



Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre

OPTIONS BOOKLET 2023

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Letter to Parents and Students



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

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Dear Parents and Students

At Highdown School & Sixth Form Centre our core value is the way in which we work together to ensure our students reach their full potential and maximise their success. This booklet is designed to provide the necessary guidance at this important time in the student's academic career to help select the best subject/qualification combinations for further study.

Since joining Highdown, students have followed a broad range of subjects. After Year 9, students will study a smaller number of subjects in order to take GCSEs or other qualifications in the summer of 2025.

It is therefore time to consider all the subjects students currently study and decide on the best options for them in September 2023. Highdown staff will guide students to the most suitable study programme based on analysis of data and appropriateness for each individual student. We will of course discuss the study programme with both students and parents if they are interested in a different programme or have questions. Each student will follow a study programme (combination of subjects) which meets their needs and will give them the best opportunity to succeed.

Please read this booklet carefully together and discuss the recommended study programme and combinations of subjects on offer. A timeline is provided to illustrate dates by which decisions should be made. Please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Flynn, Mr Lester or Mr Franks if you have any questions.

It is worth stressing that the decisions made now are very important as the subjects chosen will be studied for a further two years and will have an impact on the options available to students after Year 11. Each study programme provides progression to post 16 education and/or training. Ensure you take time to speak to staff, including subject teachers and mentors, and ask as many questions as you need so that you can confidently make the correct choices.

The first section of this booklet provides guidance on the most appropriate study programme and how to choose your option subjects. The second section then provides some details about the option subjects in order to help you make your selection. Please ask as many questions as you need and remember that Highdown staff are here to help.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Flynn
Assistant Headteacher

Joe Lester
Head of Achievement Year 9



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Introduction

OUR VISION

We are committed to ensuring that every Highdown student will experience a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum and will follow a personalised combination of courses, subjects and qualifications, which will best meet their needs and in which they can maximise their success, enabling progression to further education or training. Our curriculum aims to develop successful, confident, independent, responsible and resilient young people who are well prepared for, and progress on to, further and higher education and/or employment.

KEY STAGE 4 STUDY PROGRAMMES

At Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre we offer three Study Programmes through Years 10 and 11. A **Study Programme** refers to a combination of subjects and qualifications that a student will study in addition to the Core Curriculum.

The **Core Curriculum** includes GCSE English Language, GCSE English Literature, GCSE Mathematics, GCSEs in Science and the study of non-GCSE courses in Physical Education and PSHE. All students will study the Core Curriculum.

We have made a change this year to our core curriculum by removing the need for all students to study either GCSE Religious Studies or GCSE Citizenship. These subjects will remain as options for those students that want to take them. Elements of these subjects are incorporated into our PSHE programme so that all students continue to have access to these important subjects. A consequence of this change is that students will have an additional option choice compared to those students currently in Key Stage 4. The total number of GCSEs taken however, remains unchanged compared to current Key Stage 4.

It is our belief that students should study certain subjects in order to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum. The majority of students will study either a humanity (Geography or History) or a language. These subjects ensure further development of key literacy, data handling, explanation, analysis and evaluation skills. Such skills are essential for both further education and to improve employability, in addition to complementing all courses at Key Stage 4.

We will recommend a Study Programme, communicated via email to parents and students, which we feel will provide the best opportunity for success and for progression post-16. We strongly recommend a broad and balanced curriculum is taken by all students and will meet students whom we feel have chosen subjects that provide a curriculum that is too narrow. All study programmes lead to well-established and recognised qualifications. There are two types of qualifications taught at Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre, GCSEs and Level 1/2 technical (applied) courses.

(i) Study Programmes

| EBacc Programme | Main Programme | Technical Programme |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Students will select GCSEs in both a humanity and a language in addition to two other GCSE subjects. | Students will select a GCSE in either a humanity or a language in addition to three other GCSE subjects. | Students will select a GCSE in either a humanity or a language and one Technical subject in addition to two other GCSE subjects. |

The EBacc (English Baccalaureate) refers to the study of English, Mathematics, Science, a humanity (Geography or History) and a language at GCSE. While the focus at this stage is on study in Years 10 and 11, students should also consider education beyond Year 11, considering routes to University. The English Baccalaureate includes academic subjects highly valued by the Russell Group but it is not required for entry to any Russell Group university. However, a study by the UCL Institute of Education shows that studying subjects included in the EBacc provides students with greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that a pupil will stay on in full-time education. Studying these subjects now and doing well at them may help students access the top UK universities in the future.

Introduction continued

The Technical Programme is designed for students who will benefit from a more practical and ongoing form of assessment. Students will gain a range of personal, social and employability skills through learning in different applied contexts.

(ii) Qualifications and assessment

GCSEs are graded 9-1 with grade 5 being considered a strong pass and Grade 4 being a standard pass. Grade 5 is equivalent to a high C/low B and Grade 9 would be a very high A* in *old money*.

Level 1/2 Technical subjects are equivalent to GCSEs in value, and focus on acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills through practical, work-related activities in a real-life context. Unlike GCSE, assessment is mainly through portfolio-based assessment, which is externally moderated. They also have exams at the end of Year 11. Technical qualifications have a proven track record of supporting students into further education, apprenticeships and employment. Recent research by the London School of Economics (LSE) has shown that Technical qualifications can open doors for students, improving employability by up to 8%. The Department of Education recognises the importance of applied education as it provides students invaluable opportunities to develop their potential. Indeed, they recognise up to three Technical Awards in their new school performance measures. Sometimes Level 1/2 courses are viewed as an 'easy option'. This is certainly not true. Technical Awards are rigorous and challenging courses but how they are assessed will help ensure students are successful in these, enabling them to progress to post-16 education or training. Level 1/2 qualifications are graded using Distinction, Merit, Pass and Fail.

(iii) Choices

In September students will begin subjects which they will study for two years, leading to GCSE or equivalent qualifications. The choices they make now can have an effect on the routes/options that are open to them in the future in terms of education, training and employment.

