

Curriculum Reform September 2016

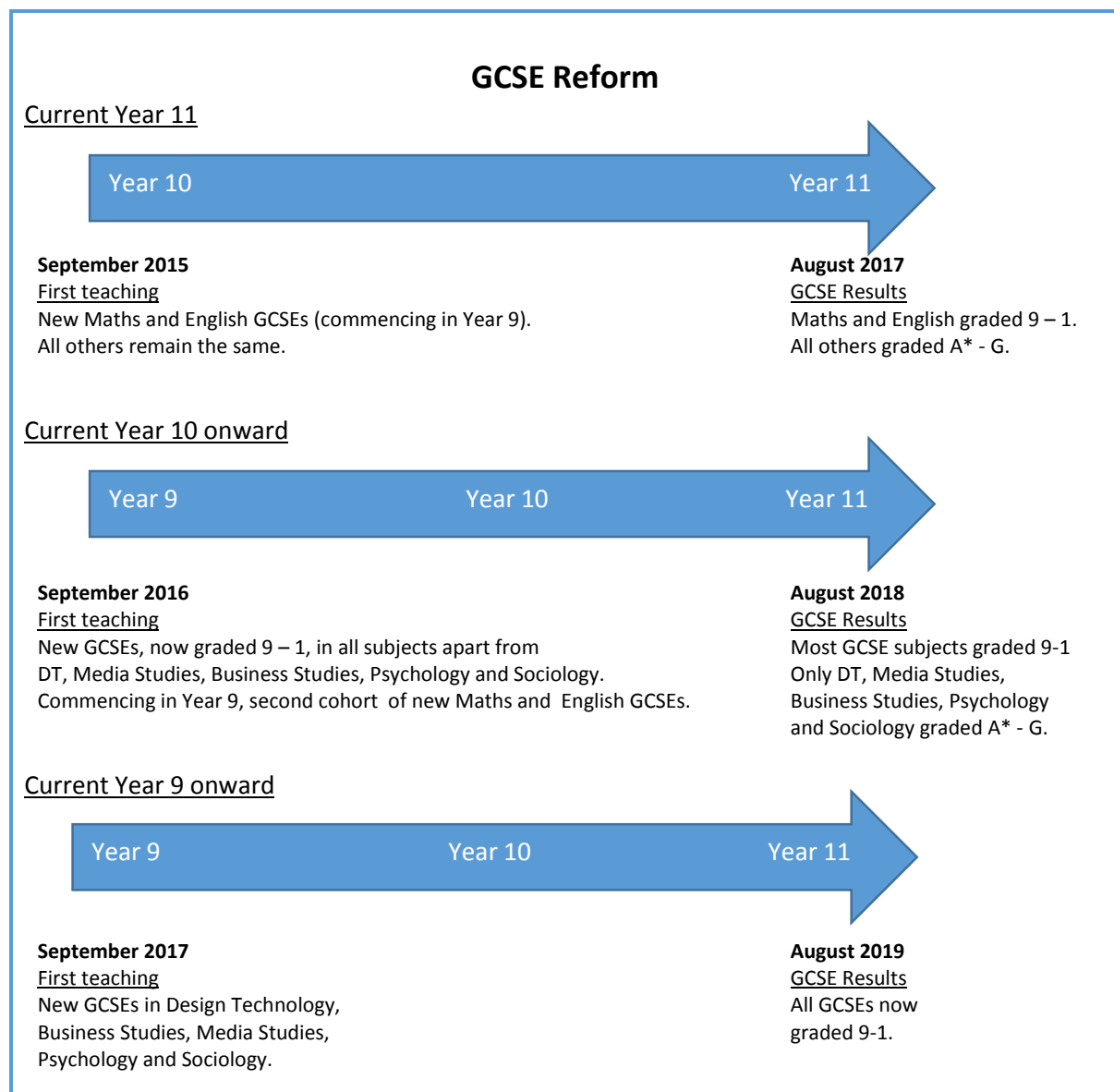
GCSE Reform

There is much in the news regarding upcoming reforms to GCSE and A Level qualifications and I would like to take this opportunity to outline the changes and how we are managing them to ensure the best outcomes for our students.

From September 2015 new GCSEs in English Language, English Literature and Maths were taught for the first time; the new specifications were designed to be more rigorous and will follow the new numerical grading system. While most other GCSEs are planned for reform and first teaching from September 2016, our current Year 11 students are following a selection of GCSE subjects that will result in both numerical and alphabetical grades being achieved come results day in August 2017. Current Year 10 students will be awarded numerical grades for all GCSEs in August 2018, except for Design Technology, Business Studies, Media Studies, Psychology and Sociology.

A more tangible change associated with the reforms is that new GCSEs will be graded using a scale of 9-1; 9 being the highest and where a new grade 7 is equivalent to the bottom of a current A grade. This means that students who currently achieve A grades or better should expect to achieve a new grade 7 or better in reformed GCSE subjects. OFQUAL have made it clear that students who are within the top 20% of those achieving at least a grade 7 will be expected to achieve the top grade 9.

The diagram below illustrates the changes at GCSE:



A Level Reform

Reflecting changes to GCSE, A Levels are also in the process of being reformed. While these reforms are resulting in changes to course content by increasing the level of demand and rigour of the qualifications, the nature of assessment is not changing significantly and so students will continue to receive alphabetical grades come the summer exam results' day.

The most notable change is that AS levels are being *decoupled* from A Levels (currently called A2) which means that AS exam performance will no longer contribute toward the A Level mark in the manner that it currently does. Indeed, the intention is to create a system whereby AS Level sits between and distinctly separate to GCSE and A Level, rather than the current state where AS levels are a stepping stone towards A2.

In September 2015, eleven subjects that we offered began to be taught to new A Level specifications with the remaining subjects being prepared for first teaching in 2016 and 2017 (three phases). Those subjects that were reformed in September 2015 are: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, English Literature, English Language & Literature, History, Art & Design, Business Studies, Sociology and Psychology. All but Maths, Further Maths, Government & Politics, ICT, Media Studies and DT will follow in September 2016, with the remaining six subjects anticipated for first teaching in September 2017. A link below outlines the timeline of changes.

While reformed A Levels subjects have decoupled AS and A Level, most students at Hatch End High School are still expected to sit AS exams at the end of Year 12, alongside non-reformed subjects unless we feel their performance is not confident enough. This allows for parity between subjects whilst helping to underpin our strong university application process.

All Harrow Schools are carefully reviewing whether to continue with the formal AS qualifications being taken in Year 12.

The diagram below illustrates the changes at A Level:



Below are a series of links to websites that outline the reforms in more detail:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/get-the-facts-gcse-and-a-level-reform/get-the-facts-as-and-a-level-reform>

New Maths GCSE – <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/mathematics-2015.html>

New English Language GCSE – <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700>

New English Literature GCSE – <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702>