Da Vinci Academy
A L.E.A.D. Academy

KS4 OPTIONS

GCSE CURRICULUM GUIDE

Academic Year
2025/26

Lead • Empower • Achieve • Drive

Contents

Curriculum Choices and the Options Process

Dear parents/carers

The selection of optional subjects at GCSE is one of the most exciting and important moments in any child's secondary education.

We aim to ensure that the information and guidance provided will support you and your child in exploring what options are right for them. Their informed choices will lead to them fulfilling their potential and flourishing in the future.

This booklet will provide you with information about the various curriculum choices available as your child moves into Years 10 and 11. It also provides you with some general information about the qualifications we offer that are appropriate for this age group of pupils. Specific details about the courses we offer are also given.

At our options evening, we will give you and your child the opportunity to see the different range of course that are available to them. You will also be provided with opportunities to speak to the various subject staff about certain subjects.

Your child's options form will need to be completed in a timely manner. If for any reason you anticipate having difficulties completing the form by the deadline, please contact the academy by telephone and ask for a member of the leadership team to call you back.

Throughout the options process, the academy will be conducting a quality assurance review. This may mean that you are invited to attend a meeting with a member of the leadership team to review provisional option choices, career progression and learning pathways to best suit your child.

Pupils will receive final confirmation of their Key Stage 4 options during the Year 9 summer term.

Welcome to your GCSE Curriculum Guide

Dear pupil

Now that you are in Year 9, you are about to begin one of the most important and exciting stages of your education so far - choosing your GCSE subjects. This is an important step in your academy journey, and this booklet will help you understand the subjects you can choose, how the options process works and how to decide what's right for you.

Over the next two years, you will study a combination of core subjects and optional subjects that you select. These choices will shape your learning journey through Years 10 and 11, and likely influence your future education, training, and career pathway.

Choosing your GCSE options can feel like a big decision, but you will get lots of help. Your teachers, tutor, careers advisors and parents or carers are all here to support you. In this booklet, you'll find clear information about each subject, what you'll learn, how it's assessed, and what careers it could lead to in the future.

Take your time reading it. Think about what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what you might want to do after you leave secondary school. Choose subjects that will keep you motivated and help you do your best.

We wish you the very best as you take this exciting step forward in your education.

GCSE OPTIONS

GUIDANCE FOR PUPILS AND PARENTS

The options process is about your qualifications and your future.

The national curriculum requires all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to study:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Computing
- Physical Education (PE)
- Citizenship

Schools must also offer at least one subject from each of these areas:

- Humanities
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Design and Technology
- Arts

They must also provide:

- Religious Education
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSE)

At our academy, this is organised as follows:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science (Combined Science Trilogy or Triple Science: Biology, Chemistry and Physics if opted for)
- Core PE (non-examined)
- Computing (non-examined)
- Religious Education (non-examined)
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE) which includes RSE, Citizenship and Careers (non-examined)
- Option programme

In addition to the taught PSHEE lessons, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development will also be covered through various curriculum areas, in assemblies and in events. The academy has mapped its SMSC provision in detail to ensure pupils receive a high-quality education in these areas.

Across the curriculum, there are opportunities for pupils to use information technology to enhance the work they are doing in the various subject areas.

Pupils will access at least two hours of PE fortnightly as part of their curriculum provision. In addition, the PE department offers a variety of other physical activities that will enable pupils to understand how to fulfil a healthy active lifestyle during school and after they leave education.

A full, and growing, programme of co-curricular activities is on offer that support the core curriculum provision. These activities are open to every pupil.

Choosing a Combination of Subjects

At our academy, we try to ensure that pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum up to the age of 16. This means ensuring that pupils study a full range of different subjects up to the age of 16. For example, the core subjects of English, mathematics and science along with a humanity, a language, an arts subject and one other.

Studying a range of subjects is one way of recognising achievement across a set of academic GCSE subjects. Having qualifications in a range of subjects will help pupils to keep their options open for further study and a range of future career pathways.

At present, universities are continuing to base their offers on Level 3 qualifications. Competition for places for some universities and courses has meant that they are looking at GCSE grades, and subjects studied, in some cases.

Why study a language?

Languages give young people a competitive advantage

Studying a foreign language can be extremely rewarding and exciting. It provides an insight into other cultures and can open the door to travel and employment opportunities. It can also broaden pupils' horizons, helping them flourish in new environments.

If your child finds language difficult, don't forget that they will have been studying them for much less time than their other subjects and while it can be a challenge, learning a language will greatly enhance their future opportunities.

What's more, we know that employers value languages, as they are increasingly important to make sure we can compete in the global market. Because of this, languages are increasingly becoming a requirement for many graduate schemes, such as those offered by Lidl.

The Russell Group has named languages as subjects that open doors to more degrees at universities."

The Russell Group is a group of 24 universities with a shared focus on research and a reputation for academic achievement

"Having language skills under your belt will help make you stand out from the crowd, whether you're applying for an entry level position, a management role or an internal transfer."

Steve Cassidy,
Senior Vice President & Managing Director, UK & Ireland, Hilton

National Performance Measures

GCSE Grading

In 2017 a new grading scheme was brought in alongside a new GCSE curriculum in England. The highest grade is 9, while 1 is the lowest, not including a U (ungraded).

The numerical grades apply to all subjects. There is no exact equivalence between the old and new GCSEs. However, grades 7 and above are roughly equivalent to the old grades A-A*, and grades 4-6 are roughly equivalent to the old grades C-B.

School performance tables report the percentage of pupils who achieve a 'strong pass' (5 or above) in both English (Language or Literature) and maths.