To give everyone the widest possible choice, Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre offers over twenty subjects in Years 10 and 11. It would be impossible to study this number of subjects all at once, so students have to make some choices. Some subjects will be new to students and students interested in one of these courses should speak to the Curriculum Leader or one of the subject teachers to find out more before making any choices. Curriculum leaders have also made short presentations about the subjects that they offer to support students making their choices. These presentations can be found on the school website - <https://www.highdown.reading.sch.uk/year-9-options>

Students need to choose subjects carefully, bearing in mind:

- which subjects they like
- which subjects they are likely to do well at
- the sort of job they would like to do in the future
- which subjects will help them achieve in Year 11 enabling them to progress to post-16 education or training

Will students get what they ask for? We will do our best to ensure that students get their first preferences. However, this is not always possible in an open option system due to student uptake of subjects. In the past most students have got their first preferences, but as we cannot guarantee this, **serious thought must be given to both reserve choices**. There are some combinations of subjects that may not be studied together, which are listed on the options form. These are established to ensure a breadth of curriculum is studied. If a course is oversubscribed the following criteria would be used to assign places.

- Meeting options form deadlines.
- Order of preference of subjects chosen.
- Ready to Learn grades.
- Evidence of commitment to the subject both in lessons and beyond the classroom.
- Possible career path.
- Teacher recommendation.

If courses are undersubscribed they will be withdrawn from our offer.

After students have completed their options forms if their chosen options do not fit, or if there is some other reason why students should change them, we will talk with them to discuss their preferences.

Can students change their mind later? No, because every subject starts a two-year course in September; if they start a new course later they will have a lot of very difficult catching up to do. That is why it is important to think hard about the choices now.

Students will need two years of hard work, excellent effort and resilience starting in September if they are going to achieve the best possible results. Students must also remember that key stage 3 practices the foundation for future success, therefore they must continue to work hard in all subjects in Year 9.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Students must talk about their choices with their family and can also ask older siblings/friends for advice. In school, students should talk to their subject teachers, who will give the best advice about each subject. Mentors (tutors) will give general advice, but if students are not sure how the system works, or which subjects combine together, Mrs Flynn, Mr Lester or Mr Franks will provide further guidance.

Students can also access careers advice and resources via the school website (school information/careers).

The adviza website is also very useful. Once on the website students should follow the link for young people.
www.adviza.org.uk

Finally, staff at school have huge experience in guiding students and have access to lots of data that can help in making decisions. If we feel that a student is making choices that they will find difficult we will speak to the student and contact home.

Options Timetable

| DATE | EVENT |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 21 February | Student Assembly Year 9 Parent Information, Advice and Guidance recorded presentation |
| WB 20 February/WB 27 February | Information, Advice and Guidance weeks |
| Monday 6 March | Office365 Options Form released |
| Friday 17 March | Deadline for submission of Office365 Options Form |
| Term 5 | Subject choices will be finalised as soon as is possible |

Contact details

Mr J Lester, Head of Achievement, Year 9

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Course information...

GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss H Eveleigh

Why study English Language and English Literature?

English Language and English Literature are not options for GCSE; they are essential subjects that everyone in the country must study. Here are a few reasons why: -

- English helps you to read and write more accurately and with greater fluency, which is a must for every job in the world!
- In English, we also help you improve your speaking and listening skills, which again are essential in every job and needed for everything we do in our day-to-day life.
- Most importantly, we help you to explore the written and spoken world around you, covering everything from newspapers and texting to political debating and poetry.

What will I study?

- Reading - Non-Fiction Texts, Poetry, Modern Drama, Shakespeare, Prose from Different Cultures, Classical Prose.
- Writing - Creative Writing, Non-Fiction Texts, Media.
- Speaking and Listening - Presenting, Discussing and Listening, Role Playing.

How will I be assessed?

All students will follow the linear GCSE exams for both English Language and English Literature.

Examinations will take place at the end of Year 11 and will be graded using the new grading system.

Students will be able to access the whole range of grades (9 - 1) for both subjects, as neither English Language nor English Literature are tiered.

English Language

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

- A written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 80 marks
- 50% GCSE Language

Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

- A written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 80 marks
- 50% GCSE Language

Non-examination Assessment: Spoken Language

- Teacher assessed throughout the course
- Marked by the teacher
- Separate endorsement
- 0% of GCSE Language

English Literature

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19 Century Novel

- A written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes

Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry

- A written examination: 2 hours and 15 minutes

Course Information...

GCSE Maths

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr W Dineley

Why study Mathematics?

The society in which you live expects everyone to know certain basic Mathematics and be able to use it in everyday life. Due to its importance every student studies the subject to the end of Year 11. As you study Mathematics in Year 10 and 11, you will develop an appreciation that Mathematics is not a collection of unrelated parts, but is about relationships.

What will I study?

The Mathematics course you will follow will help you to: -

- Think clearly and critically and work through a problem requiring many steps.
- Develop the skills of logical reasoning and of planning a strategy to solve problems.
- Understand and use mathematical language and symbols efficiently and sensibly.
- Present and understand information in a variety of forms – words, numbers, diagrams, tables, graphs etc.
- Recognise patterns and structures in a variety of situations and form generalisations.
- Where appropriate, estimate and approximate answers to required degrees of accuracy.
- Improve the quality of written communication.

How will I be assessed?

All students will follow the linear GCSE exam. Examinations will take place at the end of Year 11. Examinations are at one of two levels – Higher (9 - 4) or Foundation (5-1). There is no controlled assessment for this GCSE. Any of the content can be assessed in any of the three exam papers. The assessment pattern is the same for both Higher and Foundation.

Paper 1 (non-calculator)

- 1 hour 30 minutes
- written exam
- 80 marks
- $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ of GCSE

Paper 2 (calculator)

- 1 hour 30 minutes
- written exam
- 80 marks
- $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ of GCSE

Paper 3 (calculator)

- 1 hour 30 minutes
- written exam
- 80 marks
- $33\frac{1}{3}\%$ of GCSE

Course Information...

