



GCSE COURSE GUIDE

2026

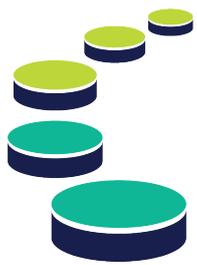


Birches Head
Academy



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Frank Field Education Trust

Frank Field Education Trust was established in 2018 by Frank Field, who was passionate about the role that schools could play in changing people's lives.

Frank spent his adult life as the Chair of the Child Poverty Action Group and then as an MP for Birkenhead, on fighting against poverty, and many social ills and injustices in Britain.

Poverty for him, had injustice at its root, and his landmark report, "The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults", commissioned by the Prime Minister, David Cameron described the importance that Education and Early Years Care play in developing children into becoming well-rounded adults. Frank was keen to develop a multi-academy trust that addressed the key issues found in his report, by providing an '0 to 18' education programme that would tackle social injustice in our country. It is from this that our Trust vision evolved. We believe Social Justice can be achieved for our communities by providing excellence in education.

Our aim has been to establish within our communities:

- an Early Life programme supporting the first 1001 days of a child's life helping parents answer the question that we all struggle with, "how do we give our children the best start in life?".
- primary and secondary schools that have the ambition to become outstanding and therefore ensuring children can have a choice-filled life. The Trust has established a Early Life Programme in Ellesmere Port in September 2021, working with local primary schools. This innovative programme goes from strength to strength and was most recently short-listed for the TES Community Engagement Award. This programme has been expanded to Handforth Grange Primary School. The programme is funded entirely by donations.



PRINCIPAL WELCOME

The final phase of your compulsory school education is probably the most important and hopefully the most exciting part of your learning so far. The next two years will bring challenge and change, as well as increased responsibility and a wealth of opportunities as young adulthood beckons.

Expectations are high for our Key Stage 4 pupils at Birches Head Academy. We believe every pupil can achieve and succeed, whatever their ability. Good attendance and punctuality are crucial for your success and are a basic expectation. You will be well supported and our excellent pastoral system links very closely to the curriculum.

Subject Teachers report on your progress throughout the year and Form Tutors will meet regularly with you in Academic Review. You will find that advice and help is available from the whole range of Key Stage 4 pastoral and curriculum staff.

You are challenged at Key Stage 4 to organise and manage your own study time. Assemblies and extra-curricular activities remain an important part of your school life and we hope that you will manage to balance your work life with enjoyment, through participating in the many events which allow time for you to have fun and grow together as a community.

Rewarding your hard work is very important to us. In each term in Key Stage 4 we will have Achievement Assemblies where we acknowledge and celebrate your hard work and encourage success. Good work and effort will be awarded on a regular basis. So, there are lots of interesting times ahead! The first stage is to arrange the subjects you will be studying. Some of these you will get to choose and the details in this booklet will help with those decisions.

We have spent much time ensuring that the currency of the courses on offer accurately meets the needs of all pupils and prepares them for the competitive world they will be joining in the future. Current Government curriculum measures (EBACC, Progress 8 and Attainment 8) require pupils to pursue a suite of specific subjects and combinations of these subjects are available for all our pupils.

Working in partnership with parents to support the learning of our pupils is something we value greatly here at Birches Head Academy. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at the School.

Mr P. Masher
Principal



OPTION CHOICE CHECKLIST

Check that you're on the right track. This checklist sets out some action points that will help you to make realistic and suitable choices. Check off each item, or date it, as you complete it.

Action Points	Completed
Read the Options Guide carefully.	
Make sure I understand the Subject Options Form and know how to fill it in.	
Find out who I can ask for help if, or when, I need it.	
Find out what each subject or course involves.	
Talk about my option choices with my parents or carers.	
Think about what I really like, and what interests me most. (You usually do better at the subjects you really enjoy.)	
Think about how well I am doing in my subjects now. What am I really good at?	
Find out if I will need any specific subjects to get into the career, or career area, I am interested in. What are they?	
Check if I have left my future career options as open as possible.	
Check that I am choosing my subjects for the right reasons. (Wanting to stay in the same class as your friends or liking the teacher doesn't count.)	
Check that I've not ruled a subject (or career) out just because people might think it's a 'boys' or 'girls' subject.	
Think about the skills I am good at and the skills I need to develop in the future. Which courses or other opportunities will help me develop these?	