Current grades	Old grades equivalent
9	A*
8	
7	A
6	B
5	
4	C
3	D
2	E
	F
1	G
U	U

Table: 9 to 1 grading scale compared to previous A to G scale (source www.gov.uk)*

Progress 8 and Attainment 8

Progress 8

This is a measure of how much progress children make between the end of primary school and the end of secondary school. It is designed to encourage good quality teaching across the curriculum.

This measure is calculated across a pupils' best eight subjects which must include the following: English Language and Literature; mathematics; three optional subjects (usually the sciences, computer science, geography, history and languages); and three further subjects. English and maths are double weighted in this calculation to reflect their importance.

Attainment 8

This is a measure that shows how well a pupil has performed across their GCSE subjects at the end of Year 11. It is based on a pupil's best eight results. Attainment 8 helps give an overall picture of a pupil's GCSE achievement across a broad and balanced curriculum and is used alongside Progress 8 to understand both attainment and progress.

GCSE OPTIONS

FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR PUPILS AND PARENTS

The options process is about your qualifications and your future.

As part of our options process, it is anticipated that most pupils will pick up to four option choices. Pupils must aim to choose at least one subject from each of the following families of subjects: humanities and languages.

Our option blocks are not rigid, but they provide a guide as to how most pupils will successfully decide on the right balance of option choices. We pride ourselves on our individual care and personalised curriculum offer where possible.

Some courses may not run if the numbers of pupils picking the subject are too small or staffing difficulties arise. Likewise, some subjects are limited by facilities and resources. Therefore, we need to impose maximum group sizes and numbers of classes. Due to this, we ask that all our pupils pick two reserve subjects. We will, however, do our very best to satisfy as many of our pupils' option choices as possible.

GCSE Options

You are now approaching a very important stage of your education where key decisions need to be made. It is important that you think carefully about these choices as they will have an impact on later decisions you might want to make about potential level 3 courses (A Level/equivalents), apprenticeships and ultimately about university routes should that be your preference. And, of course, the world of work.

GOOD REASONS FOR CHOOSING SUBJECTS

Build on success:

- Choose subjects in which you feel you will do well.
- Use your school reports/and teacher consultation to help you make an informed choice.

Go for motivation:

- Choose subjects which interest you.
- You are then likely to work hard and do well.

Choose subjects which match your learning needs:

- Some pupils prefer a course with a large quantity of 'project' work and independent learning, others prefer exams.
- Think about what type of assessment suits you best. Do you do better with coursework, or do you prefer written exams? Different courses will suit different pupils because of the way they are assessed.
- Look carefully at subject areas in which you are successful and at new courses that you have not studied at school so far.

Think about your future career:

- Try to consider a balance of subjects. You might have ideas about your future, but you could change your mind! That is why we offer a broad curriculum which keeps options for the future open.

We want to make sure that you are educated in a way that means you can adapt to changes during your working lives and respond to future opportunities. Use the internet to find out which subjects are required for any career you might be interested in.

If you do have an idea about the specific career you want to follow, check out the qualifications you need.

Beyond 16

You will be expected to stay in some form of education or training beyond the age of 16.

Many pupils will move onto a Sixth Form, where the courses cater for a wide range of ability and interests; however, a college or employment with training is also an option for many pupils.

Some pupils will continue their education and training at college or with an employer.

Ask for advice from your teachers, parents and other pupils.

POOR REASONS FOR CHOOSING SUBJECTS GCSE OPTIONS

AVOID CHOOSING A GCSE SUBJECT JUST BECAUSE...

"My friend is doing it."

It might not suit you and you may not be in the same class.

"My parents liked it at school."

Subjects change and your strengths and interests may be different.

"It sounds interesting."

Always find out more first, ask questions, speak to teachers, read the course guide.

"I don't know what else to pick."

Pick something that genuinely interests you, supports your strengths and future plans.

"I like my current teacher."

There is no guarantee that you'll have them next year – focus on the subject, not the teacher.

"It has less exams."

Subjects with lots of coursework or rehearsals also require consistent effort and time commitments.

"I think I need it for my career."

Check requirements carefully, do not assume. Ask for advice before committing.

GCSE OPTIONS

We're committed to helping every pupil build the skills they need for future success — whether in further study, training, or employment. The GCSE options they choose at 14, and later at 16 and 18, play a key role in shaping those pathways.

Some pupils will already have a clear direction, while others may need more support and guidance. Whatever the journey, our priority is to ensure every pupil has the right information to make confident, informed choices that reflect their strengths, interests, and aspirations.

CAREERS GUIDANCE

Careers guidance is a key part of our provision for pupils and families as they make important choices at Key Stage 4 and beyond.

From Years 7 to 9, pupils have explored careers through form time, lessons, activities and subject focussed discussions that help them understand their individual strengths, interests, and skills. This exploration supports pupils in making an informed decision about their choice of GCSE subjects to match their future career or pathway.

For further information and support visit our website which has useful links to careers information and guidance.

Core & Non-Examined Subjects

IN THIS SECTION:

CORE SUBJECTS

English Language

English Literature

Mathematics

Combined Science (Trilogy)

CORE NON-EXAMINED SUBJECTS

Physical Education

Religious Education

Computing

PSHEE

CORE SUBJECT

English Language

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE English Language helps you become a better reader, writer, and communicator. You'll study a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and learn how to write clearly and creatively. The course also helps you build speaking and listening skills. English Language is a core subject, and it is important for college, work, and everyday life.

