

STAYING ON FOR SIXTH YEAR

SOME QUESTIONS AND SOME ADVICE FOR FIFTH YEAR PUPILS ENTERING S6

1 Do you want another year at school?

Coming back for a sixth year is a positive choice, not an automatic progression. You need to weigh up your options carefully before deciding to stay on. Read the section in this booklet “Careers Information” which gives advice on Higher and Further Education entrance requirements as well as employment.

2 What will you be offered?

One more year of teaching and support within the school community, so that you can improve your qualifications and prepare yourself for moving on either to employment or into tertiary education.

3 How is the Sixth Year timetable made up?

Most pupils will study a mixture of Highers and Advanced Highers but it is also possible to take Intermediate/National courses and units. S6 pupils are expected to choose 5 subjects unless they are studying 4 Highers (or a mix of Highers and Advanced Highers) where they can choose a study column.

You should aim to:

- build on your SQA Intermediate or Unit Courses in S5, taking either further Intermediates/Nationals or Units or Higher

Grade in those subjects;

- take new subjects which will broaden your knowledge either as SQA Intermediates or Units or (with departmental agreement) as “Crash” Highers;

- resit Higher subjects in which your S5 results were disappointing, aiming to pass or upgrade;

- take your strongest Higher pass(es) on to the Advanced Higher, where more advanced and independent study will help you make the transition to Higher Education.

Higher Psychology will be taught by staff from Elmwood College. This Higher will be part of the normal 5 period choice. Two of these periods will be taught in school and 3 will be additional Independent Study.

The timetable you construct in consultation with the Year Team will probably be a mixture of these options, depending on your expected results and your future aspirations.

4 Independent Study

For some, your fifth column will be allocated to Private Study, giving you more freedom but also more responsibility for managing your own time. You need to use this year to develop your independent study skills, especially if you are planning to go on to University or College. The motivation for study has now to come from your own interest and selfdiscipline rather than pressure from teachers and parents, although both will still be there to give you encouragement.

Study periods will initially be spent in the school library or common room/canteen. Once timetables are established you may, given your parent's written consent, sign out to go to the University library, for example, or to undertake school service.

5 Choosing Carefully

Even if you are not sure at present whether you will stay on or not, you should complete a Course Choice Sheet.

New courses begin in June. If you leave in May, readmission will only be possible if there are exceptional circumstances.

Your choices at this stage should be carefully made. Read the course descriptions in this booklet carefully. Consult staff and also pupils who are taking the subjects now.

- Think about the balance of your course. Advanced Higher Courses involve extensive independent study; it would be very demanding to plan to take more than two subjects at this level.
- Think about subjects which will complement your present area of study or allow you to change direction if your ideas have developed during Fifth Year.
- Think about subjects which you dropped earlier or were unable to choose because your timetable in S3 or S5 was already full.
- Think flexibly and adventurously, but make sure you are committed to your final choices.

When you know your results, it may be that you will need to alter one or two of your choices because of unexpected failure or success. This process is usually complete by late August/early September. After that, you will be committed to your course of four subjects. **It is a condition of remaining at school that you study four subjects** and any exceptions will require special discussion with the Year Team.

As in Fifth Year, a review takes place after the Prelims in February 2015. If you have been offered an unconditional place in Higher Education by then, you may decide to leave. However, **if you remain at school you will normally be expected to complete all four courses**, including sitting SQA examinations in May 2014.

So don't choose a subject that doesn't really matter to you, thinking you can always drop it later. If you only want to continue with three or fewer subjects, college is probably the better option for you at this stage.

6 Responsibility and Leadership

Beyond your academic commitments, Sixth Year will give you the opportunity to develop maturity and confidence.

You will be invited to join committees organising school, social and charity events; to assist at school functions and represent the school at local events; to become involved with junior pupils in class and extra-curricular events; to captain and lead, for example in sport, music, drama and debating. More will be expected of you as an active, responsible individual and your views and constructive suggestions may be sought through the Pupil Council, the House System, Social Education, the Parent Council and the Community Council. What you say will be respected and taken seriously.

You are choosing, in other words, to become an influential person in the community which is Madras College. You need to think carefully about what it will mean. High standards will be expected of you, setting an example to younger pupils in such areas as the school dress code, your class attendance and punctuality and your general behaviour, both inside school and around the town.

7 Is it for You?

Are you happy to continue to conform to the rules, or do you feel you are ready for greater independence? It may be that you would be better suited leaving and entering employment or continuing your studies at College. The choice is an open one and you will receive help and support from the House Team should you decide to apply for work or College.

8 Taking responsibility for your decision

Here are some reasons often given by pupils for staying on, with some responses to be considered.

1 *“I need more qualifications: I didn’t get enough in Fifth Year”.*

Are you facing up honestly to the demands of your courses this year? Have you the motivation for advanced study? Learn from your Fifth Year experience and make the changes required.

2 *“I’ll have to stay at school because I’ve not made any plans or put in any applications.”*

You need to start planning your future now. Before you return to Sixth Year, the university application procedure will start. You will need to decide quickly what you hope to study or the area of employment you are aiming at.

If you expect good qualifications from S5, have you considered taking time out to work or travel, instead of a Sixth Year at school? Your UCAS application can be processed for you even though you have left.

3 *“I feel safe with the school routine and amongst my friends: I don’t feel ready to leave yet.”* Fine.

This year can be used to prepare yourself but you need to give as well as take. Enjoy your friends’ company, but make sure you are contributing to the school as a whole. Being fully involved in the work and activities of Sixth Year will help you build maturity and confidence.

4 *“I think it’ll be an easy year.”*

Why waste a year of your life? You commit yourself to a course of study and must be accountable for your use of time.

9 Finally... the basis of the contract

Sixth Year can be the most rewarding of your whole school career. In particular, your relationships with staff can be relaxed and friendly. You can enjoy working with them and sharing their interest in their subjects at a mature level of study and co-operation.

All this can only be built on your growing independence and sense of responsibility. There is no place for conflict and you should be clear that should this happen, you will not be punished: you will simply be asked to leave.