COURSE LIST

COURSE: ENGLISH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Head of Department: Mr Underwood

Exam Board: Eduqas

Qualifications: GCSE in English Language and GCSE in English Literature

From a lawyer in a courtroom to a writer in a different world or maybe a teacher in a classroom, English can provide the opportunity for a variety of different careers due to the transferable skills that are both taught and developed throughout the GCSE syllabus. All pupils are required to study both English Language and English Literature opening a world of possibilities for the future.

What will pupils study?

GCSE English Language:

English Language is the study of how a writer has constructed a piece of text to interest and engage a reader, it then provides the opportunity to use language creatively for a variety of different forms. Therefore, throughout Key Stage 4, pupils will be looking at several extracts to unpick exactly what a writer was thinking and go on to consider the effect their words have on other people. As part of the English Language curriculum pupils will develop their skills in both analysing and developing a well-constructed argument. Spoken Language also forms part of the English Language GCSE and is assessed in class. Although the mark is no longer counted towards the examination mark, a grade is still recorded and appears separately on certificates as an endorsement to the qualification.



GCSE English Literature:

English Literature is the study of how a text has been created but also a consideration of why a text has been created and the social implications that it may have had. At Key Stage 4 the texts that pupils will study are: 'Romeo and Juliet', 'An Inspector Calls', 'A Christmas Carol' and a selection of poems from the Eduqas anthology.

Assessment

Pupils will sit examination papers at the end of the course. Grade 5 is a strong pass in English Language and Literature. To study English at Level 3, colleges expect at least a grade 5.

English Language:

The English Language examination consists of two papers: Component 1 - 20th Century Literature Reading and Creative Prose Writing, and Component 2 - 19th and 21st Century Non-Fiction Reading and Transactional writing.

Examination – 100% of each pupil's final GCSE grade - two written papers and a separately endorsed Spoken Language assessment.

English Literature: The English Literature examination also consists of two papers: These are examinations worth 100% of your final GCSE grade.

Course enrichment

As part of the English Language and English Literature courses it is beneficial to be exposed to as many literary forms as possible. This could be a result of activities such as: Readathon, theatre visits, poetry workshops and walking talking mocks and other in-school events.

Where could studying English lead to?

English is about communication which forms the base of all jobs and of everyday life. Pupils can choose to study English and English Literature at A level and degree level.

COURSE: MATHEMATICS

Head of Department: Mr Brenno

Exam Board: Edexcel

Qualification: GCSE in Mathematics

What will pupils study?

Mathematics is a compulsory subject within the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 4 we follow the Edexcel Mathematics (9-1).

This provides a flexible approach to the delivery of mathematics that can be adapted to suit the needs of pupils as they progress through Years 10 and 11.

The course requires pupils to: Develop knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts, including:

- Number, Algebra, Geometry and Measures, Probability and Statistics, Ratio and Proportion, Problem Solving and Mathematical Reasoning.
- Expand their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and methods introduced in Key Stage 3 and apply these skills creatively in multi-layered problem solving situations.
- Apply the functional elements of mathematics in everyday and real-life situations.
- Exams will be taken in May/June during the final year.



Assessment

- Three written papers (Paper 1 is Non-Calculator, Papers 2 and 3 are both Calculator): each paper is 1 hour 30 minutes and 80 marks per paper.
- Foundation Tier grades 5 -1 available.
- Higher Tier grades 9 - 3 available.

Course enrichment

There will be opportunities to attend events at Keele University and other institutions to take part in competitions, problem solving challenge days, and talks held by renowned mathematicians.

Where could studying mathematics lead to?

Mathematics is a life-long skill that is used on a daily basis. It is a qualification that is needed at grade 6 or above to enrol on to Level 3 Maths courses at College.

Mathematics is a vital GCSE for anyone wishing to enter into Engineering, Accounting, Banking, Science, Research and many more careers.

COURSE: COMBINED SCIENCE

Head of Department: Mrs K Wainwright
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in Science Synergy (2 GCSEs)

What will pupils study?

GCSE study in the sciences provides the foundation for understanding the material world. Scientific understanding is changing our lives and is vital to the world's future prosperity. All pupils should learn essential aspects of the knowledge, methods, processes and uses of science. They should gain appreciation of how the complex and diverse phenomena of the natural world can be described in terms of a small number of key ideas that relate to the sciences and that are both interlinked and of universal application.

Biology Topics: Key concepts in biology, cells and control, genetics, natural selection and genetic modification, health, disease and the development of medicines, plant structures and their functions, animal coordination, control and homeostasis, exchange and transport in animals, ecosystems and material cycles.

Chemistry Topics: Key concepts in chemistry, states of matter and mixtures, chemical changes, extracting metals and equilibria, groups in the periodic table, rates of reaction and energy changes, fuels and earth science.

