



# Highlands

## Key Stage 4 Curriculum & Options Booklet 2026

Year 8 and 9

Highlands

# CONTENTS

## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER	3
2. KS4 OPTIONS INFORMATION (OVERVIEW)	4
3. THE ARTS IN YEAR 9	6
4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES	7
5. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION	9
6. FAQs	11
7. CORE SUBJECT	13
8. OPTIONAL SUBJECTS	19

# 1. INTRODUCTION LETTER FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Dear students,

As you move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 you will be making some choices about subjects that you will study. These choices are important and will affect your future so please read this information carefully.

You will be making two important choices in year 8. The first choice is about which two of the four arts subjects (art, dance, drama and music) you would like to continue studying in year 9. We want to give you a bit more time to study your preferred two arts subjects so that you can really develop your knowledge and skills in those specific domains. Please note that this is not a GCSE course and you can still choose to do a different arts subject as one of your GCSE options if you wish.



The second choice you are making is about which subjects you want to continue studying at GCSE. At Highlands in Key Stage 3, we offer a broad curriculum that introduces you to the key knowledge, skills and ideas in a range of subjects. As you move into Key Stage 4 some subjects are compulsory and must be taken at GCSE (English, maths, science). Alongside these subjects, students may choose four other subjects. One of these subjects must be a humanities subject (history, geography or religious studies) and another must be from our arts and languages list (see page 5). The other two options are free choices. This booklet, and the option evening on Wednesday 4th February 2026, will help inform that decision making process.

One aspect of the curriculum at Highlands that makes us different to lots of schools is that you will start one of your option GCSEs in year 9 and complete it in year 10. We do this because feedback from students and their families was that, firstly, they found the process of learning about preparing and revising for exams in year 10 advantageous when they got to year 11. Secondly, it reduced the number of GCSEs that were sat at the end of year 11; students said this reduced their stress levels and meant they had more time to spend on the GCSEs that they were taking. Finally, students who took the arts and technology subjects early, which sometimes involve more coursework, valued the opportunity to get those subjects completed in year 10, so they could focus on exam revision in year 11.

This booklet will help you make these important choices by providing you with information about the curriculum model, principles to help guide your decisions, information about each subject to study and, of course, information about where to get help and support.

I hope you find it helpful and the process supportive,

**Mr V McInerney**  
Headteacher

## 2. KS4 OPTIONS INFORMATION (OVERVIEW)

GCSE courses are studied over a two-year course across years 9, 10 and 11. You will continue to study a range of subjects but you will also be able to focus on subjects that you enjoy most and study these in greater depth. Some pupils find making decisions about their GCSE courses very straightforward whilst others need a little more time to think and discuss options.



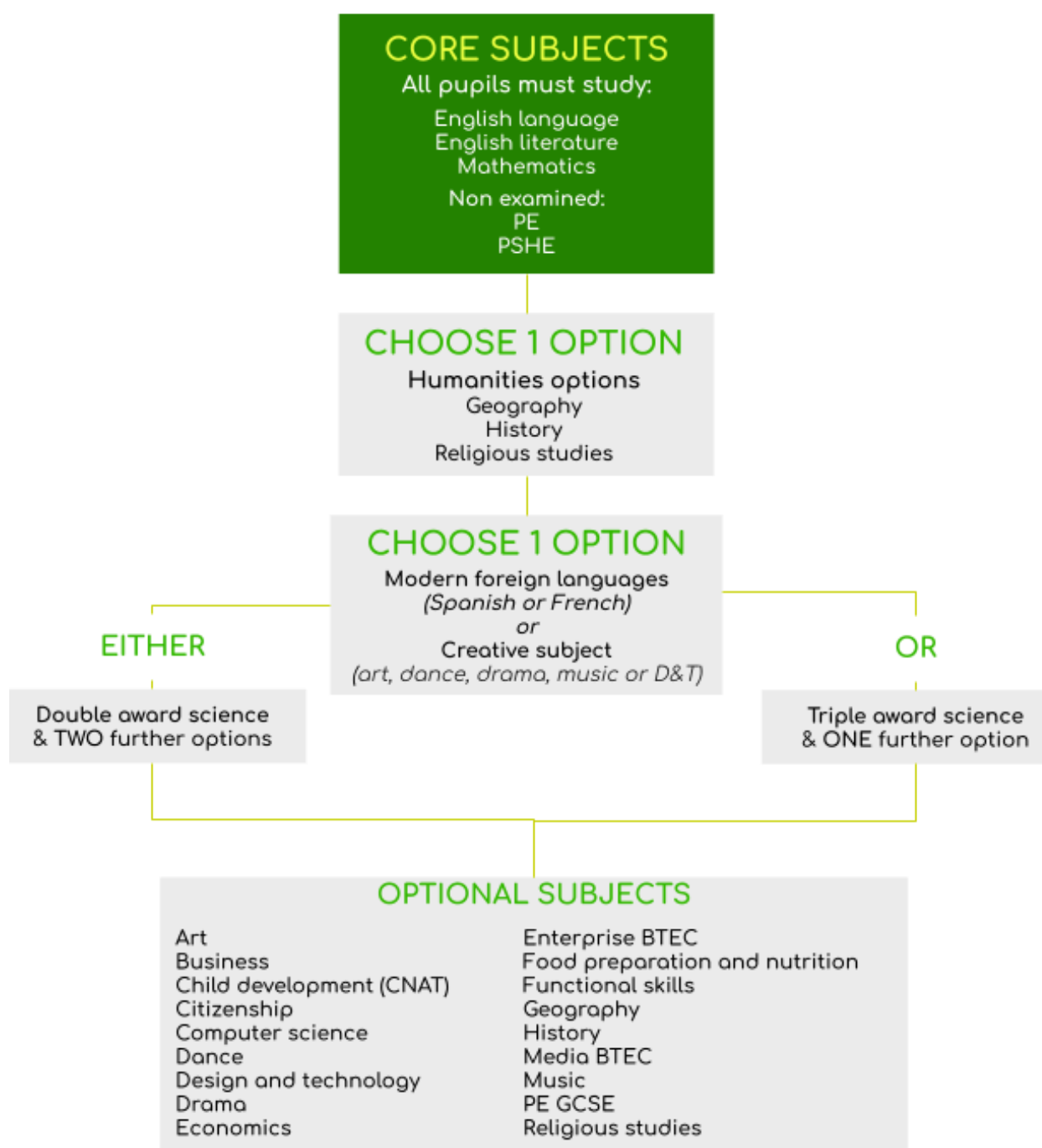
By helping you choose the right subjects for you, we hope that you will be happy in your studies, feel positive about your abilities and maximise your potential. In a number of subjects we offer the BTEC instead of the GCSE. This has no material bearing on your results or university application. BTECs are very well-regarded qualifications taken by a large number of school pupils and we have chosen them in a number of subjects because of the specification and the style of assessment.