GCSE Science

Course information

Curriculum Leader: Ms M Elliott

Why study Science?

It is compulsory for all students to study Science until the end of Year 11. This is the basis to all studies in Science and is begun by all students in Year 9. Students divide their time equally between the three disciplines of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

What will I study?

We have two Science routes: -

- GCSE Biology, GCSE Chemistry and GCSE Physics - students must follow all three separate courses
- GCSE Combined Science (Trilogy) - students follow courses in Biology, Chemistry and Physics but take examinations leading to GCSE Combined Science
- Both Science routes allow access to A Level in each of the Science disciplines

GCSE Sciences

GCSE Biology

1. Cell biology
2. Organisation
3. Infection and response
4. Bioenergetics
5. Homeostasis and response
6. Inheritance, variation and evolution
7. Ecology

GCSE Chemistry

1. Atomic structure and the periodic table
2. Bonding, structure and the properties of matter
3. Quantitative chemistry
4. Chemical changes
5. Energy changes
6. The rate and extent of chemical change
7. Organic chemistry
8. Chemical analysis
9. Chemistry of the atmosphere
10. Using resources

GCSE Physics

1. Forces
2. Energy
3. Waves
4. Electricity
5. Magnetism and electromagnetism
6. Particle model of matter
7. Atomic structure
8. Space Physics

Assessment: Each GCSE Science has two examinations of 105 minutes with each paper having at least 15% of questions on the compulsory practical work and 10% of questions using the required mathematical skills.

GCSE Combined Science (Trilogy)

Has the same general content as the separate sciences but has shorter examinations of 75 minutes per paper (two per subject giving a total of six to gain the Combined Science Qualification). The mathematical requirement for this course is the same but there are fewer required practicals. The examination board is AQA.

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Hampson

Why study PSHCE?

As part of your child's education at Highdown School we promote personal wellbeing and development through a comprehensive Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic (PSHCE) Education. The PSHCE programme gives young people the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills to live safe, healthy, productive lives and meet their full potential.

The PSHCE programme is taught as a timetabled lesson throughout the school in every year group. All PSHCE teaching takes place in a safe learning environment and is underpinned by our school ethos and values.

What will I study?

Over the course of Year 10 and Year 11 students will study different topic areas every half term. These topic areas are listed below.

Year 10

- Independence
- Responsible health choices, and safety in independent contexts
- Financial decision making
- The impact of financial decisions, debt, gambling and the impact of advertising on financial choices
- Addressing extremism and radicalisation
- Communities, belonging and challenging extremism
- Healthy relationships
- Relationships and sex expectations, myths, pleasure and challenges, including the impact of the media and pornography
- Exploring influence and county lines
- The influence and impact of drugs, gangs, role models and the media
- Mental health
- Mental health and ill health, stigma, safeguarding health, including during periods of transition or change

Year 11

- Building for the future
- Self-efficacy, stress management, and future opportunities
- Next steps
- Application processes, and skills for further education, employment and career progression
- Communication in and out of relationships
- Personal values, assertive communication (including in relation to contraception and sexual health), relationship challenges and abuse
- Families
- Different families and parental responsibilities, pregnancy, marriage and forced marriage and changing relationships

Course Information...

Physical Education/Games

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Dr T Browne

Why study PE/Games?

Regular physical activity is essential for lifelong health and fitness. Physical Education, a core subject, will build on skills learnt in previous years. The curriculum, boasting a diverse range of activities, will inspire you to succeed and excel in competitive situations and other physically demanding activities. Physical Education helps to embed values such as fairness and respect, and you will leave Highdown School with a sound understanding of how to maintain your health and fitness.

What will I study?

Highdown offers an outstanding range of activities within a bespoke pathway of activities across the entire academic year. At the start of the year you will choose favoured sports in each block of work, building your own timetable. Over 20 sports are on offer, ranging from traditional team games such as rugby, hockey and football, individual sports such as tennis, badminton and trampolining as well as the option to complete a nationally recognised qualification in sports leadership skills. Students can even look at less familiar sports such as golf, dodgeball and bench ball.

There will also be several tournaments during the year in a range of sports:

- Dodgeball
- Wedgeball
- Rock-it-ball
- Wallball
- Frisbee
- Water polo
- Netball
- Football
- Table tennis
- Badminton
- Softball
- Rounders

“Intelligence and skill can only function at the peak of their capacity when the body is healthy and strong.”

John F Kennedy

Course Information...

GCSE Art

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss E Garner

Why study Art?

Our approach to Art will introduce you to a variety of themes, materials and techniques and will help build on those already gained in Key Stage 3. The course will provide you with the skills to communicate ideas and will develop your ability to investigate, analyse and experiment.

What will I study?

The course begins with a teacher led project introducing a variety of materials and processes such as drawing, printmaking, painting, photography, mixed media and ceramics. As the course progresses, you will be able to follow a more individual programme. This will be developed through tutorials with your teacher and will be based around your strengths and interests.

A variety of artists, designers and crafts people will be studied. These will be both contemporary and from other times and cultures working within varied fields.

In your GCSE you will study a variety of themes. The first is Food and Drink.

How will I be assessed?

Coursework (60% of GCSE)

You will produce a portfolio of work throughout Years 10 and 11, which will consist of two to four projects. A coursework unit includes observational drawing work, sketchbook presentation, artist research and analysis, experimentation with materials and design ideas related to the final piece(s) in relation to the chosen theme.

Examination (40% of GCSE)

- You will complete research and develop ideas in response to your chosen examination theme.
- You will then sit a ten hour examination over two days.
- You will need to meet four assessment objectives for both coursework and the examination.

“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do” Leonardo da Vinci

Course Information...

GCSE Art Graphics

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss E Garner

Why study Art Graphics?