Physics Topics: Key concepts in physics, motion and forces, conservation of energy, waves, light and the electromagnetic spectrum, radioactivity, energy, forces doing work, forces and their effects, electricity and circuits, magnetism and the motor effect, electromagnetic induction, particle model, forces and matter.



Assessment

Combined science - pupils will take six exams lasting 1 hour and 15 minutes each (All scientific disciplines in each exam). In all examinations, pupils will find a mixture of question styles including multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, calculations and open-response questions.

Course enrichment

Throughout the course pupils will be expected to complete core practical experiments which they will be questioned on in their final examinations. These will require them to create methods, process information, carry out calculations, interpret graphical information, draw conclusions and evaluate processes.

Where could studying Science lead to?

Further studies in science open up many different career paths. These can be in the area of science but also any other field that requires you to understand processes, plan projects, work with numbers or even develop new ideas. Some examples of the areas of science that you could go into are Biochemistry, Bioinformatics, Biology, Biomedical Sciences, Biophysics, Biotechnology, Cancer Research, Cell Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Genetics, Genomics, Health Sciences, Immunology, Life Sciences, Material Science, Mathematics, Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Neuroscience, Physical Sciences, Physics, Virology.



COURSE: ART & DESIGN



Head of Department: Mrs H Howorth
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in Art & Design (Art, Craft and Design)

Art & Design GCSE is right for pupils if they:

Enjoy working with different tools, techniques, materials, and resources to generate different kinds of artwork. Want to experience different aspects of Art & Design such as drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, mixed media, and textiles.

Prefer subjects where you are encouraged to develop your own strengths and interests in a topic and follow your own lines of enquiry. Enjoy studying a creative subject that is relevant to your life and experience.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE Art & Design should have a keen interest in drawing and painting. They should be prepared to develop their artistic skills through independent study and research into the work of artists from contemporary or historical contexts. Preferably, students will have a good understanding of the characteristics of observational drawing (colour, line, shape, tone, texture).

What will pupils' study?

At GCSE, you will study two components, comprising a 'Portfolio of Work' selected from the course of study and an 'Externally Set Assignment'. The two components provide a range of creative, exciting, and stimulating opportunities to develop and explore your personal interests in Art and Design. The portfolio must include a sustained project developed in response to a subject, theme, task, or brief that is set by your teacher.

Each project or theme will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to evidence an artistic journey from your initial idea to the realisation of your intentions and final piece.

Assessment

A portfolio of work that in total shows coverage of all four assessment objectives - Marked out of 96 - Worth 60%

An externally set assignment where you will respond to a starting point from the examiner - Marked out of 96 - Worth 40%

Course Enrichment

As part of your 'Portfolio of Work' you will be required to complete a selection of further work resulting from activities such as trials and experiments; skills-based workshops; mini and/ or foundation projects; responses to gallery, museum, or site visits; work placements and independent study.

Where could Art & Design take pupils? Further studies in Art & Design can lead to careers such as Animator, Architectural Designer, Art Appraiser, Art Gallery Curator, Crafts person, Creative Director, Fashion Designer, Film Production, Furniture Designer, Graphic Designer, Illustrator, Interior Designer, Makeup Artist, Painter, Photojournalist, Web Designer and many more areas. Art is a popular subject and many of our GCSE students continue to study the subject to A-Level at college.

NB: Art & Design and 3D Design are the same exam. Therefore, pupils cannot select both of these courses

COURSE: BUSINESS STUDIES

Head of Department: Miss C Ware

Exam Board: WJEC

Qualification: GCSE 1-9

If you enjoy:

- Communication and explaining your ideas
- Thinking creatively and making decisions
- Working with numbers to solve business problems
- Learning about the world of business through real and relevant local and international brands then GCSE Business is the right subject for you!

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for this course should have a keen interest in the world of business and enterprise. You should have good literacy, preferably with good analysis and evaluative skills. You should have an interest in the “what is going on?” and the “why does this happen?”.

What will pupils study?

This qualification is made up of 2 themes:

Theme 1: Investigating a small business

You will start by exploring the world of small businesses through the lens of an entrepreneur. How and why do business ideas come about? What makes a successful business? You will learn how to develop an idea, spot an opportunity and turn it into a successful business. You will understand how to make a business effective, manage money and see how the world around us affects small businesses and all the people involved.