All GCSEs are graded using the 9-1 grading system. Both grades 8 and 9 are the equivalent to the old A\*.

## CORE AND OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

When you are studying for your GCSEs you will study some core subjects (which everyone takes) and some optional subjects (from which you select your preferred choices). You will study most of these in year 10 and 11 and take your GCSE exam in year 11. You will also have the opportunity to study one of your optional subjects in year 9 and 10 and take that subject one year early. This helps reduce some of the pressure you may experience in year 11 by spreading exams out over two years. If you are really good at science we suggest you consider choosing the triple science route which means that one of your options will be science. Don't worry though, double award science will still allow you to access science at A-level should you decide you want to pursue a science pathway. You will also have lessons in some non examined core subjects such as PE and PSHE which are good for your health and wellbeing.

The diagram below shows which subjects are available



Students must indicate their preferences for all their options during this year 8 process, including the subjects for year 10/11. This helps us to guide students and plan most effectively for the delivery across three years. However, students will be consulted again in year 9 and may be able to make changes to their remaining options should they wish.

**Please note that families do not choose which of the GCSE subjects is studied early, in year 9 and 10, this will depend on the timetable and staffing situation at school.**

### 3. THE ARTS IN YEAR 9



In year 7 and 8 students study all four 'arts' subjects (dance, drama, music and art). In year 9 you have the opportunity to specialise in two out of the four arts subjects. For example, you can select to do art and music and drop dance and drama if you wish. This means you have a little more time to study the particular 'arts' subjects that you enjoy and this helps prepare you should you wish to study those subjects as a GCSE option in year 10 and 11. Please note that this is not a GCSE course and you can still select to do the 'arts' subjects you dropped in year 8 as a GCSE course later if you choose.

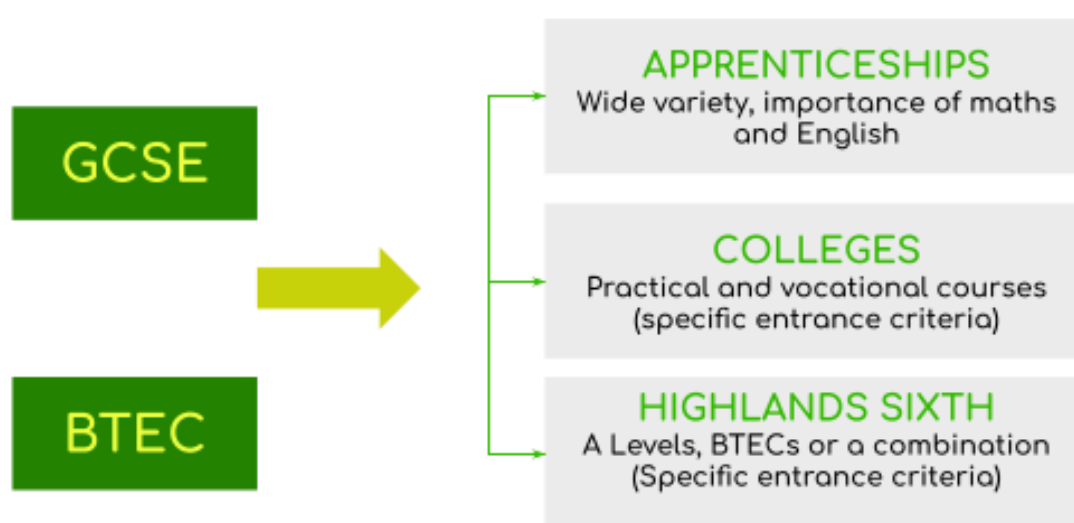
Our carefully sequenced 'arts' curriculum and extra curricular provision means you will continue to benefit from a broad and balanced arts experience across years 7, 8 and 9 regardless of the specialist choices you make in year 9.

## 4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The principles below will help you make the right choices.

### PROGRESSION

The most important thing you need to consider before you make your choices is 'progression'. All students need to consider the choices available to them and the destinations they have in mind after their time at Highlands School. These decisions are not just for the here and now, they also have to prepare you for the future. No matter what route you eventually decide to take, it's important that Key Stage 4 leaves as many future doors open to you as possible. All of the qualifications offered at Highlands can lead to a variety of progression opportunities:



### BREADTH AND RIGOUR

Our aim is ultimately to provide everyone with a curriculum that helps them come to the end of year 11 with the best set of qualifications they can. As well as grades, this means considering breadth and rigour. By breadth, we mean that you need to ensure that the choices you make are not unnecessarily narrow, as a result of picking subjects that are too similar. Remember, you need to keep as many options available for as long as you can. By rigour, we mean that you should seek to choose qualifications that, as well as providing breadth, are also rigorous. Your choices should challenge and push you. For that reason, the great majority of students at Highlands will be expected to complete a humanities subject and one subject from either MFL or the creative subjects (see list above).

### DOUBLE AWARD SCIENCE OR TRIPLE SCIENCE?

All students follow science courses to GCSE in year 11 and, for most students, this is a combined course leading to a double award. Following this combined science course is the most popular route for students in schools and is sufficient preparation for further study at A Level.

If you have shown an aptitude for science and mathematics you are able to opt to study separate science GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics. In order to create more lesson time to cover this expanded syllabus you will have additional science lessons in place of one option choice. Separate science then becomes one of your three option choices.

If you wish to be considered for the separate science route please indicate this choice during the option process and also indicate a reserve subject. The final decision about the suitability of this option choice will be made during year 9.

## INDICATIONS NOT FINAL DECISIONS

We appreciate that these are important decisions for year 8 students to make. We want to make it clear to you that these are indications, not necessarily decisions. There will be a chance to review the subject choices you have made at the end of year 9. Whilst this may not mean you can alter your early GCSE choice (you will be half way through the course by then), you can choose to change your other two option subjects if you would prefer to study an alternative subject within that option block. The school will do its best to accommodate your decisions.

## WHAT NOT TO CONSIDER

Don't consider what your friends are doing; what's right for them may not be right for you and it's your future you need to be thinking about. Don't choose subjects because you think they will be easier than others. All the subjects offered at Key Stage 4 have equivalence; there are no easy options at Key Stage 4.

## WHO CAN I TALK TO?

Your subject teachers can tell you more about their courses. As well as Mrs Laurenzi in your one-to-one meeting, Ms Casimir-West, Mr Friend (heads of year), Mr Tuton (options lead), Miss Husseyin (associate deputy headteacher) Ms Touli (senior assistant headteacher) Ms Jeynes (assistant headteacher), and your form tutor can also advise.



