Dear Parents,

One of the core strengths of Oxford High School has always been our focus on academic excellence. The outstanding exam results achieved by our girls in 2015 (76.4% A*/A at A Level and 94.7% A*/A at GCSE, our highest ever percentage) and the judgement of ‘exceptional’ for achievement in our recent inspection report highlight this strength. At a time of significant change in GCSEs and A Levels, we believe it is crucial that we revise our curriculum so that we can continue to face the external challenge of the re-modelled public exam system with justifiable confidence, maintaining the academic rigour and depth that are hallmarks of our school. In addition, we are making changes to the co-curriculum, the programme of activities that complement the subject-based curriculum and increase the breadth of the education we provide.

The revised Oxford High School curriculum allows subject study in depth, with broad and balanced subject combinations, and provides significant enrichment opportunities that support academic study whilst preparing girls for the changing workplace of the future. It helps to achieve our ultimate aim of confident women doing something that they love.

This letter describes the key features of our enhanced offer. Please see the attached document for full details of the revised curriculum. This will take effect in September 2016.

Sixth Form – 360 Programme

Our new Sixth Form curriculum has been created with an awareness that intellectual achievement begins but does not end with excellent examination results, and success in girls’ future careers is likely to require more than academic prowess.

A Levels remain at the core of the Sixth Form programme and the appropriate amount of time will be allocated to these. In future, A Levels will be fully linear rather than modular and girls will sit A Level exams only at the end of Year 13. With no public exams in Year 12, there will be greater freedom for girls to discover and explore particular interests, and take risks. This will promote independence and is better preparation for university study. Girls will also take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and at least one module of Critical Thinking.
The 360 Programme will include a series of electives, which are inspirational and rigorous short courses that go beyond A Level study, complementing or contrasting with girls’ chosen A Level subjects.

The Perspectives element of the Programme is designed to support students in understanding and developing their relationship with the world they live in. There will be modules on health, wellbeing, careers, and financial management; leadership and volunteering opportunities within the local community; and workshops on political, economic, and humanitarian issues.

Electives and Perspectives will not only enrich Sixth Form study and prepare girls for the future, they will develop skills that contribute to A Level success.

**GCSE**

New GCSE specifications are being introduced with more content and a tougher grading system. In order to maintain the current depth and rigour of study, we are increasing the teaching time allocated to subjects, without sacrificing the time available for co-curricular activities.

Girls will continue to take nine or ten GCSEs in total. Nine or ten excellent GCSE results will remain a secure platform for our girls in their applications for higher education. The number of optional subjects at GCSE will support the full range of subject combinations that our girls currently choose in the Sixth Form.

Biology, Chemistry, and Physics will be offered as separate subjects leading to three GCSEs. This will enable our girls to study these popular subjects in greater depth at this level.

We continue to expect that girls study a modern foreign language for GCSE.

**KS3**

Latin will be studied from Year 7 (a year earlier than at present); pupils will then be able to take up Ancient Greek from Year 8.

After studying both French and Mandarin in Year 7, girls will be able to choose any two modern languages from a list of six to study from Year 8. We recommend that girls continue with one of the languages studied in Year 7 and take one ‘new’ language: German, Italian, Russian, or Spanish. This will increase the range of options available within our languages curriculum and provide greater continuity of study for the girls.

For girls in Year 9 in September 2017, we will be increasing the teaching time for most subjects: typically from two lessons per week to three. Girls will choose five subjects from the humanities, languages, and Computer Science. We expect them to choose two humanities and two languages; the fifth subject should be an additional humanity, an additional language, or Computer Science.
Kaleidoscope Programme

This is a new programme, running alongside the subject-based curriculum, to replace TLC, Year 10 Compass, and Year 11 Complementary Studies. Consolidating some activities that already take place, it adds new opportunities that enhance our co-curriculum. The aim of these is a broad understanding and love of subjects, readiness for the workplace of the future, and the ability and confidence to make a positive impact in the wider world.

With a weekly schedule of activities throughout Years 7–11, the programme will have four parts:

- **Academic**: extension activities created by subject departments to inspire a love of learning and develop higher order thinking skills
- **Cultural**: educational visits to museums, galleries, places, and events, supporting and enriching other aspects of the curriculum
- **Wellbeing**: physical and mental health; additional sporting opportunities, including inter-house tournaments; dance, fitness, and martial arts
- **Wider world**: key issues for the future, and how girls can have a positive impact both in and out of their working lives

New Timetable

In order to deliver our promise of maintaining depth and enhancing the co-curriculum, we will be introducing a new timetable in September 2016. The start and finish times of the school day will not change for 2016–2017. The start and finish times of individual periods are still being considered. We will move from a position where most lessons in Year 7–11 are 35 minutes long, and some are 1 hour 15 minutes long, to a position where most lessons are 1 hour 5 minutes long, and some are 30 minutes long. In the Sixth Form, some lessons will be 1 hour 40 minutes long.

While much in the external environment is changing, and the curriculum has to reflect this, the fundamental values and aims of the school remain the same: a world-class educational experience that puts girls first and has academic excellence at its heart.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Nicholl
Deputy Head – Academic

Judith Carlisle
Head