usually possible in Year 11 until after the Easter holidays.

A low grade in one/two of their science subjects can be masked in Combined Science which is based on an average of all three disciplines. This can have a significant impact on their average point score (APS). A student who might achieve the grades 5, 5, 6 in Separate Sciences could achieve the grades 6-6 in Combined Science.

Is my child still able to study Science subjects at A-level?

Yes. If your child would like to study a science subject at A-level at Borlase, they would need to achieve at least two grade 7s (7-7) in GCSE Combined Science.

If my child studies a Science subject at A-level, would they be disadvantaged if they did Combined Science?

No. Each year, internal and external students who have followed the Combined Science route at GCSE join us in our A-level Science classes at Borlase. Indeed, approximately 75% of students nationally follow the Combined Science route at GCSE. All prospective A-level students are given summer work to complete in preparation for their A-level courses and our A-level teachers take into account that students have studied different exam boards and courses at GCSE.

We will be in a position to make recommendations to parents by letter before the end of the school year, after teachers have marked the Year 10 June assessments. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Blackwell (Combined Science Coordinator) or Mrs Parsons (Head of Science) via parents@.

Yours faithfully

Harry Blackwell
Head of Biology and Combined Science Coordinator