If you like to create artwork to a set brief and in a more two dimensional way, you should consider this course. Students will have the opportunity to use their own ideas and interests as part of their design work. They will also use art skills such as layout, design and typography.

What will I study?

You will be taught constructed and freehand drawing, as well as rendering and presentation skills. It involves you working with the design process, with a strong emphasis on creating your own original art work from research of artists and designers, also experimenting with different materials and techniques.

How will I be assessed?

Coursework (60% of GCSE)

You will produce a portfolio of work throughout Years 10 and 11, which will consist of two projects. A coursework unit includes observational drawing work, sketchbook presentation, artist/designer research and analysis, experimentation with materials and design ideas related to the final piece(s) in relation to the chosen theme.

Examination (40% of GCSE)

- You will complete research and develop ideas in response to your chosen examination theme.
- You will then sit a ten hour examination over two days.
- You will need to meet four assessment objectives for both coursework and the examination.

**“There are three responses to a piece of design – yes, no and WOW!
Wow is the one to aim for.” Milton Glaser**

Course Information...

GCSE Photography

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss E Garner

Why study Photography?

Photography is an exciting and creative subject. The course requires students to be artistic, open minded and well organised individuals, which are crucial qualities for those who wish to pursue a career in Photography or the arts.

What will I study?

You will be introduced to a variety of modern and traditional techniques and processes, digital photography, lighting and Photoshop manipulation. You will study the work of other photographers, understand what makes a good photograph and be able to create your own.

How will I be assessed?

Coursework (60% of GCSE)

You will produce a portfolio of work throughout Years 10 and 11. This will be broken down into projects based on natural form and identity (people, possessions and places). To assist coursework students need to have access to their own camera.

Examination (40% of GCSE)

- You will complete research and develop ideas in response to your chosen examination theme.
- You will sit a ten hour examination over two days.
- You will need to meet four assessment objectives for both coursework and the examination.

“One doesn’t stop seeing. One doesn’t stop framing. It doesn’t turn off and on. It’s on all the time.” Annie Leibowitz

Course Information...

GCSE Art Textile Design

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss C Lobo

Why study Textile Design?

Textile design is the creation of designs and products for woven, knitted, stitched, printed or decorative textiles that might have a functional or non-functional purpose. This course is suitable for anyone with a creative mind and an interest in textiles or fashion.

What will I study?

During the course, you will have the opportunity to explore: art textiles, fashion design and illustration, costume design, constructed textiles, printed and dyed textiles, surface pattern, stitched and/or embellished textiles, soft furnishings and/or textiles for interiors, digital textiles & installed textiles.

How will I be assessed?

Coursework (60% of GCSE)

You will produce a portfolio of work throughout Years 10 and 11, which will consist of two to four projects. A coursework unit includes preparatory work, sketchbooks, artist research and analysis, experimentation with materials and design ideas related to the final piece(s) in relation to the chosen theme.

Examination (40% of GCSE)

- You will complete research and develop ideas in response to your chosen examination theme.
- You will then sit a ten hour examination over two days.
- You will need to meet four assessment objectives for both coursework and the examination.

“Fashion is architecture: it is a matter of proportions.” Coco Chanel

Course Information...

GCSE Business

Course Information

Subject Leader: Mr M Hodges

Why study Business?

A GCSE qualification in Business should encourage students to be inspired, moved and challenged using a broad variety of skills, both academic and practical. This course is uniquely designed to prepare students to make informed decisions about the practice of business and how the business environment operates.

What will I study?

Business Studies at GCSE will involve students learning about six main elements involved in a business and its management. Through specific analysis of small and medium sized businesses, students will learn the basic concepts of starting up a business. The main topics covered are:

- Business in the real world
- Influences on business
- Business operations
- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Finance

How will I be assessed?

100% written examination

Paper 1: Influences of operations and HMR on business activity

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

Paper 2: Influences of marketing and finance on business activity

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

**“Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes.
It is best to admit them quickly, and get on with
improving your other innovations.” Steve Jobs**

Course Information...

GCSE Citizenship Studies

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Hampson

Why study Citizenship?

GCSE Citizenship Studies teaches students about a wide variety of issues both locally and globally. Ideas and concepts such as democracy, government, crime & justice, equality and diversity are studied. The course involves students taking citizenship action themselves. This will help them to develop skills in research and enquiry, interpretation of evidence, planning, collaboration, advocacy and campaigning. The course provides clear progression to courses in the Sixth Form at Highdown including Sociology, Politics and other humanities.

What will I study?

- Democracy & Government – including how elections work, the role of Parliament, making and shaping laws.
- Law & Justice – how are laws used to protect the public, the role of the courts, crime and its impact on society.
- Power & Influence – how do people participate in politics and be active citizens in society, the rights and responsibilities of individuals and the media.
- Identity & Diversity – the changing UK, migration, respect and understanding.
- Taking Citizenship Action – Students identify an issue or cause then carry out primary research. From the research students organise and deliver an event, meeting or campaign to advocate for the selected issue, problem or cause.

How will I be assessed?

100% Examination.

3 examinations – 50 minutes, 1 hour 45 minutes and 60 minutes

Examinations will include multiple choice questions, short and medium questions both knowledge based and on case study analysis, and longer evaluation questions. The citizenship action unit is part of the examination with questions referring to the project completed so there is no graded coursework element.

“There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship.”

Ralph Nader

Course Information...

GCSE Computer Science

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr D Stephenson

Why study GCSE Computer Science?

Computing is a challenging EBacc subject which uses mathematics and logic to solve real world problems which could include writing apps for your mobile phone, simulating the experiments you have carried out in the traditional sciences, developing the databases which drive websites such as Facebook or even the school registration system.

The most important aspect of Computer Science is problem solving, an essential skill for life. Students study the design, development and analysis of software and hardware used to solve problems in a variety of business, mathematical, scientific and social contexts. Computer science is seen as a first step into the many careers offered in the computing industry as well as supporting those looking to move into engineering, physics or other sciences.

