

Policy on Subject Options

Date of BoM Review: 10th February 2015

School Mission Statement

The aim of St Mary's Secondary School is to provide holistic education, in the Catholic tradition, for all our students. We are committed to the academic, creative, emotional, spiritual and physical development of each student, in a caring and safe environment.

Aims of school

- ❖ To enable the students to become fully developed and integrated persons. To prepare the students by academic and practical training for adult living and to promote in them a co-operative spirit so that they can make a constructive contribution to society.
- ❖ To enable the students to live in reverent relationship with all of creation and to nurture in them a respect for life and a care for the earth
- ❖ To enable the students to develop a healthy self image with the ability to adapt to a rapidly changing world and to live at peace within
- ❖ To nurture in the students:
 - A sense of their cultural identity
 - An appreciation of the diversity of cultures
- ❖ To assist the moral, social, cultural and political growth of the students

Introduction

The process of 'choosing subjects' begins early February annually. All students will receive a presentation by the Guidance Counsellor on subject choice in order to help students make choices for Junior Cert subjects and Leaving Cert subjects. Students may also gather information from students through the subject choice workshop with senior students. Parents will also be informed on subject choice in the following ways:

For Second year subject choice

- Parents will have an opportunity to discuss subjects at a talk given by the guidance counsellor.

For Fifth year subject Choice

- Parents are invited to attend a talk on subject choice held in St Marys by the guidance counsellor

Unlike the majority of schools, St Mary's does not use previously constructed subject bands. SUBJECT BANDS ARE CREATED FROM STUDENT PREFERENCES. Every effort is made to meet the preferences of students, there will always be situations where preferences cannot be met within the subjects bands. CONSIDERATION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO ENTRY REQUIREMENTS OF CAREER CHOICES.

Second Year Subject Choice

Subject choice

- All students study the core subjects Mathematics, Irish, English, Religion, CSPE, SPHE, Computers, PE, History, Geography and Science.
- All students study either French or Spanish (therefore French/Spanish should be written as No 1 in their option forms). Decisions around exemptions and supports are discussed on a case by case basis.
- Students select three subjects from the following list of subjects:

Art, Business studies, Home Economics, Materials Technology Wood and Music

Therefore students study:

- The core subjects above
- French or Spanish
- Two other optional subjects for their Junior Cert

Process

- Subject choice begins in late January or early February annually with a presentation by the Guidance Counsellor
- Students and parents will use a digital link to input their choices on their VSWARE account.

Options

- All students will fill in French/Spanish as their No 1 choice
- Students are advised to speak with subject teachers before making any decision
- The final day for return of Second Year options is in early May and will be communicated at the presentation with Guidance Counsellor
- After this date, Ms O'Keeffe Deputy Principal will work on creating bands based on student preferences.
- Students will be informed of their options before they break for summer holidays.
- The process then begins on timetabling by the Principal. Classes are based on student's subject choice and are so demand driven. There are classes where maximum numbers apply and will fill on a first come first served basis.
- Timetabling will continue throughout the summer months.

The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming process and thus there is no scope for change of subjects after the deadline of September 30th of the following academic year. It is dependent upon resources given by the department.

Fifth Year Subject Choice

Subject choice:

All students study the core subjects Irish, English, Maths, Religion, Guidance, LCVP/ECDL/ PE. Students then select five subjects in order of preference from the following optional subjects: French or Spanish, History, Geography, Home Economics, Business, Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Agricultural Science Art, and Music. Please note that when choosing a language students are asked to make this their number one preference. **In summary students study the core subjects above and four subjects from the above list.**

Huge efforts are made by St Marys to maintain this very broad range of subjects for students, **Options may have to be reduced, however, due to insufficient demand for a subject or lack of funding and resources by the DES.**

Making The Choice

- **When choosing Leaving Cert subjects great care must be taken as the choice of subjects made now may determine 3rd level and career options. It is imperative that you consult with our guidance counsellor for an individual appointment to check these. Students with SEN should consult to discuss impact of exemptions at senior cycle and third level.**
- Be aware of Minimum entry requirements and specific course requirements for 3rd level

We ask therefore that you go through the process of subject choice following the process outlined:

Research-----Discussion----- Reflection-----Decision

A 5th year options talk for parents will be held in St Marys annually mid/late Feb from 7:00-8:00 pm. We encourage all parents to attend this very important presentation. The deadline for return of 5th year options is normally mid March and is communicated at this meeting . Again option preferences are returned on the students VSWARE account.

After the deadline for return of subject options

- After this deadline the Deputy Principal will then go to work on creating subject bands based on student preferences and demand
- Students will be informed of their chosen subjects during May before summer holidays.

- The creation of classes and timetabling then begins by the Principal. Classes are created based on students' subject choice. **(Subjects may not be offered if there is insufficient demand)**
- Timetabling will continue during the summer months

The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming process, thus, we ask that parents and students take this process seriously by following advice given on choosing subjects.

The school is not in a position to support via staffing, timetabling, excursions, class change, or assessment, any pupil who has taken additional subjects outside of school. Students must attend class and participate in all of their chosen subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Leaving Certificate cycle. Students study 7 exam subjects on our timetable. They do not have free period where they cannot be unsupervised

Subject Change – Exceptional Circumstances

There may be some scope for subject choice change in exceptional circumstances during September. Applications must be made to the Principal in writing in conjunction with:

- The completion of 'Change of Mind' application form which must be submitted on or before September 30th. **'Change of Mind' applications will not be considered after September 30th.**
- A meeting with parents and student
- A guidance meeting with the Guidance Counsellor

The Principal will communicate her decision to the student and parents as soon as possible after receipt of application and meeting with parents. 'Change of mind' applications will not be considered after September 30th.