**Mrs Laurenzi**



**Ms Casimir-West**



**Mr Friend**



**Mr Tuton**



**Ms Jeynes**



**Miss Husseyin**



**Ms Touli**

## 5. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

### HIGHLANDS SIXTH FORM

It may seem a little way ahead but it is worth spending some time now considering the options you will have after year 11.

Staying on to join the sixth form at Highlands is by far the most popular route for our students who meet the entry requirements. A much smaller proportion apply for vocational courses at other local colleges.

At Highlands we currently offer a wide range of A Level subjects as well as Level 3 BTECs. These subjects include:

Art (Fine art)
Biology
Business (L3 BTEC) triple and single awards
Chemistry
Computer science
Dance
Design and technology: product design
Drama and theatre studies
Economics
English literature
Geography
History

Mathematics
Mathematics (further)
Media production (L3 BTEC) triple and single awards
Photography
Physical education
Physics
Politics
Psychology
RS: Philosophy and ethics
Sociology
Spanish

It doesn't matter which year you complete a GCSE, whether this happens in year 10 or year 11, you will be able to progress to A levels in the sixth form as long as you meet the entry requirements. For further information on the sixth form please speak to Mr Marcus, our director of sixth form, read our [sixth form prospectus](#) or visit the sixth form area on the school website.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

**Year 8 parents evening will take place on Wednesday 21st January** and will give your parents and you a chance to talk to your subject teachers about your progress in different subjects. Students and parents in year 9 had their parents evening before the Christmas holidays.

There will also be **an options evening on Wednesday 4th February, 6pm - 8pm** which gives you an opportunity to find out more about the option subjects and access support you may need to help you complete the option form.

The form will be submitted by **9:00am on Monday 2nd March**. Any changes you make to your choices after that may be dependent on timetabling and your parents will need to contact Mr Tuton directly.



## 6. FAQs

How many subjects do Highlands students study?

Nine GCSEs or BTECs by the end of year 11

How many option choices are there?

Students have four option choices but only two are free choices.

Option 1 - geography, history or religious studies

Option 2 - MFL or creative subjects

Option 3 - free choice

Option 4 - free choice

If a student chooses triple science they will only have one free choice.

Why are some choices only available to year 10/11? Why are they in this booklet?

Some subjects are only open to year 10/11 students because we want you to have the necessary preparation in English and maths.

Do I have to take a technology subject and an arts subject?

We encourage students to pick subjects from these areas as we expect the majority of students to follow a broad, balanced curriculum.

Are all students mature enough to take a GCSE in year 10?

Our results show that students develop the skills they need and do as well in year 10 as they do in year 11.

Who decides which option subject I will start early in year 9?

The school will make this decision based on the different combinations of choices that students have indicated. For most students this will be the technology or arts choice.

If I don't achieve the exam results I want in my year 10 option subject, will I be allowed to re-sit this same course the following year?

You won't be allowed to study the same option subject twice, but you **might** be able to re-sit the exam if your family is willing to pay for it. If you work hard enough the first time, you won't need to!

Will I be able to get my best grade in year 10?

Yes! We have had excellent results across all subjects and year groups – it is more about how hard you work than it is about whether you are in year 10 or 11.

What about a student who has special educational needs and may need an alternative curriculum or qualification?

The SEN staff will identify students who may need to vary the standard curriculum offered and we will contact parents to discuss this through the usual review cycle. There are other qualifications and courses that the school can access.

# CORE SUBJECTS

## ENGLISH SUBJECTS

### Why is this subject important?

English is relevant to virtually all fields and careers. Wherever speaking, writing or critical thinking is required, English is useful.

Learning to analyse literature effectively not only teaches you how to better enjoy books, music and film, but also how to better understand the causes and effects taking place in your family, neighbourhood and the world around you. English teaches you to understand your world with nuance and conviction.

## GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**Exam board:** English Language GCSE AQA (8700) (untiered)

### Form of assessment

Reading – (50%)

- Students are required to answer questions on unseen 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century texts
- These texts must cover fiction, non-fiction and literary non-fiction

Writing – (50%)

- Students will complete one creative writing and one transactional writing response
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar has an increased weighting of 20%

### Subject content

- 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century texts
- Creative writing
- Transactional writing

## GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

**Exam board:** English Literature GCSE AQA (8702) (untiered)

### Form of assessment

The English literature exam is a closed book examination, with 5% of the final grade awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students will be required to have an in-depth knowledge of their core texts, be able to analyse an author's use of language, form and structure, and explore how a text is influenced by the context in which it was written.

### Subject content

Students will read four chosen texts including:

- 19<sup>th</sup> century novel
- Post 1914 British drama
- Poetry anthology: power and conflict (unseen poems will also be tested)
- Shakespeare

**Exam board:** Edexcel GCSE (1MA0) (foundation or higher tier)

### Form of assessment

The mathematics GCSE specification is split up into three assessment objectives.

- AO1: Use and apply standard techniques
- AO2: Reason, interpret and communicate mathematically
- AO3: Solve problems with mathematics and other contexts

Students will have to take three exam papers at the end of the course, one non-calculator paper and two calculator papers. These will be either foundation or higher tier.

### Subject content

GCSE mathematics requires students to develop knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts, including:

- Number
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Ratio & Proportion
- Probability
- Statistics

### Why is this subject important?

GCSE mathematics covers a lot of the basic skills that students will need to use in everyday life and because of this, it is a compulsory subject for all students in years 9 to 11. Students will use a lot of what they learn in GCSE mathematics in the other GCSEs that are studied. For example in science students may be asked to use formulae and solve equations, in geography students will need to read charts and diagrams and use statistics and in D&T students will need to use measures and make scale drawings. Most college and sixth form courses require GCSE mathematics as an entry requirement, as do many jobs and careers.

Almost all jobs and careers require a mathematics GCSE, but the following careers are some that would enable students to make the most of their mathematics qualification:

Accountancy	Business management	Computer science	Environmental studies	Pharmacy
Architecture	Engineering	Insurance	Marketing	Psychology
Banking	Economics	ICT	Medicine	Science

## SCIENCE SUBJECTS

Students follow either:

- Trilogy combined science in their core science lessons (a double award)
- Separate sciences: biology, chemistry and physics - this takes up one option choice

The separate science route is demanding and for students with evidence of strong mathematical and scientific skills.

Please note - There is no requirement to study the separate sciences in order to study or get into a scientific field.

