

## **St. Louis Secondary School – Junior Certificate Curriculum**

In the recent past, the Junior Certificate curriculum has been undergoing a lot of change. Civic, Social and Political Education (C.S.P.E.) was introduced some years ago and all students must take it in the Junior Certificate Examination. Religion has now become an examinable subject and last September, 2003, Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) became compulsory, although non-examinable. This, coupled with the fact that St. Louis students are taking a total now of 14 subjects (12 for examination), encouraged us to consider some changes to our existing curriculum.

The current First Years started with us last September and made their subject choices before they arrived into the school. These are the subjects they will take to Junior Certificate level.

We are introducing a new and more flexible model this coming September and your daughters will be the first beneficiaries. At this stage you have received a subject choice form and you will have noticed that your daughter is taking practically all of the subjects on offer. In fact she will take all but two of the entire complement of 17 subjects taught in St. Louis in the junior cycle. At the end of her First Year, she will then make her final subject choices which she will take to Junior Certificate level.

### **Year 1:**

Core Subjects: Irish, English, Mathematics, Religion, History, Geography, French, Science, Music, Business, P.E., C.S.P.E., S.P.H.E.

Options: 2 subjects from the following: Art, German, Home Economics, Technology.

Students take a total of 15 subjects in 1st Year

### **Year 2 & 3:**

Core Subjects: Irish, English, Mathematics, Religion, History, Geography, French or German, P.E., C.S.P.E., S.P.H.E.

Options: 3 subjects from the following: Art, Business, German, Home Economics, Music, Science, Technology.

Students must have taken all three subjects during 1st Year

Students take a total of 13 (11 for examination) subjects in 2nd and 3rd Year and will drop two subjects from 1st Year.

### Advantages:

- As a result of these changes, there is a class period available per week throughout the three years for Pastoral Care/class meetings/guidance counselling.
- A student gets the opportunity to try out a range of subjects in her 1st Year without the pressure of continuing with some of them up to her Junior Cert.
- Every student will take subjects such as Science, French, Music and Business for at least one year.
- Students can still have the option to take two languages, i.e. French and German through to Junior Certificate (with every student taking at least one continental language).
- The subject load has been reduced by one and the broad base of subject choice has been retained.

In 1st Year students are placed in home classes which are mixed ability i.e. no banding/streaming takes place. Teachers pursue common course work with all the classes and common tests regularly take place particularly in Irish, English and Mathematics.

At the end of 1st Year:

Final subject choices have to be made and these subjects will be taken at Junior Certificate level.

The students will remain in their home classes from 1st Year and subject such as Irish, English and Mathematics will be banded i.e. your daughter will be placed in a class which best suits her ability level. All Irish, English, Maths. classes are timetabled at the same periods each day to allow for flexibility of movement between the bands. Some banding may occur for subjects such as French and Business which usually have a high uptake with students. All other subjects are mixed ability.

The home class mainly stays the same from 1st through to 6th Year – there are usually some changes due to students opting to take Transition Year.

Irish, English and Mathematics are available at three levels for Junior Certificate – Foundation, Ordinary and Higher. All others can be taken at Ordinary or Higher levels.

**ICT:** all 1st and 2nd Year students take a 6 week course in ICT where time is taken from the timetable to operate this.

**Leaving Certificate implications:** subject choice at this stage is very important and seriously affects Leaving Certificate options and subsequent career opportunities. We recommend that you give careful consideration to your daughter's ultimate choice of subjects. This model allows her to become familiar with a range of subjects before making a final choice for Junior Certificate.