Note:

Section 28 of the Education Act allows for the Appeal of the Principals decision to the Board of Management

APPENDIX 1

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Subject choice has now begun for 1st years. As you are probably aware at this all your daughters have now attended a presentation on subject choice by the Guidance Counsellor.

Unlike the majority of schools we do not use previously created subject band. Our bands are created annually from student preference.

Thus every effort is made to meet the preferences of students get there will always be situations where preferences cannot be met within the subject bands.

Subject choice

All students study the core subjects Mathematics, Irish, English, Religion, CSPE, History, Geography and Science.

All students study either French or Spanish (therefore French/Spanish should be written as No 1 in their option forms)

Students select three subjects from the following list of subjects:

Art, Business studies, Home Economics, Materials Technology Wood and Music

Therefore students study The core subjects above

French or Spanish

Two other optional subjects for their Junior Cert

Process

- Subject choice has begun on February 6th with a presentation by the Guidance Counsellor
- During this week students will receive an option form similar to the one below

Options

- All students will fill in French/Spanish as their No 1 choice
- Students are advised to speak with subject teachers before making any decision
- There will be a Parent Teacher Meeting in February where you will have an opportunity to speak with individual teachers
- The final day for return of Second Year options is in late March.
- After the March deadline Ms Finn (DP) will work on creating bands based on student preferences.
- Students will be informed of their options during May 2012
- The process then begins on timetabling by the Principal. Classes are created by your daughter's subject choice.
- Timetabling will continue throughout the summer months.

As you can appreciate from the above, the process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming process.

APPENDIX 1A

Dear Parents,

As you are probably aware subject choice has now begun for 3rd and 4th years. All your daughters have now attended a very comprehensive presentation given by the guidance counsellor and thus have been well informed on their options for Leaving Certificate.

Unlike the majority of schools we do not use previously created subject bands.

E.g. Option band one: please choose from the following band:

Biology/Chemistry/Music/Art

Our bands are created annually from student preference and demand. Thus every effort is made to meet the preferences of students, yet, there will always be situations where preferences cannot be met within the subject groupings.

Subject choice:

All students study the core subjects Irish, English, Maths, Religion, Guidance, LCVP/ECDL, PE. Students then select five subjects in order of preference from the following optional subjects: French or Spanish, History, Geography, Home Economics, Business, Accounting, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Art, and Music. Please note that when choosing a language students are asked to make this their number one preference.

In summary students study the core subjects above and four subjects from the above list. Huge efforts are made by St Marys to maintain this very broad range of subjects for students, given the huge constraints in Department of Education funding both in terms of capitation and teacher allocation.

Making the choice

- When choosing Leaving Cert subjects great care must be taken as the choice of subjects made now may determine 3rd level and career options in two years time
- Be aware of Minimum entry requirements and specific course requirements for 3rd level
- Identify the subjects you like—it is easier to work on something you enjoy
- Note subjects you are good at
- Ask your subject teachers for advice
- If uncertain about your future career, choose a balance of subjects to keep options open
- Talk about options to your parents, guidance counsellor, online careers sites and Leaving Certificate students(remembering however that individuals have different competencies for different areas of study)
- Look at text books of subjects, exam papers and websites

We ask therefore that you go through the process of subject choice following the process outlined:

Research-----Discussion----- Reflection-----Decision

A 5th year options talk for parents will be held in St Marys on Monday evening Feb 9th from 7:00-8:00 pm. We encourage all parents to attend this very important presentation. The deadline for return of 5th year options is Friday March 20th .

After March 20th

- After March 20th, the Deputy Principal will then go to work on creating subject bands based on student preferences and demand
- Students will be informed of their chosen subjects during May 2012.
- The creation of classes and timetabling then begins by the Principal. Classes are created based on students' subject choice. **Subjects may not be offered if there is insufficient demand.**
- Timetabling will continue during the summer months

As you are aware from the above, the process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming process, thus we ask parents and students to **please take this process seriously** by following advice on choosing subjects.

The school is not in a position to support via staffing, timetabling, excursions, class change, or assessment, any pupil who has taken additional subjects outside of school.

Students must attend class and participate in all of their chosen subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Leaving Certificate cycle..

We wish parents and students every good luck in choosing subjects. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact us by phoning the school office to make an appointment.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms M Finn

Principal

Ms Y O'Keeffe

Deputy Principal

To be returned to the office on March

Student Name _____

Class _____

Note:

- when choosing a language please make it your first preference--- write as number one
- Number your other choices in order of preference—2,3,4,5
- If your preferences cannot be met we will discuss your options with you further to help make other choices.

French	
Spanish	
Accounting	
Art	
Biology	
Business	
Chemistry	
Geography	
History	
Home Economics	
Music	
Physics	

I/We understand that while every effort will be made to accommodate the choices above.....

- I/We realise that further discussion may be necessary regarding the options in the case of unavailability of subject due to lack of demand or other relevant circumstances
- **I/we understand that once this selection has been finalised one cannot drop or change any subject before the Leaving Certificate.**
- **I/we understand that the school cannot make any provision regarding staffing, timetabling, class change, or assessment for a student taking an additional subject outside of school.**

Student Signature _____

Parent/(Guardian)Signature _____

APPENDIX TWO

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Over the coming month your daughters have an important decision to make as to whether:

- To continue onto 5th year or
- To do Transition year

In order to help with this decision your daughters have now received two presentations on TY and 5th year options. In order to help you as parents, an information evening will be held here in St Marys on Monday Feb 27th comprising of two talks:

- 5th year subject choice 7-8pm
- Transition year talk 8-9 pm

I would recommend that all parents attend. Please find attached information with regard to 5th year subject choice. Application forms for Transition year will be given out on the night of the talk.

Looking forward to meeting with you.

Yours Sincerely,

M Finn

Principal