Theme 2: Building a Business

Theme 2 you will move on to investigating business growth. How does a business develop beyond the start-up phase? You'll learn about key business concepts and issues and decisions you need to make when growing a business and working in a global business. You'll learn about meeting customer needs, making marketing, operational, financial and human resourcing decisions and you'll explore how the wider world impacts the business as it grows.

Assessment

You will be assessed through 2 exams:



Paper 1 - Exam worth 50%. The exam is 1 hour and 45 minutes, it will be made up of multiple-choice questions, and short and extended response questions.

Paper 2 – Exam worth 50%. The exam is 1hr 45mins, it will be made up of multiple-choice questions, and short and extended response questions.

Course enrichment

During the course there will be opportunities to explore the field of Business outside of the classroom, this will be done through trips, guest speakers, competitions and revision workshops.

Where could studying GCSE Business take pupils?

After this qualification you'll understand the world of business and have developed skills in making decisions and making persuasive arguments, creative and practical problem solving and understanding data, finance and communication. It's also a great step preparing you for further and higher education such as A levels and BTEC courses. A GCSE Business course could help prepare you for an entrepreneurial role and help you to gain an understanding of what is involved in a business-related profession, like accountancy, law, marketing or the leisure and tourism industry.

COURSE: DRAMA – PERFORMING ARTS

Head of Department: Miss M Plimmer

Exam Board: Pearson

Qualification: BTEC Technical Award (Acting)

Performing Arts: Drama is right for you if you:

- Performing Arts: Drama is right for you if you:
- Enjoy performing Drama and are keen to develop your performance skills further as an actor.
- Enjoy devising your own dramatic pieces.
- Would like to know more about the roles and responsibilities within the Performing Arts industry.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for drama should have a keen interest in performance and/or technical aspects of theatre and be prepared to work hard to develop their knowledge and skills. They should be prepared to develop their drama skills through independent study and research into the work of artists from contemporary, historical or popular culture.



What will pupils study?

The Level 2 BTEC Technical Award is a practical introduction to life and work in the Performing Arts industry. Pupils will study three components as follows:

Component 1 – Exploring the Performing Arts – 30%

Pupils will develop their understanding of the Performing Arts by examining the work of performing arts professionals and the process used to create performance.

Component 2 – Developing Skills and Techniques in the Performing Arts – 30%

Pupils will develop their performing arts skills through the reproduction of acting repertoire.

Component 3 – Responding to a Brief – 40%

Pupils will be given the opportunity to devise and present a work as part of a group to contribute to workshop performance in response to a brief and stimulus.

Assessment

Components 1 and 2 are internally assessed. Component 3 is externally assessed.

Where could Performing Arts take you?

When you have completed the qualification, you will have developed a practical understanding of the Performing Arts sector, and the roles and responsibilities of the people involved in the Performing Arts industry. This could lead to a range of performance, creative, technical or backstage careers, such as actor, choreographer, director, camera operator, playwright, arts administrator, broadcast journalist, costume or set designer, or work in lighting / sound. Beyond careers in the Performing Arts Industry, the transferable skills developed through the course will support pupils in life beyond education, in interviews, careers and society.

COURSE

FOOD: HOSPITALITY & CATERING

Head of Department: Miss H Howorth

Exam Board: WJEC

Qualification: WJEC Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering (Technical Award)

Hospitality & Catering is right for pupils if they:

- Have a broad interest in the food industry including hygiene, safety, law and regulations
- Want to work in the hospitality industry
- Want to design, prepare and present new food ideas

Pre-requisites

You should have an understanding of basic food hygiene and some skills in preparing and cooking simple dishes. You should be willing to develop your skills to enable you to design, prepare and present a complex meal. You will need to have good problem solving skills, good organisation and excellent time-keeping.

How is the course structured?

The course is structured into two units:

- **Unit 1** The Hospitality and catering industry: In this unit you will focus on learning about different types of providers, legislation, food safety and the roles and responsibilities within the sector.
- **Unit 2** Hospitality and catering in action: you will develop practical skills for planning, preparing, cooking and presenting nutritional dishes meeting the client needs.

Each of the units have been designed so that knowledge, skills and understanding are developed through tasks that have many of the characteristics of real work in the sector.

How is the course assessed?

The course is assessed through the completion of the two units:

Unit 1: The Hospitality and Catering Industry
(40% of overall grade)



External exam duration: 90 minutes number of marks: 90

Unit 2: Hospitality and Catering in Action

(60% of overall grade)

Internal controlled assessment totalling 9 hours and production of a portfolio of work

How you will be graded?

L1 Pass, L2 Pass, L2 Merit, L2 Distinction, L2 Distinction*

What can the qualification lead to?

