



The Government of Sark

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A COMMITTEE OF THE CHIEF PLEAS OF SARK
COMMITTEE OFFICE, LA CHASSE MARETTE, SARK GY10 1SF

Dear Sark Resident,

August 2015

GCSE at Sark School

This information is being provided due to the recent circulation of inaccurate information including the Sark First postcard. The information given in this letter is accurate and up to date and is already in the public domain.

Further information can be found on the school website www.sarkschool.co.uk or by contacting the Headteacher, Sarah Cottle at head@school.sark.gg. Alternatively, please contact the Education Committee on education@gov.sark.gg

Background

Until 2004 pupils did not have the opportunity to study for GCSEs at Sark School. If parents wanted their children to achieve formal qualifications they had no alternative but to send their child to school in Guernsey or the UK.

In 2004 with the opening of the new school building, better IT facilities and increased staffing, for the first time pupils were able to study for a limited number of GCSEs supported by distance learning providers.

The principle provider was Nisai Virtual Academy which offered GCSE courses in English, maths, science, additional science and business and communications systems. This meant that pupils could achieve 5 GCSEs. The cost of each subject was £500 per term. This meant that with all subjects being 2 years with the exception of science and additional science which were 1 year courses, the total cost of achieving 5GCSEs was £12,000.

These costs were paid by parents.

Moving Forward Since 2010

Since 2010 the school has sought ways to not only reduce the considerable cost of GCSEs but also to increase the number of subjects available for study.

To support pupils further it has also become the expectation that pupils will stay at school full time until the completion of their studies and exams at the end of Year 11, age 16 rather than leave school at the end of Year 10, age 15.

The Situation Now

The school uses three distance learning providers:

Nisai Virtual Academy, Oxford Open Learning and Wolsey Hall, Oxford.

Pupils can study for GCSEs [or International GCSEs] in English, maths, biology, physics, psychology, business studies, religious studies, geography, history, sociology and economics as well as an ITQ level 2 certificate [IT qualification equivalent to a GCSE at Grades A – C].

All pupils are given the opportunity to achieve 5 GCSEs including maths and English as this is the minimum requirement to progress to Level 3 qualifications [ie 'A' levels]. At present all pupils are studying for 6 GCSEs.

Pupils take their GCSE exams at Guernsey Grammar School as Sark School is too small to be an examination centre.

Costs

Subjects supported through the Nisai Virtual Academy cost £500 a term making a total cost of £1500 for a 1 year course and £3000 for a 2 year course.

Oxford Open Learning courses cost £300 per subject.
Wolsey Hall, Oxford courses cost £330 per subject.

These costs are paid by parents. Additional costs such as text books and other materials as well as exam entry fees are paid for by school.

The majority of pupils choose to study for an ITQ which is only available through Nisai and is a 1 year course. They then study for a range of other subjects.

Examples of typical costs paid by parents

A – 6 GCSEs

ITQ through Nisai + maths, English, history, geography and a science through either Oxford Open Learning or Wolsey Hall

Total Cost for the two year courses= **£3060**

B – 6 GCSEs

ITQ & maths through Nisai + psychology, business studies, history and geography through Oxford Open Learning or Wolsey Hall

Total Cost for the two year courses = **£5730**

C – 6 GCSEs

Maths, English, business studies, religious studies, psychology and sociology through Oxford Open Learning

Total Cost for the two year courses= **£1200**

The Future

By continually seeking ways to improve support in school, pupils are achieving increasing success in their GCSE exams with good grades [A to C] being achieved in many subjects including English and Maths in the past 3 years.

The school will continue to work with distance learning providers to improve provision whilst trying to keep costs as low as possible for parents who will continue to pay for course fees as agreed by Chief Pleas, when GCSEs were first introduced.

**Conseiller Christine Audrain
Chairman, Education Committee**