



Year 8 Options 2021

Application Information





Introduction

Dear Year 8 student

You are now at the exciting stage of choosing which subjects you want to study during Key Stage 4. Options assemblies, SPHERE lessons and form time will provide you with advice and guidance on the content of all subjects available for selection. You will need to think carefully about this process and ask plenty of relevant questions which will enable you to select the best subject choices. Do not panic, you have lots of time for this, the deadline for making your choices is **May 26th**.

Wednesday 24th March	Options process information videos by Mr Dionisi and Mr Lister released to parents and students.
Monday 29th March	<u>Options subject videos</u> available for all subjects and options booklets & forms issued by tutors
March – May	Discussions between form tutors and their Year 8 students about interests, progress and potential options choices. All tutors must countersign students' final options choices. SPHERE lessons during this period will focus on options choices.
Wednesday 26th May	Options deadline. All forms must have been returned to tutors.
Summer Term	Options confirmation communicated to students.

It is important that you discuss your potential options with people you know well and who can help you make an informed choice. Clearly your parents or carers will be important in this process, however, other useful people include your form tutor; individual subject teachers and subject leaders; and Mrs S Miles, our Careers Leader.

When you are making your choices please consider the following:

- choose subjects you enjoy
- consider the benefits of a broad and balanced course selection
- read the subject booklet, ask questions where needed
- don't choose a course because your friends have or because you like the teacher

Please look carefully through the pages of this booklet, watch the subject videos and talk to the subject teachers about the subjects that you have an interest in.

Mr K Lister - Senior Assistant Headteacher

Mr A Dionisi - Progress Leader Year 8

Why take Options in Year 8?

Why Choose Options in Year 8?

Year 9 provides the bridge into GCSE where we can establish a strong connection between the curriculum in the lower years and GCSE syllabus. Our intent is to link the knowledge, confidence and skills gained in year 7-8 with GCSE choices. Year 9 balances continuity with change. Prior learning from KS3 is interleaved with new subject knowledge across a very broad and balanced range of GCSE and non-GCSE options.

It has been shown that:

- students who have a longer lead time before an examination are more likely to achieve better results. Most subjects have terminal examinations – this means they are tested at the end of the course in Year 11
- a longer key stage gives time for students to adapt and familiarise themselves with the pressures of multiple examinations at the end of Year 11
- ongoing Mock Examinations in these three years will allow students to practice and develop their technique and confidence prior to final examinations in summer 2024.

Changes for 2021

In previous years we have asked Year 8 students to choose 4 option subjects. However, given the disruption to learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic we are concerned that our current Year 8 students have not had full access to the school's specialist teaching rooms we feel that their experience of some subjects is too limited to make a firm choice at this stage. As such we are introducing a new process for this year:

For 2021 we are asking Year 8 to select 6 subject options to learn in Year 9. This allows them to experience further learning in a wide range of subjects before narrowing down further in a second round of options at the end of Year 9.

Towards the end of Year 9 we will ask students to reflect on and rank their option subjects in order of preference and we will then allocate groups for Year 10 and 11 to continue subjects based on these preferences. There will no opportunity to start a new subject in Year 10, the second round of options is only choosing from those already studied in Year 9.

Making option choices is a commitment to six subjects, which then becomes four subjects for the next **three** years. Changing courses during Years 9 to 11 beyond the options process is usually impossible, and students are expected to complete all courses that they carry into Year 10. Therefore, prior discussion advice and guidance with parents and teachers should be taken before choices are made.



We offer a very broad curriculum choice

To do this, ***we cannot completely guarantee all option preferences will be met in full for all students.*** This year with more options to choose from there is a higher chance that you can select the subjects and combinations you want, but we cannot possibly foresee every potential combination and preference. Students and parents/carers must be aware that any one option subject will absorb 6% of their curriculum time during Year 9, rising to 8% in Years 10 and 11. Conversely, all other subjects cover 94 to 92% of the timetable. Therefore, although your option choices are important to us, we cannot guarantee all choices will be met for all students. As such we also ask for a first reserve course choice. Occasionally, a student will be required to accept their reserve choices which we hope they will understand in this context. ***Please consider your reserve choices very carefully and remember to include them on your form.***



The GCSE Exam Structure

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- All GCSE examinations will be taken at the end of Year 11 in Summer 2024.
- Coursework or Controlled Assessment is expected in Technical Awards (e.g. BTEC qualifications), Geography, Design and Technology, Art and Photography. Moderated practical assessments will be required in subjects such as PE and Drama.
- GCSE subjects will all receive a grade structure ranging from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade available. Technical awards have other grade structures, usually ranked as Pass, Merit or Distinction.
- Both English Language and Literature will be taught as part of the compulsory core GCSEs alongside Maths, Combined Science, and PE (Sports Science).
- Up to three non-GCSE equivalent qualifications, known collectively as Technical Awards, will be recognised by the Government – these are as rigorous as a GCSE subject and will have examinations as well as offering some practical and technical elements. In our subject offer, Technical Awards are likely to be available in Architecture, Business Studies, Dance, Hospitality and Catering, Health and Social Care, iMedia and some areas of Sports Science.



General Guidance

In addition to the examined core subjects, all students must participate in the non-examined SPHERE course outlined below. This is in line with Government guidelines and consequently students are not able to 'opt out' of these lessons. This non-examined subject is aimed at providing students with a basic grounding in personal health, ethics and society. These are all important 'employability skills' for students.

SPHERE – Social, Personal, Health and Religious Education

All students will participate in SPHERE over the next three years. The aim of the course is primarily concerned with helping students develop the skills and knowledge necessary for the transition from school into the adult world. Great emphasis is given to the careers aspects of the course and the development of each student's readiness for the next step in their education, employment and training beyond sixteen.

Other aspects include an understanding of personal health, relationship education, citizenship and economic well-being as well as exploration of the primary religious characteristics and diversity and values of the United Kingdom. This course is not examined but is intended to develop rounded the individuals and support students as they move to adulthood.

Career Education Guidance:

Our nationally recognised career information and guidance is integrated into the curriculum in a number of ways. In particular, during the school year students will receive impartial career information through their SPHERE lessons. There will also be times when extra-curricular support is provided for specific courses, often through visiting professionals, and regular assembly slots.

How to make your course choices

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Compulsory Core Examination Subjects:

These courses are set for all students:

English Language

English Literature

Combined Science

Mathematics

Sports Science

They are not included in the options forms as these are required subjects. If you are encouraged by your science teacher to choose the three separate sciences these will replace combined science in your compulsory courses and also count as one of your six options choices.



English Baccalaureate

The English Baccalaureate

You may have heard mention of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) by the Government or media. The EBacc is not a qualification, but a grouping of highly valued, facilitating academic subjects that are recognised by the Government as giving a broad and balanced education.

The EBacc measure requires students to gain a strong pass in the existing 'core subjects' of English, Maths and Science, plus:

One Humanities subject (Geography or History)

and

One Language (French or Spanish)

The EBacc offers a subject combination which can open doors and opportunities for students beyond GCSE. In a rapidly changing world, the EBacc gives the flexible skills necessary to thrive in professional life and the Government encourages this route to a broad and balanced education.

All students are allowed to choose to study EBacc subjects, however if we believe it is particularly in your interest for your future, your Progress Leader may specifically guide you towards choosing subjects that cover the EBacc.