Successful completion of this qualification could lead to a number of possibilities.

There are many local colleges that provide advanced qualifications in food, catering and hospitality e.g. apprenticeships and level 3 courses. You could progress into careers like a chef, dietetics, health and social care, food technologist, nursing, food production and manufacture, nutritionist, hospitality, food product development and child care.

COURSE: GEOGRAPHY



Head of Faculty: Mrs J. Timperley
Head of Department: Mrs C Underwood
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in Geography 9-1

GCSE Geography is right for pupils if they:

- Enjoy finding out about people, places, landscapes and events.
- Enjoy studying a subject that is relevant to life and experience.
- Want the opportunity to work outdoors as well as in the classroom.
- Prefer writing structured answers rather than long essays

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE Geography should have a keen interest in what is going on in the world around us. They should enjoy learning about topical issues, causes and effects of events around us, and be prepared to work hard both in class and at home to increase the breadth and depth of their knowledge.

What will pupils study?

At GCSE, the course provides a balance between physical and human geography and places an emphasis upon a pupil's ability to understand issues and subsequently apply theory to situations. Pupils will gain practical skills from two days of fieldwork that will be examined in a skills paper.

There are three key areas of work:

- Living with the physical environment: Natural Hazards, Living World, Physical Landscapes of the UK (rivers and coasts).
- Challenges in the human environment: Urban Challenges, Changing Economic World, Challenge of Resource Management.
- Geographical Applications: Issue Evaluation, Fieldwork Data Collection Techniques, Graphing

Techniques and Data Analysis.

Assessment

There are three examinations which take place at the end of the course:

- Paper 1: 1 hour 30 minutes, 88 marks, 35% of final grade
- Paper 2: 1 hour 30 minutes, 88 marks, also 35% of final grade
- Paper 3: 1 hour 30 minutes, 76 marks, 30% of final grade

Course enrichment

As part of the compulsory fieldwork element, trips and fieldwork are completed that are relevant to classwork; currently, these include visits to examine river processes, and Castleton, to practice fieldwork skills.

Where could studying Geography lead to?

Further studies in geography can lead to careers in Law, Accountancy, Market Research, Management Consultancy, Aid Work, Landscape Architecture, Countryside Management, Field Studies Work, Environmental Consultancy, Civil Engineering, Social Work, Cartography, Surveying, Town Planning, Heritage Management and many more areas.

Geography is a popular subject and many of our GCSE pupils continue to study the subject to A-level. Pupils also go on to study Geography, or related subjects, at University. As Geography is an academically demanding course, it is highly valued by universities as an A-level choice therefore the Russell Group report published in 2011 names Geography as one of eight facilitating subjects; it is also incredibly well valued by all employers, due to the wide range of knowledge, and report writing and statistical skills, acquired.



COURSE: HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Head of faculty: Mrs J. Timperley

Head of Department: Mrs J. Timperley

Exam Board: Pearson Edexcel

Qualification: BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Tech Award in Health and Social Care

The Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Tech Award in This course offers a practical introduction to life and work in the health and social care sector.

Pre-requisites

You should be interested in human growth, development and life cycle.

What will pupils study?

This course will give you the opportunity to develop knowledge and technical skills in a practical learning environment. You will also develop key skills relevant to the health and social care sector such as research techniques and how to measure someone's physical health. You will also develop your written communication skills as you create health and wellbeing plans for an individual with specific needs.

Everyone taking this qualification will study three components, covering the following content areas:

Human Lifespan and Development gives you the opportunity to study how people grow and develop over the course of their lives, from infancy to old age. You will also look at the factors that may affect growth and development throughout the lifespan, such as life changing events like marriage or death of a partner.

Health and Social Care Services you will investigate common services as well as those for specific needs and consider how they may work together to meet individual's needs. You will examine the barriers to individuals accessing services and how they may be overcome. You will explore the skills, attributes and values that are required in health and social care, and their importance in making sure that the people who use these services get the care they need.

Health and Wellbeing explores the factors that can have a positive or negative influence on an individual's health and wellbeing. You will learn to interpret physiological and lifestyle indicators, and what they mean for someone's state of health. You will learn how to use this information to design an appropriate plan for improving someone's health and wellbeing, including short- and long-term targets. Additionally, you will explore the difficulties an individual may face when trying to make these changes.