COURSE CONTENT

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

Section A: Reading

- One literature fiction text (unseen)
- Focus: how writers use narrative and descriptive techniques to engage readers

Section B: Writing

- Descriptive or narrative writing

Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

Section A: Reading

- One non-fiction and one literary non-fiction text (unseen)
- Focus: how different writers present a similar topic over time

Section B: Writing

- Writing to present a viewpoint (e.g., article, speech, letter)

You will learn how to:

- Read fluently and with understanding a wide range of texts from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries
- Write clearly, coherently, and accurately using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures
- Use figurative language and analyse texts critically
- Develop higher-order reading and critical thinking skills

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Plus spoken language assessment	Non-examined – Assessed throughout the course	0% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE English Language is essential for future study and will help you get onto a wide range of career pathways. These careers might include:

- Screenwriter
- Literacy Critic
- Publisher
- Lecturer
- Public Relations Specialist

"English GCSE really helped me grow in confidence — I can explain my ideas so much better now."

CORE SUBJECT

English Literature

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE English Literature lets you explore stories, plays, and poems from different times and places. You'll study famous works like Shakespeare, a 19th-century novel, modern texts, and poetry. You will learn how to understand characters, themes, and language, and how to write about them clearly.

COURSE CONTENT

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th-Century Novel

Section A: Shakespeare (Macbeth)

- Pupils answer one question on their chosen play, analysing an extract and the play as a whole.

Section B: 19th-Century Novel

- *A Christmas Carol* – Charles Dickens

Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry

Section A: Modern Prose or Drama

- *An Inspector Calls* – J.B. Priestley

Section B: Poetry Anthology

- Power and Conflict
- Comparative question on two poems (one printed, one from memory)

Section C: Unseen Poetry

- One question on an unseen poem
- One comparative question on a second unseen poem

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE English literature helps you to think deeply. It is important for future study and will help you to embark onto a wide range of career pathways. These careers might include:

- Speechwriter
- Copywriter
- Translator
- Lexicographer
- Communications Officer

You will be expected to:

- Read and understand whole texts
- Analyse language, form, and structure
- Explore context and authorial intent
- Use quotations effectively
- Write clearly and coherently under timed conditions

> *"It's not just about books – it's about understanding people, emotions, and society."*

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	40% of GCSE
Paper 2	2 hour 15 minutes	60% of GCSE

CORE SUBJECT

Mathematics

Examination Board: OCR

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE mathematics builds your skills in number, algebra, geometry, ratio, probability, and statistics. You'll solve real-world problems and develop logical thinking.

This course deepens your knowledge across the six main areas of mathematics: Number, Algebra, Ratio and Proportion, Geometry, Statistics, and Probability. You'll focus on developing multiplicative reasoning and learn to apply mathematical concepts in varied contexts, including substituting and rearranging formulae, which are skills valuable across many subjects.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into six main content areas:

1. Number
2. Algebra
3. Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change
4. Geometry and Measures
5. Probability
6. Statistics

You will be expected to:

- Develop fluency in mathematical methods
- Apply techniques to solve real-world problems
- Reason mathematically and construct arguments
- Interpret and communicate mathematical information effectively

"I didn't realise how much maths is used in real life until we did the finance and percentages topics."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	3 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 30 minutes	33% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 30 minutes	33% of GCSE
Paper 3	1 hour 30 minutes	33% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

GCSE mathematics is one of the most useful subjects to hold. It is essential for future study and career pathways. Some of the careers available to you with a qualification in maths include:

- Actuary
- Engineer
- Data Analyst
- Architect
- Accountant

"Our teacher never gave up on us – even when we didn't get it the first time, they kept finding new ways to help."

CORE SUBJECT

Combined Science (Trilogy)

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE AQA Combined Science: Trilogy covers biology, chemistry, and physics. You'll learn about cells, the human body, chemical reactions, energy, forces, and more. It's designed to build your science skills through experiments, problem-solving, and real-world examples. This double award qualification gives you two GCSEs.

COURSE CONTENT

Biology Topics

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

Physics Topics

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

> *"There's a lot of content, but I feel like I've learned how to revise properly because of science."*

Chemistry Topics

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

Required practical activities are assessed through written exams, not coursework

> *"The required practical activities helped me feel more prepared for the exam questions because I'd actually done it myself."*

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	6 examinations	Total marks
Biology Paper 1 *(topics 1-4)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE
Biology Paper 2 *(topics 5-7)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE
Chemistry Paper 1 *(topics 8-12)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE
Chemistry Paper 2 *(topics 13-17)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE
Physics Paper 1 *(topics 18-21)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE
Physics Paper 2 *(topics 22-24)*	1 hour 15 mins	16.7% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSEs in combined science helps prepare you for further science study or for future careers in science. The career pathways available to you with science qualifications are endless. Possible career pathways might include:

- Biomedical Scientist
- Environmental Scientist
- Pharmacist
- Forensic Scientist
- Engineer

Physical Education

SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Core PE helps you stay active, healthy, and build teamwork skills. You'll take part in a range of sports and fitness activities, improving your strength, stamina, and coordination. There are no exams—just practical lessons that support your physical and mental wellbeing. It's a great way to stay fit, have fun, and learn how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Religious Education

SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Religious Education helps you explore different beliefs, values, and moral issues. You'll discuss topics like justice, equality, and human rights, and learn how religion influences people's lives and choices. Lessons focus on debate, reflection, and understanding others. There are no exams - just thoughtful discussions that help you develop respect, empathy, and critical thinking.