## COMBINED SCIENCE

**Exam board:** AQA Trilogy GCSE - Combined Science (8464)

### Form of assessment

2 x 1 hour 15 minutes exams for biology, chemistry and physics taken at the end of year 11 (six exams in total). This course consists of units made from all three sciences and leads to a double award GCSE.

Students will receive two combined grades on the 9 to 1 scale, separated by no more than 1 grade. Hence 7-7 or 7-6 are possible outcomes but not 7-5.

### Subject content

16 core practicals are covered and examined in the final papers. There is a high maths content (up to 30% in the physics papers). Students will study a range of key scientific concepts and learn how scientific knowledge is obtained and used.

### Why is this subject important?

Since it is a requirement of the National Curriculum that all students study Science, this course encourages students to be inspired, motivated and challenged by following a broad, coherent, practical, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. It encourages learners to develop their curiosity about the living, material and physical worlds and provides insight into and experience of how Science works.



## SEPARATE SCIENCES - GCSE BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

**Exam board:** AQA GCSE Biology, AQA GCSE Chemistry, AQA GCSE Physics - specifications 8461, 8462, 8463

### Form of assessment

This course provides three separate GCSE qualifications. All three GCSEs must be studied.

- This counts as one of your option choices.
- 2 x 1 hour 45 minutes exams for biology, chemistry and physics (six exams in total).
- All the exams will be taken at the end of year 11.
- Students will receive a separate 9-1 grade for each of the three subjects.

### Subject content

Students study a range of key scientific concepts and learn how scientific knowledge is obtained and used - i.e. how science really works. Students will follow the core biology, chemistry and physics units from the combined science course plus extra content in each science.

The 24 core practicals are examined in the final papers. There is a high maths content (up to 30% in the physics papers).

### Why is this subject important?

The GCSEs in separate sciences encourage students to be inspired, motivated and challenged by following a broad, coherent, practical, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. It encourages learners to develop their curiosity about the living, material and physical worlds and provides insight into and experience of how science works.



### **This course does not lead to an examination**

To ensure students make progress through Key Stage 4, Physical Education (P.E.) teaching provides opportunities for students to progress and access as broad a curriculum as possible. It is our aim to develop students' physical literacy, instil the importance of leading a physically active lifestyle and look to encourage students to stay active once they leave school.

During year 9, students complete a range of activities that include health-related exercise, football, volleyball, badminton, netball, tag rugby, cricket, basketball, rounders and athletics in preparation for the opportunities that are made available to them in year 10/11.

In years 10 and year 11 core PE, students take part in a range of activities that develop on from their skills and knowledge learnt in KS3. These activities include football, tag rugby, handball, table tennis, health-related exercise, rounders, cricket, netball, basketball and athletic activities.



# OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

**Exam board:** OCR GCSE Art and Design

### Form of assessment

There are **four** key assessment objectives:

- A01 - develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources
- A02 – refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes
- A03 - record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses
- A04 - present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language.



### Subject content

#### Component 1: Coursework portfolio - work based on a chosen theme (60%)

- Completion of a varied body of work that covers all four assessment objectives
- This will last from the start of January in the first year of the course, through until December of the second year .

#### Component 2: Externally set task - based on an exam title, not previously seen (40%)

- One unit of work based on one of the exam titles, that covers all four assessment objectives.
- Externally set task - the paper is given out at the start of January during the second year of the course.
- Students will have 8/10 weeks preparatory time and will then sit a ten-hour exam over two days

Students will be required to work in at least **two** of the main areas of study: drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, 3D studies and mixed media.

*What is required:*

- A range of artwork based on the chosen theme/exam title. This will include researching artists that have a connection to the theme/title and that can inspire and influence students' work.
- copies of artists' work and comparative studies.
- A range of detailed, realistic drawings based on real objects/people/places.
- A good range of photographs (that students will be able to produce detailed drawings from)
- A variety of material experimentations, based on the chosen theme, exploring and experimenting with different materials.
- A range of compositional designs showing different ideas influenced by the chosen artist and chosen theme/title. These compositional designs will lead towards students making their final piece/s.

### Why is this subject important?

Art and Design is both a form of communication and a means of expressing ideas and feelings. It is a visual language and we live in a world where the use of visual imagery and information influences every facet of our lives. Whether it be in paintings, advertising, films, theatre, photography, media, digital design, fashion, textiles, interior or furniture design, art and design is a subject which encompasses this very rich field of human activity and offers you a chance to work with ideas.

**Exam Board:** Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9–1) in Business

**Form of assessment**

- **Theme 1: Investigating small business**  
Written examination (50%): 1 hour and 45 minutes, 90 marks
- **Theme 2: Building a business**  
Written examination (50%): 1 hour and 45 minutes, 90 marks

**Subject content**

- Students will apply knowledge and understanding to different business contexts. These include businesses ranging from small enterprises to large multinationals and businesses operating in local, national and global contexts
- Develop an understanding of how these contexts impact on business behaviour
- Use business terminology to identify and explain business activity
- Apply business concepts to familiar and unfamiliar contexts

**Why is this subject important?**

Studying business gives great foundational knowledge of what it's like to work in a business and the factors that go into making a business successful. The great thing about business is that it's universal - the terms and concepts don't differ depending on who or where you are! You'll also learn a lot of transferable skills, like leadership or how to be a team player. Doing a business GCSE is also a great way to improve your employability skills. In every business there will be different departments doing wildly different things, but having a good understanding of how a business functions means you can look at the business as a whole. This perspective is rarer than you think and it can help you bring new ideas to the table that benefit the business.



**Exam board:** OCR Cambridge Nationals Level 1/2

This qualification is designed for students wishing to develop knowledge and practical skills in child development. Students will experience practical and theoretical elements to the lessons.

### Form of assessment

The qualification has three units. All units must be passed for a grade to be awarded.

- **Unit RO57: Written exam (40%)** - Health and wellbeing for child development
- **Unit RO58: Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) (30%)** - Create a safe environment and understand the nutritional needs of children from birth to five years.
- **Unit RO59: Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) (30%)** - Understand the development of a child from one to five years.

### Subject content

#### Unit R057: Health and wellbeing for child development

Students will learn about the importance of preconception health and reproduction, antenatal care and preparation for birth, including postnatal care and the conditions in which a child can thrive.

Topics include:

- Preconception, health and reproduction.
- Antenatal care and preparation for birth.
- Postnatal checks, postnatal care and the conditions for development.
- Childhood illnesses and a child safe environment.

#### Unit R058: Create a safe environment and understand the nutritional needs of children from birth to five years

This is assessed by a set assignment. Students will learn how to create a safe environment for children from birth to five years in childcare settings. Students will research and choose equipment that is suitable and safe for use and will learn about children's nutrition and dietary needs.