Assessment

There are three parts to the course:

- 3.1: Component 1 – Independent Writing Set Assignment, 60 marks, 30% of final grade
- 3.2: Component 2 – Independent Writing Set Assignment, 60 marks, 30% of final grade
- Both component 1 and 2 are internal assessment pieces of work, completed in school in a controlled and timed environment.
- 3.3: 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks, 40% of final grade

Course enrichment

In GCSE Health and Social Care we try to inspire our pupil's interest in the subject by introducing them to the different elements that exist within our healthcare system. Utilising, potential speakers from the NHS and material demonstrating the variety of key roles and responsibilities, we also aim to demonstrate to pupils future avenues of education with trips to further/higher educational establishments.

Where could Health and Social take you?

Once you have completed the qualification, you will have developed a practical understanding of the health and social care sector. If you decide to go on to further study of health and social care, the best option for you will depend on the grades you have achieved. You could progress to a Level 2 Technical Certificate or to a Level 3 programme, such as A Levels, a T Level or a BTEC National, either on its own or in combination with A levels.

COURSE: HISTORY

Head of Faculty: Mrs J. Timperley
Head of Department: Mrs J. Timperley
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in History 9-1

GCSE History is right for pupils if they:

- Enjoy finding out about the past.
- Want to understand how the world around them works.
- Have an investigative and inquisitive mind.
- Like to explain their own ideas.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE History should have a keen interest in History and in understanding about the past. Pupils should enjoy learning about why things have happened and about how these have shaped our world today. Pupils should be prepared to work hard both in class and at home to develop their understanding of the course content and issues covered. This is a written subject, purely assessed by exams.

What will pupils study?

The GCSE course covers a wide range of British and European History, with in-depth studies on Elizabethan History, Weimar and Nazi Germany, other elements of the course include Conflict and Tension after World War One and how Public Health and medicine for people in Britain has changed over time.

There are four units of work:

Germany, 1890 – 1945, Democracy and Dictatorship: exploring the growth of democracy in Germany, leading to the collapse of the Weimar Republic and dictatorship Nazi Germany.

Conflict and Tension: the inter-war years, 1918 – 39: exploring the results of World War One and the Treaty of Versailles, the work of the League of Nations and the causes of World War Two.

Health and the People, c1000 to the present

day: exploring how medicine and public health has developed in Britain. Focusing on causes, effects, and consequences by drawing on key themes such as war, religion, the government, communication, science, and roles of key individuals, and how these link together.

Elizabethan England, c1568-1603: including the rule of Elizabeth I, life in England at the time and the challenges faced from abroad. This unit includes a study of a historical environment.



Assessment

Paper 1: Germany Depth study and Conflict in Tension, externally assessed paper worth 50% of the GCSE.

Paper 2: Health and the People and Elizabethan England, externally assessed paper worth 50% of the GCSE, this will also include the study of an historic environment.

Course enrichment

As part of the course pupils will be required to complete a study of an historic environment which will include a visit to a site which they will be asked a question on, in the Paper 2 exam.

Where could studying History lead to?

History helps to develop essential communication and analysis skills which are valued in a wide range of jobs. As part of the course pupils will be explaining points of view and events, drawing conclusions and using several pieces of evidence to make a judgement.

History is well recognised for its value as a Qualification and is a popular option for further study at A-Level. Further studies in History can lead to careers in areas like Law, Journalism, working for the government, teaching, business, heritage, conservation and in libraries.

COURSE: ICT (VOCATIONAL AWARD)

Head of Department: Miss C Ware

Exam Board: WJEC

Qualification: Vocational Award (pass, merit, or distinction)

Vocational Award in ICT is right for pupils if they:

Are passionate about technology, like solving problems.
Curious about all things digital and want to learn some fantastic new skills.

Pre-requisites:

Pupils opting for ICT should have a keen interest in applications using computers. Pupils need to be ready to learn new skills and apply themselves with new software.



What will pupils study?

The qualification is made up of 2 units:

Unit 1: ICT in Society

In unit 1 pupils will explore the wide range of uses of hardware, application and specialist software in society. Investigate how information technology is used in a range of contexts, including business and organisations, education and homes.

Unit 2: ICT in Context

In unit 2 pupils will gain a working knowledge of databases, spreadsheets, automated documents, and images. Learn to apply your knowledge and understanding to solve problems in vocational settings.

Assessment

Pupils will be assessed through a blend of exams and controlled assessments.

Unit 1 - Exam worth 40%. The exam is 1 hour and 20 minutes, it will be made up of short and extended response questions.

Unit 2 – Controlled assessment worth 60%. As part of this assessment, you will be given a scenario and will need to undertake a number of tasks.

Course enrichment

During the course there will be opportunities to explore the field of ICT outside of the classroom, this will be done through trips, guest speakers, competitions and revision workshops.