Computing

SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Computing helps you understand how technology works and how to use it safely and effectively. You'll explore topics like digital safety, data handling, and how computers impact everyday life. Lessons focus on real-world skills like using software, solving problems, and thinking logically. There are no exams - just practical learning to prepare you for life in a digital world.

Personal, Social, Health, Careers and Economic Education (PSHEE)

SUBJECT OVERVIEW

PSHEE (Personal, Social, Health, and Economic Education) helps you build life skills and understand important issues. You'll learn about relationships, mental health, staying safe, careers, and money management. Lessons focus on discussion, reflection, and making informed choices. There are no exams—just practical learning to support your wellbeing and prepare you for adult life.

Optional Subjects

IN THIS SECTION:

HUMANITIES
- **Geography**
- **History**
- **Religious Studies**

SCIENCE
- **Biology** (Triple)
- **Chemistry** (Triple)
- **Physics** (Triple)

LANGUAGES
- **French**

CREATIVE ARTS
- **Art**
- **Food and Nutrition**

PHYSICAL AND PERFORMING ARTS
- **Music**
- **Physical Education**

OTHER
- **Computer Science**
- **Statistics**

HUMANITIES - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Geography

Examination Board: Eduqas B

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Geography helps you understand the world around you - how people, places, and environments are interconnected. You will gain critical knowledge and informed opinions about topics like climate change, global development, urban growth and hazard management. The course includes map skills, fieldwork, and real-world case studies.

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1:
Investigating Geographical Issues

- Three structured themes:
  - Changing Places – Changing Economies
  - Changing Environments
  - Environmental Challenges
- Includes decision-making exercises based on a resource booklet

Component 2:
Problem Solving Geography

- A skills-based paper based on your knowledge of component 1 requiring you to:
  - Interpret and analyse data
  - Apply knowledge to unfamiliar contexts
  - Make and justify decisions
- Build on content from Component 1

Component 3:
Applied Fieldwork Enquiry

- Based on two fieldwork enquiries (human and physical geography)
- As part of the course, you will be expected to:
  - Understand the enquiry process
  - Analyse fieldwork data
  - Evaluate methods and conclusions

Skills Developed	Cartographic, graphical, numerical, and statistical skills	Critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving	Application of knowledge to real-world scenarios and geographical challenges

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	3 written examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	40% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 30 minutes	30% of GCSE
Paper 3	1 hour 30 minutes	30% of GCSE

"It's not just maps and mountains — we learn about real-world stuff like migration and global development."

CAREER PATHWAYS

By studying GCSE geography, you will learn the foundational knowledge you need to enter career pathways such as an:

- Urban planner
- Environmental consultant
- Climate change analyst
- Armed forces
- Global business developer
- Sustainability manager

HUMANITIES - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

History

Examination Board: Pearson Edexcel

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE History helps you understand key events, people, and changes that shaped the world. You'll study topics like medicine through time, Elizabethan England, the Cold War, and Weimar and Nazi Germany. The course builds skills in analysis, argument, and using evidence.

COURSE CONTENT

Paper 1: Thematic Study and Historic Environment

- One thematic study (long-term development over time)
- One historic environment (linked to the thematic study)
- Medicine in Britain, c1250–present and The British sector of the Western Front, 1914–18

Paper 2: Period Study and British Depth Study

- One British depth study
- Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, c1060–88

Or

- Early Elizabethan England, 1558–88

And

- One period study
- The American West, c1835–c1895

Or

- Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91

Paper 3: Modern Depth Study

- Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE history will help to prepare you for a wide range of history-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Lawyer
- Archaeologist
- Historian
- Journalist
- Teacher

"I enjoyed the lessons where we looked at sources and had to figure out what they really meant."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	3 written examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 20 minutes	30% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 50 minutes	40% of GCSE
Paper 3	1 hour 30 minutes	30% of GCSE

HUMANITIES - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Religious Studies

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Religious Studies explores key beliefs, teachings, and practices in religions such as Christianity and Islam. You'll also examine moral and philosophical questions about life, death, peace, and justice. The course builds skills in analysis, evaluation, and respectful debate.

> *"I've learned to respect different opinions, even when I don't agree with them."*

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1:* *The Study of Religions

You will study two religions: Christianity and Islam.

Topics include:

- Beliefs and teachings
- Practices
- Sources of wisdom and authority
- Influence on individuals and communities

Component 2:* *Thematic Studies

You will study four themes:

- Theme A: Relationships and families
- Theme B: Religion and life
- Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment
- Theme F: Religion, human rights and social justice

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 written examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

A GCSE in religious studies helps to lay the foundations for future career pathways in:

- Human rights lawyer
- Charity worker
- Lecturer
- Social worker
- Civil servant

> *"Religious Studies has helped me understand different beliefs and why people live the way they do."*

SCIENCE - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Biology (Triple)

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE biology explores how living things work and interact. You'll study cells, the human body, genetics, ecosystems, and more. The course includes practical experiments and real-life examples to help you understand key ideas. It builds skills in investigation, analysis, and problem-solving. This must be studied alongside chemistry and physics.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 7 main topics:

1. Cell Biology
2. Organisation
3. Infection and Response
4. Bioenergetics
5. Homeostasis and Response
6. Inheritance, Variation and Evolution
7. Ecology

There are 10 required practical activities, including:

- Microscopy
- Osmosis
- Enzymes
- Food Tests
- Photosynthesis
- Reaction Time
- Plant Responses
- Field Investigation
- Decay
- Sampling Techniques

Required practical activities are assessed through written exams, not coursework

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE biology will help prepare you for a wide range of science-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Doctor or a nurse
- Biomedical scientist
- Environmental scientist
- Geneticist
- Marine biologist