What will I study?

In addition to gaining an in-depth understanding of how computer and communications systems work you will also learn how to program in the Python language, develop database solutions and implement simple networks. Each topic studied will include both practical and theoretical elements that will stretch and challenge all students.

How will I be assessed?

Paper 1: Computational thinking and problem solving - Practical - External Examination (50%)

Paper 2: Theory of Computer Science – Written paper - External Examination (50%)

“Anyone who has lost track of time when using a computer knows the propensity to dream, the urge to make dreams come true and the tendency to miss lunch.” Tim Berners-Lee

Course Information...

Cambridge Nationals Level 1/2 in Creative iMedia (ICT)

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr D Stephenson

This course is open for all students, although places will be prioritised for students on the Technical Pathway.

Why study GCSE Creative iMedia?

Creative iMedia aims to equip creative students with the skills to work in the creative and digital media sector. In this **highly practical course** you will learn how to build websites, create digital graphics, edit digital video and sound.

In addition to learning the skills needed to create digital media our students will gain an understanding of the pre-production techniques used throughout the creative industries, which are transferrable to a wide range of occupations.

As you might expect this course also focuses on developing the soft and problem-solving skills desired by employers. It is also considered a good path towards studying ICT, Media or Web Design as a career and being an excellent support subject for the arts.

What will I study?

Planning media productions from brainstorming to client presentations

Creating digital images using Adobe Photoshop

Editing video and sound media

Developing web pages using Adobe Dreamweaver

How will I be assessed?

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| RO81: Pre-Production Skills | - Written paper 25% |
| RO82: Creating Digital Graphics | - OCR Moderated Coursework 25% |
| RO85: Creating a Multipage Website | - Centre Assessed Coursework 25% |
| RO86: Creating a Digital Animation | - OCR Moderated Coursework 25% |

Optional Extension - RO86: Creating a digital animation

**“Technology allows more people to tell more stories in more ways.
Storytelling knows no boundaries. I believe print and web can work
beautifully together.” Donna Talarico**

Course Information...

GCSE Design and Technology

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss C Lobo

Why study Design and Technology?

Studying this course will encourage you to: -

- Design and make products with creativity using a range of materials and techniques. The advantage of this course is that you can study and make products with paper/card, timber, metals, plastics, electronics, depending on your choice.
- Become more aware of sustainability and the environmental impact of your designs.

What will I study?

- The impact of new and emerging technologies and materials and how this influences design.
- How energy is generated and stored.
- The functions of mechanical devices.
- How electronic systems provide functionality to products and processes.
- The use of programmable components to embed functionality into products.
- The categorisation and properties of materials.
- How design and technological practice takes place within contexts which form outcomes.
- Investigate environmental, social and economic challenges.
- Investigate and analyse the work of past and present professionals and companies.
- Identify, investigate and outline design possibilities.
- Design and make prototypes that are fit for purpose.
- Demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding of:
 - Technical principles.
 - Designing and making principles.

How will I be assessed?

50% Written examination – covering the core knowledge of D&T, plus questions on your chosen materials

50% Non-Exam Assessment

Investigate: This includes investigation of needs and research, and a product specification.

Design: This includes producing different design ideas, review of initial ideas, development of design ideas into a chosen design, communication of design ideas and review of the chosen design.

Make: This includes manufacture, and quality and accuracy.

Evaluate: This includes testing and evaluation.

“Everybody thinks it is how something looks, whereas for me, design is pretty much everything.” James Dyson

Course Information...

GCSE Drama

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mrs S Lake

Why study Drama?

This exciting GCSE in Drama gives students the opportunity to explore the subject from a range of perspectives by devising their own, original work; by bringing to life the work of a playwright; as theatre reviewers, developing their own thoughts on what makes drama and theatre successful; and as creative artists building and bringing a character to life through exploration and rehearsal.

What will I study?

During your course you will consider:

- Acting
- Stage craft
- Script study
- Practitioners
- A variety of styles and genres of Theatre
- Devising
- Improvisation
- Physical Theatre
- Playwrights

How will I be assessed?

Exam assessment (40%)

Component 1 – Written exam: 1hr 45 minutes

Section A: Drama Terminology (*4 marks*)

Section B: Set Play – Blood Brothers (*44 marks*)

Section C: Live theatre (*32 marks*)

80 marks in total

Non exam assessment (60%)

Component 2: Devising drama (Practical)

Students will create a **devised** performance in groups. They will be able to select a starting point from a range of stimuli provided by the department.

Devising log (*60 marks*)

Devised performance (*20 marks*)

80 marks in total

Component 3: Texts in practice (Practical)

Performance of two extracts from one play.

Performance of Extract 1 (*20 marks*) **and** Extract 2 (*20 marks*)

40 marks in total

Course Information...

GCSE Economics

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr W Dineley

Why study Economics?

Few subjects are as dynamic as Economics, with the news full of examples of economic principles learnt in the classroom operating in the real world. Through the study of how markets and economies work at both national and global levels you will see how current and historical events can be understood from an economic standpoint. That understanding and the use of economic arguments will empower you to make informed decisions as active participants in society throughout your life.

What will I study?

You will study how markets and economies operate by considering the following main topics:

- Resource allocation.
- How prices are determined.
- Production, costs, revenue and profit.
- Competitive and concentrated markets.
- How and why the government manages the economy.
- International trade and the global economy.
- The role of money and financial markets.

How will I be assessed?

100% written examination

Paper 1: How markets work

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

Paper 2: How the economy works

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

“An economist is an expert who will know tomorrow why the things he predicted yesterday didn't happen today.” Laurence J. Peter

Course Information...

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss C Lobo

Why study Food Preparation and Nutrition?

Food Preparation and Nutrition equips students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to cook and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating. It encourages students to cook, enables them to make informed decisions about food and nutrition and allows them to acquire knowledge in order to be able to feed themselves and others affordably and nutritiously, now and later in life. Food Preparation and Nutrition complements GCSEs in Science and Physical Education.