Topics include:

- Creating a safe environment in a childcare setting.
- Choosing suitable equipment for a childcare setting.
- Nutritional needs of children from birth to five years.

#### Unit R059: Understand the development of a child from one to five years

This is assessed by a set assignment. Students will learn the physical, intellectual and social developmental norms for children from one to five years. They will understand the importance of creating plans and providing different play activities to support children in their development.

Topics include:

- Physical, intellectual and social developmental norms from one to five years.
- Stages and types of play and how play benefits development.
- Observe the development of a child aged one to five years.
- Plan and evaluate play activities for a child aged one to five years for a chosen area of development.

### **Why is this subject important?**

This qualification will help students to develop knowledge, understanding and skills that will allow them to help and support those in their care, starting from preconception through to children aged birth to five years.

The knowledge and skills developed will help students to progress onto further study in the care sector. This may be other vocational qualifications, such as the Level 2 or Level 3 OCR Cambridge Technicals in Health and Social Care or the Early Years Educator Apprenticeship. The qualification also helps to develop other transferable skills, such as research and communication skills that will be valuable in other life and work situations.



# CITIZENSHIP

**Exam board:** Edexcel

Students study citizenship across years 7, 8 and 9. It then becomes an optional GCSE subject.

## **Form of assessment**

In years 10 - 11, students who have chosen this option subject will have three lessons a week to complete a full course GCSE in Citizenship.

As part of the course, students will sit two 1 hour 45 minutes exams which will test students' knowledge of core concepts taught at KS4 such as, diversity, human rights, civil and criminal law, parliamentary democracy and actions citizens take to influence decisions locally, nationally and globally.

Students will need to demonstrate the ability to:

- understand the range of methods and approaches that can be used by governments, organisations, groups and individuals to address citizenship issues in society, including practical citizenship actions.
- formulate citizenship enquiries, identifying and sequencing research questions to analyse citizenship ideas, issues and debates.
- select and organise their knowledge and understanding in responses and analysis, when creating and communicating their own arguments, explaining ideas and different viewpoints and perspectives, countering viewpoints they do not support, giving reasons and justifying conclusions drawn.

## **Subject content**

The GCSE course content is divided into five themes:

- **Living together in the UK:** human rights, discrimination and the law, migration and identity.
- **Democracy at work in the UK:** forming a government, making laws and government spending.
- **Law and justice:** criminal and civil law, sentencing, young people and crime.
- **Power and influence:** the media, pressure groups, voting, the EU, NATO, UN and the Commonwealth.
- **Taking citizenship action:** planning and participating in your action.

## **Why is this subject important?**

Through work in lesson time and activities across and beyond the curriculum, learn how to deal with the moral, social and cultural issues they face as they approach adulthood and get a good grounding in the workings of the political, legal and financial systems; locally, within the UK and abroad.

**Exam board:** GCSE OCR J277

## **Form of assessment**

All students complete three mandatory units:

- Unit 1 - Computer systems (written paper – 1 hour 30 minutes)
- Unit 2 – Computational thinking, algorithms and programming (written paper – 1 hour 30 minutes)
- Unit 3 - Programming project – compulsory component – non-graded

## **Assessment:**

- Exam - 50% Component 1 – Computer Systems
- Exam – 50% Component 2 – Computational thinking, algorithms and programming

## **Subject content**

The qualification will build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established through the computer science elements of the Key Stage 3 programme of study.

Computer science students learn logical reasoning, algorithmic thinking, design and structured problem solving—all concepts and skills that are valuable well beyond the computing classroom. Students gain awareness of the resources required to implement and deploy a solution and how to deal with real-world and business constraints. These skills are applicable in many contexts, from science and engineering to the humanities and business, and have already led to deeper understanding in many areas.

## **Why is this subject important?**

We live in a digitised, computerised, programmable world, and to make sense of it, computing is needed. An engineer using a computer to design a bridge must understand the limitations of the numerical methods used, how the maximum capacity estimates were computed and how reliable they are. An educated citizen using a government database or bidding in an eBay auction should have a basic understanding of the underlying algorithms of such conveniences, as well as the security and privacy issues that arise when information is transmitted and stored digitally. These are computing, not ICT issues.

Most careers in the 21st century will require an understanding of computing. Many jobs that today's students will have in 10 to 20 years haven't been invented yet. Professionals in every discipline—from art and entertainment, to communications and health care, to factory workers, small business owners, and retail store staff— need to understand computing to be globally competitive in their fields.

This qualification will give students the opportunity to study A Level computer science in sixth form.

**Exam board:** Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Tech Award in Creative Digital Media Production

## How will I be assessed?

Students will have to complete three compulsory units and two optional units for a single GCSE equivalent award.

- **Component 1:** Exploring Media Products (30%) – *Internally assessed*
- **Component 2:** Developing Digital Media Production Skills (30%) – *Internally assessed*
- **Component 3:** Create a Media Product in Response to a Brief (40%) 9 hours, 60 marks. – *External assessment, completed under supervised conditions.*

## Subject content

- **Exploring Media Products:**  
Students will develop their understanding of how media products are created for specific audiences and purposes. They will explore the relationship between genre, narrative and representation in media products, and develop your understanding of how they are interpreted by audiences.
- **Developing Digital Media Production Skills:**  
Students will develop practical media production skills and techniques. They will have the opportunity to specialise in audio/moving images. Students will apply these skills and techniques to relevant pre-production, production and post-production processes when reworking an existing media product/s.
- **Creating a Media product:**  
Students will build on knowledge, understanding and skills acquired and developed in Components 1 and 2. Students will apply their practical skills to the creation of a media product in response to a brief. Students will submit their ideas, pre-production planning and final media product in a portfolio of evidence.

## Why is this subject important?

This course gives students the opportunity to develop real media industry skills in digital video production, non-linear editing and sound design. This qualification is highly regarded by the media industry and will give students skills in creating new media and in the digital arts.

Creative digital media production will equip students with practical, 'hands-on' creative skills to kick start a career or develop a keen interest in video production, animation, sound design or editing. Students will learn how to create, animate, shoot and edit with Creative Digital Media Production.

Creative media employment has provided around two million jobs in the UK and employment opportunities in the creative media sector are growing. There are approximately 182,000 businesses involved in the creative industry generating revenues of over £26 billion per year.

You can continue to study in this area with a Level 3 BTEC Creative Media qualification in Highlands Sixth Form.

**Exam board:** GCSE Dance AQA (8236)

### Form of assessment

Dance is a GCSE course which is 60% practical and 40% theory. The course enables students to develop skills, knowledge and understanding of Dance through choreography, performing and dance analysis.