"Biology was the science that made the most sense to me – I liked learning how the body works."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE

SCIENCE - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Chemistry (Triple)

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Chemistry helps you understand the substances that make up our world. You'll study atoms, chemical reactions, the periodic table, acids and alkalis, and more. The course includes hands-on experiments and real-life applications. You'll build skills in analysis, problem-solving, and scientific thinking. This must be studied alongside biology and physics.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 10 main topics:

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

There are 8 required practical activities, including:

- Making Salts
- Electrolysis
- Temperature Changes
- Rates of Reaction
- Chromatography
- Identifying Ions
- Water Purification
- Neutralisation

Required practical activities are assessed through written exams, not coursework

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE chemistry will help prepare you for a wide range of science-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Pharmacist
- Forensic scientist
- Chemical engineer
- Materials scientist
- Toxicologist

"Balancing equations used to confuse me, but now it's one of the things I'm best at."

SCIENCE - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Physics (Triple)

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Physics explores the laws and forces that shape our universe. You'll study energy, electricity, motion, waves, and space, using experiments and real-life examples to understand how things work. The course builds skills in problem-solving, data analysis, and scientific thinking. This must be studied alongside biology and chemistry.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into 7 main topics:

1. Energy
2. Electricity
3. Particle Model of Matter
4. Atomic Structure
5. Forces
6. Waves
7. Magnetism and Electromagnetism

There are 10 required practical activities, including:

- Specific Heat Capacity
- Thermal Insulation
- Resistance
- IV Characteristics
- Density
- Light – Reflection and Refraction
- Lenses
- Forces and Extension
- Acceleration
- Waves in a Solid and a Liquid

Required practical activities are assessed through written exams, not coursework

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE physics will help prepare you for a wide range of science-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Aerospace engineer
- Medical physicist
- Renewable energy engineer
- Robotics engineer
- Theoretical physicist
- Financial analyst

"I found the maths side of physics hard, but it felt good when I got the right answer after working it through."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE

LANGUAGES - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

French

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE French helps you build confidence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in French. You'll learn to talk about everyday topics like family, school, holidays, and future plans. The course also explores French-speaking cultures.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is structured around three main themes, each with several subtopics:

Theme 1: Identity and Culture

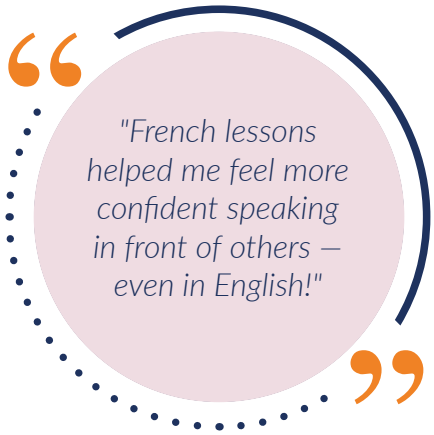
- Me, my family and friends
- Technology in everyday life
- Free-time activities (music, cinema, food, sport)
- Customs and festivals in French-speaking countries

Theme 2: Local, National, International and Global Areas of Interest

- Home, town, neighbourhood and region
- Social issues (charity work, healthy living)
- Global issues (environment, poverty)
- Travel and tourism

Theme 3: Current and Future Study and Employment

- My studies
- Life at school/college
- Education post-16
- Jobs, career choices and ambitions



This is assessed in four parts:

1. Listening

- Includes comprehension questions in English and French

2. Speaking

Conducted by the teacher

Includes:

- Role-play
- Photo card discussion
- General conversation
- Duration: 7–9 mins (Foundation) / 10–12 mins (Higher)

3. Reading

Includes:

- Comprehension questions
- Translation from French into English

4. Writing

Includes:

- Short and extended writing tasks
- Translation from English into French

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Examinations Foundation	Higher	Total marks
Paper 1 **Speaking**	7 to 9 minutes + 15 minutes preparation time	10 to 12 minutes + 15 minutes preparation time	25% of GCSE
Paper 2 **Listening and understanding**	45 minutes including 5 minutes of reading time	60 minutes, including 5 minutes of reading time	25% of GCSE
Paper 3 **Reading and understanding**	45 minutes	60 minutes	25% of GCSE
Paper 4 **Writing**	1 hour 15 minutes	1 hour 20 minutes	25% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE French will help to prepare you for a wide range of languages-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Diplomat
- Translator
- Journalist
- Teacher
- International Lawyer

"At first, I found the structure of French sentences difficult, but now I enjoy the logic behind it."

CREATIVE ARTS - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Art

Examination Board: OCR

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Art helps you explore your creativity through drawing, painting, sculpture, and mixed media. You'll develop practical skills and learn how to express ideas visually. The course includes studying artists and creating a personal portfolio.

COURSE CONTENT

Component 01: Portfolio (60%)

- You will produce a portfolio of practical work based on a personal response to a theme, starting point, or brief.
- Work will be presented in formats appropriate to the title and area of study.

Component 02: Externally Set Task (40%)

- You will select a starting point from an externally set task provided by OCR in January of Year 11.
- You will develop ideas and prepare during a preparatory period.
- The final piece is created in a **10-hour supervised exam (usually over one or two days)**.
- Written work accompanies practical work, including exploration of the theme, analysis of artists, and personal reflection.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	1 examination	Total marks
Portfolio (non-exam assessment)	Coursework	60% of GCSE
Externally set task	10 hours	40% of GCSE

"I've learned how to research artists and use their techniques to inspire my own work."