What will I study?

By studying Food Preparation and Nutrition students will:

- be able to demonstrate effective and safe cooking skills by planning, preparing and cooking a variety of food commodities whilst using different cooking techniques and equipment.
- develop knowledge and understanding of the functional properties and chemical characteristics of food as well as a sound knowledge of the nutritional content of food and drinks.
- understand the relationship between diet, nutrition and health, including the physiological and psychological effects of poor diet and health.
- understand the economic, environmental, ethical and socio-cultural influences on food availability, production processes, diet and health choices.
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of functional and nutritional properties, sensory qualities and microbiological food safety considerations when preparing, processing, storing, cooking and serving food.
- understand and explore a range of ingredients and processes from different culinary traditions (traditional British and international) to inspire new ideas or modify existing recipes.

How will I be assessed?

Exam: Food Preparation and Nutrition (50%)

Theoretical knowledge of food preparation and nutrition covering:

- Food commodities
- Principles of nutrition
- Diet and good health
- The science of food
- Where food comes from
- Cooking and food preparation

Non Exam Assessment: (50%)

NEA tasks are set by the exam board, and students have a choice of two tasks to complete for each assignment.

Task 1: Food Investigation (15%): A report (1,500–2,000 words) including evidence of a practical investigation, looking at working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

Task 2: Food Preparation Assessment (35%): Research, planning, preparation, cooking, and presentation. Students are required to prepare and present three dishes in a three hour session, showcasing their skills.

Course Information...

GCSE Geography

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mrs R Eaton

Why study Geography?

By opting for Geography you are showing an interest in the world in which we live. There is a strong emphasis on you as a global citizen, decision making and sustainability. The course is engaging and relevant to today's geographers – a qualification that enables students to explore the world, the issues it faces and their own place in it, and to help prepare them to succeed in their chosen pathway.

There is a balance of emphasis on physical, human and environmental geography and focus on sustainability.

What will I study?

You will be able to develop a variety of skills. These include an enquiry based approach to learning, decision making, data response and handling, graphical, cartographic, ICT and GIS. You will use many resources such as maps, photographs, DVDs, satellite images and the internet. All students choosing GCSE Geography are required to undertake two field work investigations, one human and one physical. Students will complete a river study and look into counter-urbanisation in the London rural-urban fringe commuter belt. This work will be examined in the unit 3 Geographical Applications exam. There is no coursework.

The cost of these investigations is estimated to be £70 for the two trips, Human and Physical.

Topics will include:

- Climatic hazards
- Weather hazards
- Tectonic Hazards
- Physical landscapes of the UK: rivers, coasts
- Ecosystems: tropical rainforests, hot deserts
- Resource management – water, food, energy
- Challenges of an urban world
- Economic changes and development

Accompanying text book: AQA GCSE Geography, ISBN-13: 978-0198366614, cost approx £28

How will I be assessed?

AQA – Exam Board

Paper 1: Living with the physical environment 35%

Paper 2: Challenges in the human environment 35%

Paper 3: Geographical applications – this would include issue evaluation, fieldwork & geographical skills 30%

Course Information...

VTCT Level 1/2 Technical Award in the Study of Hair and Beauty

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Miss C Lobo

This course is open for all students, although places will be prioritised for students on the Technical Pathway.

Who is this qualification for?

The VTCT Level 1/2 Technical Award in the Study of Hair and Beauty is aimed at learners aged 14-16 who have an interest in developing a broad understanding of the hairdressing and beauty therapy sector and related industries, including retail, leisure, manufacturing and other personal care services.

What will the learner study as part of this qualification?

This qualification is designed to use the context of hairdressing and beauty therapy as a vehicle to support learners to develop broad and comprehensive understanding of the sector and related industries but, more importantly, of core academic knowledge and study skills that will support progression into post-16 and higher education. Specifically, the qualification will prepare learners to progress onto qualifications related to the hair and beauty sector, such as the T Level in Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics; however, learners may also progress onto broader areas of study. It is a vocational qualification equivalent to GCSE grades 9-1. The content of the qualification is designed to engage learners through the context of hair and beauty due to its popularity and aspirational career pathways. This qualification has been developed collaboratively with schools, colleges, employers and other associations to ensure it has the appropriate content and is fit for purpose for learners aged 14-16.

This qualification consists of three mandatory units.

- UCO90 – Business and entrepreneurship in the hair and beauty sector
- UCO91 – Anatomy, physiology and cosmetic science
- UCO92 – Design in the hair and beauty sector

What knowledge and skills will learners develop as part of this qualification and how might these be of use and value in further studies?

Throughout the delivery of the qualification, learners will develop the following skills and knowledge;

- A broad and comprehensive understanding of the hair and beauty sector
- A significant knowledge core which spans the vocational sector and related industries
- Academic and study skills that will support progression within the hair and beauty sector and more broadly.

The qualification content will provide learners with an understanding of the chemistry of hair, beauty and nail products, as well as the anatomy and physiology of the integumentary system. They will explore design skills and techniques that can be used within the hair and beauty sector, giving learners the opportunity to develop their skills in planning, carrying out research and presenting design brief ideas. Learners will also explore the business aspect of the hair and beauty sector, the broad related industries and understand the aspirational career opportunities available. Learners will have the opportunity to explore the principles of marketing and how entrepreneurship supports the hair and beauty sector, including how to select and design appropriate promotional activities and materials.

The following GCSE subject areas will complement this qualification by further broadening application of skills in the context of hair and beauty:

- Science • Business • Design Technology • Art and Design • History • Media Studies

“The essence is, what can we do next? And will it be good?” Vidal Sassoon

Course Information...

GCSE History

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Ms A Duncan

Why study History?

This is an exciting and varied course that aims to provide students with an excellent understanding of the events that have shaped our country and world from the medieval period to the present day. The study of History helps students to develop many transferable skills that are of benefit to other subjects and to employers. These include data handling, explanation analysis, written and verbal communication and empathy.