- **Component 1: Performance and choreography (60%)**
  - 2 set phrases of 30 seconds each performed as a solo in a contemporary style
  - A performance in a duet or trio to a selected piece of music with a chosen theme. The dance is around 3 minutes long
  - A piece of dance choreographed by the student to a stimulus chosen from a selection given by the exam board at the start of Year 11. The dance needs to be 3 minutes long.
  
- **Component 2: Dance appreciation (40%) - 1 hour 30 minutes**  
Students will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of choreographic processes and performing skills, critical appreciation of their own work and critical appreciation of 6 professional works from the GCSE Dance anthology.

### Subject content

#### Performance (30%)

- **Set Phrases**  
Students will learn 2 set phrases from the exam board and perform them as a solo. The dances are recorded and sent to be marked by the exam board.
- **Duet/trio performance**  
Students will perform in either a duet with one other dancer, or in a trio with two other dancers. The dance is choreographed by the students, the teacher and guest professional choreographers. The students are marked on their ability to perform expressive, physical and technical dance skills. The dance should be between 3 minutes and 3 and a half minutes.

#### Choreography (30%)

- **Solo or group choreography**  
Students will create a dance based on a given stimulus set by the exam board, this can either be a solo (two to two and a half minutes) or a group dance for two to five dancers (three to three and a half minutes).

#### Dance theory paper (40%)

- **Section A** - questions about dance and choreography skills. Writing about creating your own dance.
- **Section B** - answering three 6 mark questions about your own performance and choreography work.
- **Section C** - a couple of short answer questions and two 12 mark essays on the features of the 6 dances studied in the anthology.

#### Why is this subject important?

Dance allows students to develop their confidence and self-esteem and it helps them to develop essential interpersonal skills such as problem solving and communication skills.

**Exam board:** AQA GCSE Drama

## Form of assessment

- **Component 1: Understanding Drama (40%)**  
Written exam - one paper 1 hour 45 minutes, which is split into three sections. Section A is multiple choice questions about general theatre knowledge, section B is based on the play text *The Crucible* and section C is based on a Live Theatre performance that students will see in a theatre.
- **Component 2: Devising Drama (40%)**  
The performance of the devised piece (20 marks)  
The devising log that explains how the work was developed. (60 marks)  
Both pieces of NEA (non-examined assessment) are marked by the teacher and moderated externally by AQA.
- **Component 2: Texts in Practice (20%)**  
A practical performance exam - two extracts from a single performance text.

## Subject content

Students will have the opportunity to create their own work as well as explore and perform performance texts written by a range of playwrights. They will also be exposed to a number of theatrical styles in their practical work and explore different ways of communicating ideas on stage.

- **Component 1: *Written Exam*** with three sections: One section will be based on a play students have studied: *The Crucible*. They will be given a series of questions where they will write as an actor and designer in relation to an extract from the play. In Section C students will analyse and evaluate a live theatre production that they have seen.
- **Component 2: *Devising***. Students will perform as part of a group and will create a piece of drama based on a stimulus. Students will need to develop a devising log to evidence *how* they created the piece and evaluate the impact of the final performance on the audience.
- **Component 3: *Scripted Performance***. Students will practically explore a play chosen by the teacher and perform two extracts from that play to an examiner- this can be either as a monologue, duologue or a group.

Students will visit the theatre to watch a professional production. They will need to write about this production in their written exam.

## Why is this subject important?

Drama teaches students to be creative, problem solve and build self-confidence. Students studying drama will also develop their communication and self-discipline skills through working as part of a team.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS

Most students are expected to select **one** design and technology subject to ensure they experience a broad and balanced curriculum.

Design and technology students will sit a 1 hour 45 minutes written paper, 40 marks on core content and 60 marks in a materials category from the following material choices:

- Textiles
- Timbers

They will also complete non-examined assessment (NEA) (50%) - 100 marks

The project consists of a portfolio and a prototype after developing a range of ideas from a contextual challenge.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY: TIMBERS

**Exam board:** GCSE Design and technology: Edexcel 1DT0

### Form of assessment

**Component 1:** Written exam (50%) 1 hour 45 minutes - 100 marks

- Section A: Core content
  - Four questions - 40 marks
- Section B: Timbers
  - Four questions - 60 marks

The paper will include questions that target mathematics – 15% of marks. Calculators may be used in the exam. An understanding of underlying **scientific** principles is also expected.

**Component 2:** Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) (50%) - 100 marks

- The project consists of a portfolio and a prototype after developing a range of ideas from a contextual challenge.

### Subject content

Students undertake a project that will test their skills in: investigating, designing, making and evaluating a prototype of a product that will allow them to apply the skills they have acquired and developed throughout their study.

Once they have selected the contextual challenge, students develop a range of potential ideas and then realise one through practical making activities.

### Why is this subject important

Design and technology gives students the opportunity to demonstrate creativity and innovation with no material or technology limitations. Students will have the opportunity to work with a wide range of materials and to specialise in one material for the exam.

In addition to the core principles all students will develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding of specialist techniques, processes and material and components.



**Exam board:** GCSE Design and technology: Edexcel (9-1) 1DT0

### Form of assessment

**Component 1:** Written exam (50%) 1 hour 45 minutes - 100 marks

- Section A: Core content
  - Four questions - 40 marks
  
- Section B: Textiles
  - Four questions - 60 marks

The paper will include questions that target mathematics – (15%). Calculators may be used in the exam. An understanding of underlying **scientific** principles is also expected.

**Component 2:** Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) (50%) - 100 marks

- The project consists of a portfolio and a prototype after developing a range of ideas from a contextual challenge.

### Subject content

Students undertake a project that will test their skills in: investigating, designing, making and evaluating a prototype of a product that will allow them to apply the skills they have acquired and developed throughout their study.

Once they have selected the contextual challenge, students develop a range of potential ideas and then realise one through practical making activities.

### Why is this subject important?

Design and technology gives students the opportunity to demonstrate creativity and innovation with no material or technology limitations. Students will have the opportunity to work with a wide range of materials and to specialise in one material for the exam.

In addition to the core principles, all students will develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding of specialist techniques, processes, materials and components. Students specialising in textiles can either follow a fashion, accessories or furnishing route for the final assessment. Throughout the first year of the course, students will complete some small projects developing their theory and practical skills. They will learn to apply a range of manufacturing processes, which will develop their understanding and confidence when working with materials.



**Exam board:** GCSE (9-1) Economics OCR J205

### Form of assessment

Written examinations including case studies and essay

- **Introduction to Economics** (50%) - 1 hour 30 minutes, 80 marks, written paper.
- **National and International Economics** (50%) - 1 hour 30 minutes, 80 marks, written paper.