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE art will help to prepare you for a wide range of art-based career pathways. These careers might include:

- Marketer
- Freelance designer
- Fine artist
- Animator
- Art therapist

CREATIVE ARTS - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Food and Nutrition

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE AQA Food Preparation and Nutrition teaches you how to cook and understand food. You'll learn about nutrition, food science, safety, and where food comes from. The course includes practical cooking skills and creating your own dishes.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is structured around five core topics, with practical skills integrated throughout:

1. Food, Nutrition and Health
2. Food Science
3. Food Safety
4. Food Choice
5. Food Provenance

There are 12 key skills:

- Knife Skills
- Preparing Fruits and Vegetables
- Use of Equipment
- Cooking Methods
- Making doughs
- Raising agents
- Sauce making
- Tenderising and marinating
- Making batters
- Setting mixtures
- Use of eggs
- Presentation and garnishing

CAREER PATHWAYS

A GCSE in food and nutrition is great preparation for further study and careers in nutrition, catering, health, or food science.

- Executive chef
- Food scientist
- Nutritionist
- Food photographer
- Catering manager

You will complete two key components:

- **Written Exam:** Testing your knowledge of food science, nutrition, and practical food preparation.
- **Non-Examined Assessment (NEA):** A practical portfolio where you research, plan, prepare, and evaluate dishes in response to a brief. This is split into two parts.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	1 examination	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 45 minutes	50% of GCSE
Non-exam assessment (NEA)	30-35 hours	50% of GCSE

"Food and Nutrition is more than just cooking - we learn about health, science, and how food affects the body. It's really interesting"

PHYSICAL & PERFORMING ARTS - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Music

Examination Board: AQA

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Music helps you develop your skills in performing, composing, and understanding music. You will explore a wide range of styles, from classical to pop, and study set works in detail. The course includes solo and group performances, as well as creating your own music.

> *"I've learned how to interpret music more expressively, not just play the notes."*

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1: Understanding Music

- Listening and contextual understanding
- Study of four areas of music:
  - Western classical tradition 1650–1910
  - Popular music
  - Traditional music
  - Western classical tradition since 1910
- You must be able to:
  - Identify musical elements and devices
  - Use musical language
  - Analyse unfamiliar and set works

Component 2: Performing Music

- One solo performance
- One ensemble performance
- Combined duration: minimum 4 minutes (at least 1 minute must be ensemble)
- Performances can be on any instrument or voice, including music technology

Component 3: Composing Music

- One composition to a brief (set by AQA)
- One free composition
- Combined duration: minimum 3 minutes
- You must demonstrate:
  - Use of musical elements
  - Creativity and structure
  - Appropriate use of instrumentation and technology

Skills Developed

- Listening and appraising
- Performing with technical control and expression
- Composing original music
- Understanding musical context and genre

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	One written examination	Total marks
Component 1 - **Understanding Music**	1 hour 30 minutes	40% of GCSE
Component 2 - **Non-examination assessment**		30% of GCSE
Component 3 - **Composition**		30% of GCSE

CAREER PATHWAYS

Studying GCSE music is great preparation for further study and careers for a wide range of music related career pathways. These careers might include:

- Sound engineer
- Musician
- Composer
- Music therapist
- Theatre performer

PHYSICAL & PERFORMING ARTS - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Physical Education

Examination Board: Edexcel

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Physical Education helps you understand how the body works in sport and how to improve performance. You'll study topics like fitness, training, anatomy, and the effects of exercise. You'll develop skills in teamwork, analysis, and healthy living.

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1: Fitness and Body Systems

- Applied anatomy and physiology
- Movement analysis
- Physical training
- Use of data (embedded throughout)

Component 2: Health and Performance

- Health, fitness and well-being
- Sport psychology
- Socio-cultural influences
- Use of data (embedded throughout)

Component 3: Practical Performance

Requirements:

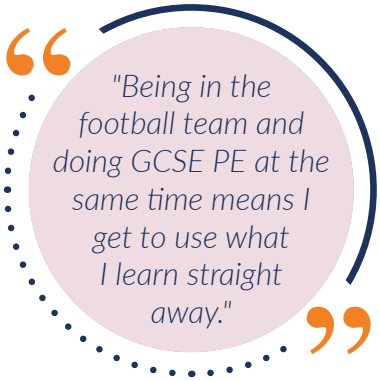
- Three activities: one team, one individual, and one free choice
- Assessment focuses on skills in isolation and in competitive situations

Component 4: Personal Exercise Programme (PEP)

- You will plan, carry out, monitor, and evaluate a personal training programme
- Includes analysis of performance and application of training principles

Skills Developed

- Understanding of body systems and physical training
- Application of psychological and sociocultural theory to sport
- Practical performance in a range of physical activities
- Analytical and evaluative skills through coursework



ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Assessment	Assessment Weighting
Component 1 – Fitness and Body Systems	Exam: 1 hour 45 mins	36%
Component 2 – Health and Performance	Exam: 1 hour 15 mins	24%
Component 3 – Practical Performance	3 Sport Practical	30%
Component 4 – Personal Exercise Plan	Coursework	10%

CAREER PATHWAYS

GCSE Physical Education is great preparation for further study and careers in sports related disciplines. These might include:

- Professional athlete
- Football referee
- Physiotherapist
- Sports psychologist
- PE teacher
- Armed forces

OTHER - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Computer Science

Examination Board: OCR

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Computer Science teaches you how computers work and how to think like a programmer. You'll learn about hardware, software, networks, cybersecurity, and algorithms. You'll also write code using languages like Python. The course builds problem-solving, logic, and analytical skills.