What will I study?

Students will study these eras through three different units:

- **Weimar and Nazi Germany 1918-39**
A depth study looking at the rise and rule of the Nazis in Germany, enabling students to understand the complexity of this historical situation and the interplay of different aspects within it. These aspects include social, economic, political, religious, technological and military factors.
- **Early Elizabethan England 1558-88 and Superpower relations and the Cold War 1941-91**
A period study enabling students to understand the unfolding narrative of substantial developments and issues in both these periods.
- **Medicine in Britain, c1250–present and The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches**
A thematic study looking at changes to medicine in Britain over a long sweep of history, including the most significant characteristics of different ages. This will reveal changes in aspects of society over the centuries and allow comparisons to be made between different periods of history. These aspects will include some or all of the following: culture, economics, politics, religion, science, technology and war.

British history will form a minimum of 40% of the assessed content over the full course, but students will also study History through looking at localities and Europe and the wider world. It is an excellent option for any students with an interest in the world we live in and a curious, enquiring mind.

How will I be assessed?

There will be three written exams at the end of Year 11 which will assess students' knowledge, analysis and evaluation of historical events, processes and sources.

“Study history, study history. In history lies all the secrets of statescraft.” Winston Churchill

Course Information...

MFL – GCSE French

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Guianvarch

Students may only opt to study a language that they have previously studied at Key Stage 3.

Why study French?

- Employers and Universities increasingly demand a foreign language qualification.
- French companies work in the Thames Valley and seek French speakers.
- The proximity of France with its rich culture enables students to experience life and travel in France.

What will I study?

The aim of the course is to enable students to develop:

- An understanding of French in a variety of contexts.
- Knowledge of French vocabulary and structures.
- Transferable language learning skills.
- The ability to communicate effectively in French.
- Knowledge of the rich culture of France.

The main themes studied are:

- Identity and culture.
- Local area, holiday, travel.
- School.
- Future aspirations, study and work.
- International and global dimension, including bringing the world together and environmental issues.

How will I be assessed?

Students will be assessed in the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking at the end of the two-year course. This will be broken down into:

Writing – 25%

Reading – 25%

Listening – 25%

Speaking – 25%

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going” Rita Mae Brown

Course Information...

MFL – GCSE Mandarin Chinese

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Guianvarch

Students may only opt to study a language that they have previously studied at Key Stage 3. Students on the Mandarin Excellence Programme must take GCSE Mandarin Chinese.

Why study Mandarin?

- Over 1.3 billion people speak Mandarin including people in China, Singapore and Taiwan.
- China is a huge economic power and it is vital to be equipped for the future.
- Mandarin is a completely different language with its rich culture and the grammar is relatively easy to learn.

What will I study?

The aim of the course is to enable students to develop:

- An understanding of Chinese in a variety of contexts.
- Knowledge of Chinese vocabulary and structures.
- Transferable language learning skills.
- The ability to communicate effectively in Chinese.
- The awareness and understanding of countries and communities where Chinese is spoken.

The main topics you study are:

- Identity and culture.
- Local, national, international and global areas of interest.
- School.
- Future aspirations, study and work.
- Environmental issues.

How will I be assessed?

Students will be assessed in the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking at the end of the two-year course. This will be broken down into:

Writing – 25%

Reading – 25%

Listening – 25%

Speaking – 25%

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.” Chinese Proverb

Course Information...

MFL – GCSE Spanish

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Guianvarch

Students may only opt to study a language that they have previously studied at Key Stage 3.

Why study Spanish?

- 430 million Spanish speakers worldwide.
- Spain is one of the UK's major trading partners.
- The value of trade between Spain and the UK is about £21 billion per year.
- Spain is the most likely country to be visited by UK tourists.

What will I study?

The aim of the course is to enable students to develop:

- An understanding of Spanish in a variety of contexts.
- Knowledge of Spanish vocabulary and structures.
- Transferable language learning skills.
- The ability to communicate effectively in Spanish.
- The awareness and understanding of countries and communities where Spanish is spoken.

The main themes studied are:

- Identity and culture.
- Local area, holiday, travel, school.
- Future aspirations, study and work.
- International and global dimension, including bringing the world together and environmental issues.

How will I be assessed?

Students will be assessed in the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking at the end of the two-year course. This will be broken down into:

Writing – 25%

Reading – 25%

Listening – 25%

Speaking – 25%

**“The limits of my language are the limits
of my world.”** Ludwig Wittgenstein

Course Information...

GCSE Music

Course Information

Subject Leader: Mr H Santer

Why study Music?

You should choose Music if you meet at least four of the following criteria: -

- You have enjoyed Music at Key Stage 3.
- You play an instrument and/or sing.
- You can read music.
- You enjoy performing and composing.
- You enjoy working with computers.
- You want to study A Level Music or Music Technology.

What will I study?

The course is split into three main areas – Performing, Composing, and Listening and Appraising.

Performing: You will take part in solo and ensemble performances throughout the course.

Composing: You will have many opportunities to create your own composition work in a variety of musical styles.

Listening and Appraising: You will study a wide range of different music, from Classical and Jazz to Pop and Rock.

How will I be assessed?

Performing: a portfolio of at least two performances, one of which must be as part of an ensemble (30%)

Composing: Composition 1 – based on a brief set by the exam board (15%)

Composition 2 – free choice composition (15%)

Listening and Appraising: Written examination – a series of questions based on musical elements, context and language and linked to the various Areas of Study which students will study in class (40%)

“Without music, life would be a mistake.” Friedrich Nietzsche

Course Information...

GCSE Music Technology

Course Information

Subject Leader: Mr H Santer

Why study Music Technology?

You should choose Music Technology if you meet at least four of the following criteria: -

- You enjoy creating your own music tracks.
- You have enjoyed Music at Key Stage 3.
- You want to make CD/MP3 recordings.
- You enjoy working with computers.
- You want to study A Level Music Technology.