### Subject content

Students on this course will develop an understanding of the impact of economic choices. Students explore how consumers, producers and governments interact in markets nationally and internationally, developing awareness for the impact of economics on our lives.

#### **Paper 1: Introduction to economics and the role of markets and money.**

- The economic problem
- Scarcity and choice
- Demand and supply
- Competition and production
- The labour market
- The role of financial and money markets

#### **Paper 2: Economic objectives and the role of government. International trade and the global economy**

- Economic objectives (economic growth, low unemployment, fair distribution of income and price stability)
- Economic policies (fiscal, monetary and supply side)
- Limitations of markets
- Exchange rates
- Importance of international trade
- Balance of payments
- Globalisation

### Why is this subject important?

This course gives a strong foundation for A Level economics which is a popular choice for many students in the sixth form. However, it is not a requirement for entry to the A Level course.

Economics teaches students to explain and evaluate economic problems and possible solutions. Students will be able to acquire a way of thinking as economists and develop a logical approach to thinking and reasoning.

**Exam board:** Pearson BTEC Tech Award in Enterprise

**Form of assessment**

The course is made up of three components, all of which must be passed successfully. There are two coursework components and one externally assessed written exam component.

- **Component 1 – Exploring Enterprises** - (30%) (Internally assessed coursework assignments under exam supervision.)
- **Component 2 – Planning and Presenting a Micro-Enterprise Idea-** (30%) (Internally assessed coursework assignments under exam supervision.)
- **Component 3 –Marketing and Finance for Enterprise** (40%) (Externally assessed written exam sat in year 11)

The course is graded using the BTEC grading system of Pass, Merit and Distinction. The GCSE equivalency grades are shown below.

BTEC Grade	GCSE Grade
Level 2 Distinction*	Grade 8-9
Level 2 Distinction	Grade 7
Level 2 Merit	Grade 5-6
Level 2 Pass	Grade 4
Level 1 Distinction	Grade 3
Level 1 Merit	Grade 2
Level 1 Pass	Grade 1

**Subject content**

- **Component 1:** Examine different enterprises to develop knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of enterprises and the skills needed by entrepreneurs.
- **Component 2:** Explore business ideas, plan and pitch a micro-enterprise activity to an audience, and use feedback to review their business plan.
- **Component 3:** Explore the different promotional methods used by enterprises and the factors that influence how enterprises identify and target their market.

**Why is this subject important?**

The BTEC Tech Award in enterprise is designed to help students to develop their business skills. This will be done through coursework based assignments and a written exam. Students are encouraged to explore topics and build on their knowledge which will help in the wider world of business.

**Exam board:** GCSE AQA 8585

## Form of assessment

- **Controlled Assessment** (50%) - 100 marks
  - **Assignment 1 – Science Investigation** (30 marks) – set by AQA  
Practical investigation into the function and properties of ingredients. Students produce a written report (1500 – 2000 words) which includes photographs of practical work.
  - **Assignment 2 – Practical Task** (70 marks) – set by AQA  
Students will research one of the tasks set by AQA and will trial dishes that use different techniques. Students will choose three dishes to make in a three-hour practical exam. Students will also need to analyse the nutritional value, cost and sensory properties of the dishes that were made.
- **Exam** – (50%) 1 hour 45 minutes - 100 marks  
One exam based on the theory work that has been covered in the course. Students will be assessed on their knowledge, skills and understanding of each of the five areas studied. These will be a mixture of short answer and extended answer questions.

## Subject content

- 1 - Food, nutrition and health
- 2 - Food science
- 3 - Food safety
- 4 - Food choice
- 5 - Food provenance

Students will learn how ingredients work together to make products and the scientific principles behind cooking. This is complemented by the study of nutrition and how to prepare foods for healthier living. It builds on the work that all students study at KS3 in their technology lessons.

This is a very practical course and students will learn the twelve skill groups throughout the two years culminating in a practical exam in the final year. Students will learn about the nutritional needs of different groups of people as well as where different nutrients come from.

### Why is this subject important?

Students will learn a range of skills to help plan, prepare and cook different recipes for all different groups of people. Learning about where different foods come from will help students understand the impact on the environment of food production and it will also allow students to live a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet. Students will have an excellent understanding of food science and nutrition which can be a base of many different career pathways.

**Please note: this option is not suitable if you want to take A Level Product design**

**Exam board:** Edexcel Geography Specification B (1GB0)

### Form of assessment

There are three written exams:

- **Paper 1:** Global Geographical Issues: 1 hour 30 minutes
- **Paper 2:** UK Geographical Issues: 1 hour 45 minutes
- **Paper 3:** People and Environmental Issues - Decision Making: 1 hour 30 minutes

### Subject content

#### Paper 1:

- Hazardous Earth
- Development Dynamics
- Challenges of an Urbanising World

#### Paper 2:

- UK Evolving Physical Landscapes, Rivers and Coasts
- UK Evolving Human Landscapes, Dynamic Cities
- Geographical Investigations, Human and Physical Fieldwork Study

#### Paper 3

- People and the Biosphere
- Forests Under Threat
- Consuming Energy Resources

All new Geography courses have encouraged more fieldwork, rather than controlled assessment. There will be questions about the fieldwork investigations in the exams.

### Why is this subject important?

Studying geography gives students the opportunity to understand more about the world, the challenges it faces and their place within it. Geography develops critical thinking by helping students analyse patterns, causes, and relationships.

This GCSE course will deepen their understanding of Geographical processes, illuminate the impact of change and of people-environment interactions, highlight the dynamic links and relationships between places and environments at different scales, and develop competence in using a wide range of geographical investigative skills and approaches.

Geography enables students to become globally and environmentally informed and thoughtful, enquiring citizens.

The skills acquired support a wide range of careers, such as urban planning, environmental science, disaster management, international relations, modern technologies such as GPS and mapping, to mention a few.

**Exam board:** AQA GCSE History (8145)

## Form of assessment

- **Paper 1:** written exam (50%): 2 hours - 84 marks (including four marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
- **Paper 2:** - Written exam (50%): 2 hours - 84 marks (including four marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)

## Subject content

### Paper 1:

- **Section A: Period studies - 1D America, 1920–1973: Opportunity and inequality**
  - Part one: American people and the 'Boom'
  - Part two: Bust – Americans' experiences of the depression and new deal
  - Part three: Post-war America
- **Section B: Wider world depth studies - Conflict and tension between East and West, 1945–1972**
  - Part one: The origins of the Cold War
  - Part two: The development of the Cold War
  - Part three: Transformation of the Cold War

### Paper 2:

- **Section A: Thematic studies :2C Health and the People**
  - Part one: Medicine stands still
  - Part two: The beginning of change
  - Part three: A revolution in medicine
  - Part four: Modern medicine
- **Section B: British depth studies - Elizabethan England, c1568–1603**
  - Part one: Elizabeth's court and Parliament
  - Part two: Life in Elizabethan times
  - Part three: Troubles at home and abroad
  - Part four: The historic environment of Elizabethan England

## Why is this subject important?

Studying history will give students a sound knowledge and understanding of the developments, concepts and conflicts which have shaped the twentieth century. The course will also focus on essential skills such as analysis, constructive argument and comprehension. This will also provide grounding for a large variety of further study and careers.