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1:
Computer Systems

Focuses on the theoretical aspects of computing.

- Systems Architecture
- Memory and Storage
- Computer Networks, Connections and Protocols
- Network Security
- Systems Software
- Ethical, Legal, Cultural and Environmental Impacts

Component 2:
Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming

Focuses on practical and problem-solving skills.

- Algorithms
- Programming Fundamentals
- Producing Robust Programmes
- Boolean Logic
- Programming Languages and IDEs

Practical Programming Requirement

- Design, write, test, and refine programmes
- Solve problems using a programming language (e.g., Python)

> *"I enjoyed making my own programmes – it felt good to see something I built actually work."*

CAREER PATHWAYS

Taking a qualification in GCSE computer science might help prepare you for career pathways such as:

- A data analyst
- Games developer
- Cyber-crime investigator
- Software engineer
- Web designer

> *"I didn't think I'd be into computing, but now I'm thinking about taking it further after GCSE."*

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 30 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 30 minutes	50% of GCSE

OTHER - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Statistics

Examination Board: Edexcel

Course Type: GCSE

GCSE Statistics teaches you how to collect, analyse, and interpret data. You'll learn about probability, averages, graphs, sampling, and statistical tests. The course helps you understand real-world data and make informed decisions. It builds strong problem-solving and numeracy skills.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is structured around three main topic areas:

Topic 1: The Collection of Data

- Statistical enquiry cycle
- Hypotheses and constraints
- Types of data (qualitative, quantitative, discrete, continuous)
- Sampling methods (random, stratified, systematic)
- Multivariate data (Higher tier only)
- Questionnaires and interviews
- Cleaning data and identifying extraneous variables

Topic 2: Processing, Representing and Analysing Data

- Charts and diagrams
- Measures of central tendency
- Measures of dispersion
- Comparing data sets
- Correlation and regression
- Time series analysis
- Estimation and quality assurance

Topic 3: Probability

- Probability scale and expected frequency
- Relative and absolute risk
- Addition and multiplication laws
- Independent and conditional probability
- Sample space diagrams, tree diagrams, Venn diagrams
- Binomial and normal distributions (Higher tier only)

CAREER PATHWAYS

GCSE Statistics provides a solid foundation or further study and careers in science, business, economics, or data analysis. These careers might include:

- Data scientist
- Actuary
- Epidemiologist
- Market research analyst
- Sports performance analyst

"I actually enjoy Statistics because it feels useful - like I'm learning skills I'll use in real life."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	2 examinations	Total marks
Paper 1	1 hour 30 minutes	50% of GCSE
Paper 2	1 hour 30 minutes	50% of GCSE

Optional Vocational Subjects

IN THIS SECTION:

VOCATIONAL - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Child Development

Examination Board: Pearson BTEC

Course Type: Vocational

Level 1/2 Child Development teaches you how children grow, learn, and develop from birth to age five. You'll explore topics like play, health, nutrition, and how to support learning. The course includes practical tasks and written assignments, with one external exam. It builds skills in observation, planning, and care. It's great preparation for further study and careers in childcare, education, or health and social care.

COURSE CONTENT

Key topics include:

- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of those involved in caring for children.
- Exploring the factors that influence children's development, including health, nutrition, and the environment.
- Learning how to support the development and wellbeing of children through play and activities.
- Studying the importance of safety and safeguarding in childcare settings.

The course combines practical assignments with theory, giving you skills and knowledge that are valuable for careers in childcare, education, or health and social care.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Assessment	Assessment Weighting
Component 1 **Children's growth and Development**	Coursework	30%
Component 2 **Learning Through Play**	Coursework	30%
Component 3 **Supporting Children in Play, Learn and Develop**	Written Exam	40%

CAREER PATHWAYS

- Teacher
- Child psychologist
- Paediatric nurse
- Social worker
- Speech and language therapist

"Child Development has made me think about working in social work or teaching. It's opened up new ideas for my future."

VOCATIONAL - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Construction

Examination Board: Eduqas

Course Type: GCSE

Level 1/2 Construction introduces you to the skills and knowledge needed in the construction industry. You'll learn about building methods, health and safety, tools, and materials. The course includes practical tasks and written work, helping you develop hands-on experience and problem-solving skills. It's great preparation for further study and careers in trades like carpentry, bricklaying, or site management.

COURSE CONTENT

Unit 1: Safety and Security in Construction

- Health and safety legislation (e.g. HSE regulations)
- Risk assessment and hazard identification
- Site security and safe working practices

Unit 2: Practical Construction Skills

- Hands-on tasks in:
  - Carpentry (e.g. building a stud wall)
  - Brickwork (e.g. mixing mortar, laying bricks in stretcher bond)
  - Decorating (e.g. wallpapering, painting)
  - Electrics and plumbing (introduced in newer versions)
- Pupils' complete practical tasks based on real-world scenarios

Unit 3: Planning Construction Projects

- Understanding job roles in construction
- Calculating materials, time, and costs
- Project planning and sequencing of tasks

CAREER PATHWAYS

- Architect
- Civil engineer
- Quantity surveyor
- Site manager
- Sustainable building consultant

> *"It's preparing me for a real job. I'm thinking about going into carpentry or site work after school."*

Skills Developed

- Practical construction techniques
- Health and safety awareness
- Teamwork and communication
- Project planning and resource management
- Understanding of the construction industry and career pathways

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Assessment	Assessment Weighting
Introduction to the built environment	Electronic exam	40%
Constructing the built environment	Practical and written coursework	60%

VOCATIONAL - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Health and Social Care

Examination Board:
Pearson BTEC Technical Award

Course Type: Vocational

The Level 1/2 in Health and Social Care teaches pupils how to support people's health and wellbeing. It covers topics like care values, health needs, and how to plan support for individuals. Pupils learn through real-life examples and practical tasks.