What will I study?

The course is split into three main areas – Performing, Composing, and Listening and Appraising.

Performing: You will learn how to use sequencing software and multi-tracking recording techniques throughout the course.

Composing: You will have many opportunities to create your own composition work in a variety of musical styles.

Listening and Appraising: You will study a wide range of different music, from Classical and Jazz to Pop and Rock.

How will I be assessed?

Performing: a portfolio of at least two performances using Music sequencing software and recording techniques, one of which must be as part of an ensemble (30%)

Composing: Composition 1 – based on a brief set by the exam board (15%)

Composition 2 – free choice composition (15%)

Listening and Appraising: Written examination – a series of questions based on musical elements, context language and linked to the various Areas of Study which students will study in class (40%).

“I think it’s so cool that you can pick up the guitar and create something that didn’t exist five minutes ago. You can write something that no one’s ever heard before. You have music at your fingertips.” Michelle Branch

Course Information...

GCSE Physical Education

Why study Physical Education?

Curriculum Leader: Dr T Browne

Sport is a global, multi billion pound industry and therefore has many exciting career opportunities. Studying GCSE Physical Education is the first building block to following pathways in performing, coaching, teaching, physiotherapy, sports rehabilitation, medicine, officiating, sports technology development, sports administration, sports psychology, sports management and media. You will study GCSE Physical Education if you regularly enjoy competitive sport and have a thirst for exploring the theory behind improving performance as well as the benefits to health regular participation can bring.

What will I study?

The course is split into three main areas – theoretical units, practical performance and coursework.

Theoretical Units

Topics studied will develop students':

- Knowledge and understanding of the factors that underpin physical activity and sport and use this knowledge to improve performance.
- Understanding of how the physiological and psychological state affects performance in physical activity and sport.
- Develop their ability to analyse and evaluate to improve performance in physical activity and sport.
- Understand the contribution which physical activity and sport make to health, fitness and well-being.
- Understand key socio-cultural influences which can affect people's involvement in physical activity and sport.

Practical Performance

Students will develop their ability across a wide range of sports, performing effectively in different physical activities by developing skills and techniques and selecting and using tactics, strategies and/or compositional ideas.

How will I be assessed?

Theory:

Two Theory Exam papers at the end of Year 11

Practical:

Assessment in three sports (1 team, 1 individual + 1 choice)

Coursework:

Creation of Personal Exercise Programme (written coursework)

**“Take care of your body. It’s the only place
you have to live.” Jim Rohn**

Course Information...

GCSE Religious Studies

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Hampson

Why study Ethics?

This GCSE course is an opportunity to develop your knowledge and understanding of some of the most important moral and social issues in our world. It will cause you to think more about the different views people have on these issues and help you develop your own beliefs and ethical viewpoints. You will need to use your thinking skills, personal skills and your ability to listen and learn from other cultures to be successful.

What will I study?

Component 1: The study of religions

Beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity and Islam

Component 2: Thematic studies

- Theme A: Relationships and families.
- Theme B: Religion and life.
- Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict.
- Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment.

How will I be assessed?

- 100% written examination
- Two examinations – Both written exams: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 96 marks (plus 6 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG))
- Each exam is 50% of GCSE

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” Socrates

Course Information...

Level 2 Cambridge Nationals Sport Studies

This is an option for Technical Study Programme Students

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Dr T Browne

This course is open for students on the Technical Study Programme.

Why study Level 2 Sports Studies?

Level 2 Sports Studies is an excellent starting point for learners wishing to develop knowledge and skills of the sports sector. Sports Studies will cultivate a core of knowledge and understanding as well as apply that knowledge in preparing, planning and developing a health and fitness programme and training sessions.

What will I study?

- Contemporary issues in sports.
- This will include theory on what motivates people to take part in sport, the barriers to participation, and the importance of role models and world sporting events. Students will also investigate the significant role sport has in promoting values and fair play.
- Developing sports skills.
- Students will have the opportunity to take part in a range of sports in four roles. These roles are: The team performer, the individual performer, the coach and the official.
- Sports Leadership.
- Students will explore different leadership styles and knowledge of how to plan effective sports sessions. As the course progresses students will lead sessions and evaluate success.
- Sport and the media.
- Media's influence has turned sport into a multi-billion pound industry. This unit will allow learners to explore different facets of media including the written press, TV and growth formats such as the internet. Learners will evaluate the merits of all formats and their impact both positive and negative on sport.

How will I be assessed?

Assessment will be split

- 50% internally assessed portfolio of evidence. The assessment portfolio is built from the work completed in the Sports Leadership and Sport & Media units.
- 25% internally assessed practical performance. This is assessed across performance, coaching and officiating.
- 25% externally assessed written exam. Contemporary issues.

“It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things” Leonardo da Vinci

Course Information...

GCSE Statistics

Course Information

Curriculum Leader: Mr W Dineley

Why study Statistics?

In a world swimming with data, an understanding of how that data is collected, used and interpreted is vital in empowering you to make informed decisions in both your private and professional lives in the future. Not only will you learn how to perform your own statistical investigations collecting and interpreting real world data yourself, you will also develop the tools and understanding to critique the statistics put forward by others. Data is one of our most valuable commodities – can you afford not to understand it?

What will I study?

You will study all aspects of the Statistical Enquiry Cycle by considering the following main topics:

- the importance of planning for collecting, recording and processing data;
- issues around primary and secondary data and the potential for bias;
- generate data visualisations;
- calculate statistical measures to compare data;
- interpret calculations and visualisations in the context of a problem; and
- evaluate the validity and reliability of statistical findings.

How will I be assessed?

100% written examination. Entries are tiered as either Foundation (Grades 1-5) or Higher (Grades 4-9).

Paper 1

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

Paper 2

1 hour 45 minutes

50% of GCSE

Any content from the course can be examined on either paper with questions being a mixture of multiple choice, short answer and a Statistical Enquiry Cycle Question

“Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable.” Mark Twain