Where could studying ICT lead to?

The ICT industry offers a wide Range of exciting opportunities which include:

- Data analyst
- Digital content producer
- Systems engineer
- Web marketing manager



COURSE: MUSIC

Head of Department: Miss E Mooney

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification: GCSE in Music

Performing Arts: Music is right for you if you:

- Enjoy music and exploring different types and styles of music from all eras and places in the world.
- Enjoy learning about how music is created and how modern music came from music of the past
- Are creative and enjoy creating your own music
- Are a performer and want to improve your instrumental skills

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for music should have a keen interest in music, and a clear idea of one particular instrument they would like to specialise in for performance (this should be an instrument that they already play or have taken lessons on). They should be prepared to develop their musical skills through independent study and practice to support the learning they do in lessons. Pupils should be competent in their ability to understand musical notation and chords and feel comfortable listening to and commenting on music.

What will pupils study?

The BTEC Technical Award is a practical introduction to being able to explore music and the music industry in a more detailed manner. Pupils will study three components as follows:

Component 1: Performance, pupils will:

- Work to create two performances, one as a soloist, and the other working as part of an ensemble
- Develop their performance skills to create a polished performance for their final submission
- Pupils have the option to use music technology e.g. Garageband to create this performance for both the solo and ensemble option.
- Pupils also have the option to create an improvisation based on a stimulus of their choice if they wish to.

Component 2: Composition - during component 2, pupils will:

- Reflect on their progress, and on areas for improvement.
- Develop a range of practical skills.
- Apply skills and techniques in a music performance, creation or production.

Component 3: Responding to a Music Brief During component 3, pupils will:

- Create two compositions, one to a brief provided by the exam board and one as a 'free' composition where they choose the stimulus
- Explore compositional techniques from a variety of styles (including the areas of study for the exam)
- Learn how to create and annotate a musical score to submit alongside their composition.

Component 3: Appraising - during component 3, pupils will:

Prepare for a listening based exam based on 4 areas of study.



- Area of study 1: Musical Forms and Devices
- Area of study 2: Music for Ensemble
- Area of study 3: Film Music
- Area of study 4: Popular Music.
- During this component, pupils will develop their knowledge and use of the musical elements, musical contexts and use of musical language to further their understanding of music.
- This component allows pupils to experience a broad range of genres from more traditional Western Classical Music to more modern popular music and form links between genres to understand how music is created.

Assessment

Components 1 and 2 are assessed via controlled coursework that is teacher assessed and then moderated by the exam board. Component 3 is a listening exam that is completed in the main exam season in Year 11. Some of the music will be familiar to pupils as it will be from the areas of study that we have spent time learning about in class, some will be unprepared but assess knowledge and skills learnt during the component.

Course enrichment

To further develop your musical skills, you might showcase your work in school concerts, shows and other events. You might also do some wider listening around the genres we study and watch some performances outside of school.

Where could Music take you?

Further studies in Music can lead to a career as a musician, composer, music teacher, music therapist, music promoter, sound engineer, producer, studio engineer, event manager, music journalist or a job with a record company. A number of recent Music pupils have gone on to study Music at college with great success.

COURSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Head of Faculty: Miss H Howorth
Head of Department: Miss H Howorth
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in Photography

GCSE Photography is right for pupils if they:

- Enjoy working with different tools, techniques, materials and resources to generate different kinds of photography or moving imagery.
- Want to experience different aspects of Photography such as Location Photography, Studio Photography, Experimental Imagery,
- Documentary Photography, Photojournalism,
- Moving Image: film, video and animation.
- Prefer subjects where you are encouraged to develop your own strengths and interests in a topic and follow your own lines of enquiry.
- Enjoy studying a creative subject that is relevant to your life and experience.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE Photography should have a keen interest in photographic techniques and processes. They should be prepared to develop their photographic skills through independent study and research into the work of photographers from contemporary or historical contexts. Preferably, pupils will have a good understanding of the characteristics of the visual and tactile elements of images such as colour, line, shape, tone, texture, pattern, composition, scale, sequence, and contrast.

What will pupils' study?

At GCSE, pupils will study two components, comprising a 'Portfolio of Work' selected from the course of study and an 'Externally Set Assignment'.

The two components provide a range of creative, exciting and stimulating opportunities to develop and explore your personal interests in photography.

The portfolio must include a sustained project developed in response to a subject, theme, task or brief that is set by the teacher. Each project or theme will give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to evidence a



photographic journey from their initial idea to the realisation of their intentions and final piece.