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1

- Understand human growth and development across life stages and the factors that affect it
- Understand how individuals deal with life events.

Component 2

- Understand the different types of health and social care services and barriers to accessing them
- Understand the skills, attributes and values required to give care.

Component 3

- Factors that affect health and wellbeing
- Interpreting Heath Indicators
- Person Centred approaches to improving health and wellbeing.

Skills Developed

- Understanding of care values and rights
- Communication and empathy
- Planning and evaluating support and activities
- Awareness of health promotion and life events
- Research and presentation skills

"Health and Social Care has helped me understand how to support people in real, meaningful ways."

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Assessment	Assessment Weighting
Component 1 – **Human Lifespan Development**	Coursework	30%
Component 2 – **Health and Social Services and values**	Coursework	30%
Component 3 – **Health and well-being**	Written Exam	40%

CAREER PATHWAYS

A qualification in health and social care is ideal for anyone interested in working with children, the elderly, or people with additional needs in careers like nursing, social work, or care services.

Possible career choices are:

- Social worker
- Nurse
- Care manager
- Occupational therapist
- Public health educator

VOCATIONAL - OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Travel and Tourism

Examination Board: Pearson BTEC

Course Type: Vocational

The Level 1/2 in Travel and Tourism introduces pupils to the world of travel, tourism, and customer service. It covers UK and international destinations, how the industry works, and how to meet customer needs. Pupils learn through real-life examples and practical tasks.

> *"Tourism is about much more than just holidays—it involves planning, excellent customer service, and understanding how tourism impacts the world."*

COURSE CONTENT

Component 1: Travel and Tourism Organisations and Destinations

- Aims and roles of travel and tourism organisations
- How organisations work together
- Types of travel and tourism
- Features of tourist destinations
- Travel routes and accessibility

Component 2: Customer Needs in Travel and Tourism

- Market research in travel and tourism
- Identifying customer needs and preferences
- Selecting appropriate products and services
- Planning a holiday to meet specific customer needs

Component 3: Influences on Global Travel and Tourism

- Factors influencing global travel and tourism (e.g. economic, environmental, political)
- Responses of organisations and destinations to these factors
- Impacts of tourism on global destinations
- Sustainable tourism and managing tourism development

CAREER PATHWAYS

A qualification in travel and tourism is ideal for anyone interested in working in travel, tourism, or hospitality, such as travel agents, tour guides, or hotel staff.

Potential career choice might include:

- Travel consultant
- Hotel manager
- Event coordinator
- Airline pilot
- Cabin crew

Skills Developed

- Research and analysis
- Planning and decision-making
- Sustainable tourism awareness
- Understanding of customer service
- Knowledge of global tourism trends

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Components	Assessment	Assessment Weighting
Component 1: **Organisations and Destinations**	Coursework	30%
Component 2: **Customer Needs Non-examination assessment**	Coursework	30%
Component 3: **Influences of Global Travel and Tourism**	2 hour Exam	40%

Frequently Asked Questions

Alternative questions and answers we could consider:

What is the difference between GCSEs and Vocational courses?

A GCSE course is a traditional qualification, usually assessed through 100% examination. Vocational qualifications are assessed through a mixture of exams and coursework. Both qualifications are of equal difficulty but the nature of coursework in vocational qualifications may be more suitable for some pupils.

What is a Cambridge National qualification?

This is a broad and engaging level 1 and level 2 qualification that equips pupils with applied knowledge and associated practical skills. Similar to a BTEC qualification, they will have a coursework element to them.

Are Cambridge Nationals worth the same as GCSE subjects?

All subjects are worth the same: one GCSE equivalent

If I do a Cambridge National qualification, can I still get into Sixth Form?

Yes, as long as you have a minimum of five GCSEs at grade 4/ CNAT qualifications, in four separate subjects. These must include English and mathematics.

Are subjects first come, first served?

No, providing the options are submitted by the deadline.

Are any options easier than others?

All subjects are of equal academic difficulty so subject choices should not be made because of the perceived difficulty of a subject compared to another.

Can I do a mixture of Cambridge National and GCSE subjects?

Yes.

Will I get all of my first choices?

While the vast majority of pupils do get their first choices, we do sometimes have to allocate a number of reserve choices, so it is important you select reserve choices that you are willing and able to do. If you have a specific career direction or outside interest in mind, you should write this on the options form so that we can take this into account when we allocate subjects.

Do I have to take a language?

We strongly recommend all pupils take a language. Having a language will open more doors to post-16 study and employment.

What science option will I take?

All pupils will study combined science unless they opt to study separate qualifications in biology, chemistry and physics. Where pupils are finding the breadth of content of separate science challenging, there is the option of moving pupils onto combined science instead. This award covers all three sciences and is equivalent to two GCSEs. Pupils following this route and achieving good grades (grade 5 or above) are eligible to study science A levels.

When do I find out which subjects I have been given from my choices?

You will find out which subjects you have been allocated later in the summer term.

If I start a subject and later realise that I have made a mistake, what can I do?

This happens to some pupils every year. There are only two weeks at the start of term when we look at requests for changes and make them if we can. Sometimes subject groups are full, and pupils are unable to move but we will do our best to help.

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