## FRENCH AND SPANISH

**Exam board:** GCSE French Edexcel (1FR0) and GCSE Spanish Edexcel (1SP0) (foundation or higher tier)

### Form of assessment

Students will be entered at either foundation or higher tier for each of the four skills.

- AO1 Speaking: communicate and interact in speech on a range of the topics studied (25%).
- AO2 Listening: understand and respond to different types of spoken language (25%).
- AO3 Reading: understand and respond to different types of written language comprehension and translation (25%).
- AO4 Writing: communicate in writing on a range of the topics studied (25%).

The exam tier will be decided based on performance in the mock examinations in year 11. There are four papers in each tier and all four skills will have a final exam.

### Subject content

During the MFL GCSE course, students will further develop their skills in and knowledge of the language, to enable them to perform listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks relating to the following themes:

- **Media & technology:** Explore how the digital world shapes our lives.
- **My personal world:** Discuss identity, relationships, and everyday life.
- **Studying and my future:** Understand how language plays a role in education and career pathways.
- **Lifestyle and wellbeing:** Dive into healthy living, social life, and emotional well-being.
- **Travel and tourism:** Learn how language enhances your travel experiences and opens up the world.
- **My neighbourhood:** Talk about the local environment, culture, and community.

### Why is this subject important?

Learning a new language isn't just about communicating—it's about unlocking a world of opportunities. The benefits are endless, from improving your academic performance and cognitive skills to developing a deeper appreciation for different cultures.

In today's interconnected world, speaking another language is more essential than ever. It opens doors to global career opportunities, helps you connect with people from all over the world, and equips you to thrive in the modern marketplace.

**Exam board:** Edexcel GCSE Music specification

Students will need to sing or play an instrument or have produced music using ICT to a good standard to succeed in music GCSE. Students who choose GCSE music should have at least two years of instrumental or vocal tuition. The minimum standard required would be Grade 2 or equivalent at the start of the course.

### Form of assessment

There are three components:

**Component 1: Performing** (30%) - Assessed by the teacher (60 marks)

- Solo performing
- Ensemble performing (two or more live players)

#### Assessment overview

- Students perform for at least four minutes' combined duration.
- Solo performance: at least one minute in duration and one or more pieces.
- Ensemble performance: at least one minute in duration and one or more pieces.

**Component 2: Composing** (30%) - Assessed by the teacher (60 marks)

- Developing musical ideas
- Compositional techniques and strategies
- Ensuring technical control and coherence
- Methods of notating composition scores

#### Assessment overview

- Students compose two compositions, of at least three minutes **combined** duration.
- One composition to a brief set by Pearson, of at least one minute in duration.
- One free composition set by the student, of at least one minute in duration.

**Component 3: Appraising** (40%) Written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes (80 marks)

- Musical elements, musical contexts and musical language

#### Assessment overview

The paper is made up of two sections and is out of a total of 80 marks.

Section A – Areas of study, dictation, and unfamiliar pieces (68 marks).

Section B – Extended response comparison between a set work and one unfamiliar piece (12 marks).

### Subject content

Four areas of study with two set works each:

- Instrumental music 1700–1820
- Vocal music
- Music for stage and screen
- Fusions

### Why is this subject important?

Music will allow students to develop their performing, composing and listening skills to a higher level. Students will listen to a broad range of musical styles and use the ideas as the basis for their own pieces.

By learning to listen critically, students will expand their musical horizons and gain a deeper understanding of how music is constructed. Listening to a broad range of music also helps develop other areas of musical activity, including composing and performing. Students will gain a broad aural knowledge of western classical music, popular music and traditional music from around the world.

**Exam board:** OCR (J587)

It is essential that students are playing a regular sport both inside and outside of school in order to access this GCSE.

**Form of assessment**

There are three components.

**Component 1: Physical factors affecting performance** (30% ) written exam, 1 hour - 60 marks

This paper covers:

- Applied anatomy
- Physical training

**Component 2: Socio-cultural influences and sports psychology** (30% ) written exam, 1 hour - 60 marks

This paper covers:

- Health, fitness and wellbeing
- Diet and Nutrition
- Socio-cultural issues
- Sports Psychology

**Component 3: GCSE Practical activity assessment** (40%) Non-exam assessment - 80 marks

- Analysing and evaluating performance (AEP): 20 marks
- Practical performance in three sporting activities: 60 marks

A total of three activities are taken from the list of OCR recognised activities.

- One or two can be taken from the Team Activity List
- One or two can be taken from the Individual Activity List

**Why is this subject important?**

GCSE Physical Education is designed to open your eyes to the amazing world of sports performance.

*It provides clear insight into the field*

The combination of physical performance and academic challenge provides an exciting opportunity. Students will also learn about physical education through a range of different contexts and the impact it has on everyday lives.

*It keeps the subject real*

It encourages students to immerse themselves in the world of sports and PE with the chance to perform sport (through the non-exam assessment component) and delve into the how and why of physical activity and sport.

*It provides skills for a modern world*

Students can develop a practical set of key skills, including dealing with pressure, split second decision-making, communication, teamwork, interpreting and analysing data, and more.

**Exam board:** AQA GCSE Religious Studies A (8062)

## Form of assessment

There are two written exams

- Paper 1: Beliefs and practices (Christianity & Islam) - 1 hour 45 minutes
- Paper 2: Themes - 1 hour 45 minutes

## Subject content

Beliefs, teachings and practices of two religions:

- Christianity
- Islam

## Four topics from the Philosophical, Ethical and Religious Themes:

- Theme B: Religion and life.
- Theme C: The existence of God and revelation.
- Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict.
- Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment.

## Why is this subject important

Religious Studies GCSE balances looking at two religions in depth, with how religions approach current societal and moral issues. It is an excellent foundation for the A Level RS (Philosophy and Ethics) and Sociology. This course is designed to introduce students to ethics, legal questions and issues arising in society with a series of philosophical, religious and ordinary peoples' viewpoints. It offers students a chance to develop knowledge, analytical skills and the ability to debate.