Assessment

- Portfolio of Work that shows coverage of four assessment objectives – marked out of 96 – worth 60%
- Externally Set Assignment where pupils will respond to a starting point from an externally set exam paper – marked out of 96 – worth 40%

Course enrichment

As part of pupils 'Portfolio of Work' they will be required to complete a selection of further work resulting from activities such as trials and experiments; skills-based workshops; mini and/or foundation projects; responses to gallery, museum or site visits; work placements and independent study.

Where could studying Photography lead to? Further studies in Photography can lead to careers such as Professional Photographer, Animator, Film Production, Photojournalist, Web Designer and many more areas. Photography is a popular subject and many of our GCSE pupils continue to study the subject to A-level at college.

COURSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Head of Faculty: Mrs J. Timperley

Exam Board: Pearson's Edexcel

Qualification: GCSE Religious Education (9-1)

GCSE Religious Studies is right for pupils if they:

- Are interested in learning more about religious beliefs and practices.
- Enjoyed the Year 8 and 9 topics of prejudice and discrimination, terrorism, crime and punishment, matters of life and death and social justice.
- Prefer subjects where they are encouraged to develop their own point of view, while considering a range of different opinions.
- Enjoy topics that allow them to study current affairs and their views on them.
- Enjoy debate and discussion.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE Religious Studies should have a keen interest in learning about a range of different viewpoints. They should be prepared to develop their discussion and debate skills through learning about Christian and Muslim views on a wide range of issues. Preferably, pupils will have a good understanding of how to structure an argument and how to develop their answers in detail.

What will pupils study?

At GCSE, they will study two units:

Paper 1: Christianity- This unit covers the following topics: Matters of Life and Death:

What are the origins of the universe? Is life special? Should abortion be allowed in all situations? Why is euthanasia illegal in the UK? What happens when we die? Is the environment ours to destroy?

- Marriage and Family Life: Is marriage important today? Why is divorce becoming more common? Is sex only for within marriage? What is family life like today? Should contraception be readily available to all? Why should all genders be equal?
- Christian Beliefs: Why are there different groups of Christians? Did God create the universe and people?
- Was Jesus, God? What did Jesus do? Can Jesus save people? Do Heaven and Hell really exist? Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Living the Christian Life: How do Christians worship? What is life as a Christian really like? Is prayer really a way to contact God? Why are Christmas and Easter celebrated? Is the Church relevant in society today?

Paper 2: Islam - This unit covers the following topics:

- Muslim Beliefs: What do different groups of Muslims believe? What is Allah like? Were prophets really messengers of God? Are holy books really the word of God? Do we believe in angels? Is there such a thing as fate? What do Muslims believe happens when we die?
- Living the Muslim life: What does Muslim life look like? Why are the Five Pillars important to Muslims?
- How and why do Muslims celebrate special religious days? What do Muslims do to commemorate the history of their religion?
- Peace and Conflict: Does Islam really mean 'peace'? What do Muslims do to promote peace worldwide? Why is there conflict in the world? Can it ever be right for a Muslim to go to war? Can war ever be justified, for religious reasons or at all?
- Should weapons of mass destruction ever be used?
- Crime and Punishment: What is justice? What causes crime? Why do good things happen to bad people? What are fair punishments? Is it always possible to forgive? Should everyone, even criminals, have human rights? Should UK law allow the death penalty?

Assessment

Paper 1 - Christianity: Exam at the end of Year 11, 1 hour and 45 minutes. (50%)

Paper 2 - Islam: Exam at the end of Year 11, 1 hour and 45 minutes. (50%)

Course enrichment

As part of the study on Christianity and Islam, pupils will have the opportunity to visit places of worship. They will also be visited by external speakers to develop their learning of key topics in greater depth.

Where could studying Religious Studies lead to?

The skills and abilities they develop through GCSE Religious Studies will show to future employers that they understand and appreciate different viewpoints, religious and otherwise. Studying GCSE RS shows that pupils have a proficient level of literacy and can put forward their point articulately and with sensitivity to others. GCSE RS prepares them well for further study of Philosophy, Theology, English, Classics and History.

In terms of employment, RS looks good to employers in any area, as it demonstrates an understanding of different people and sensitivity to their beliefs and practices.

COURSE SPANISH



Head of Department: Mrs Hawkins
Exam Board: Edexcel
Qualification: GCSE 9-1

GCSE Spanish is right for pupils if they:

- Want to progress their ability to speak, read and write in another language.
- Want to stand out from the crowd when it comes to employment.
- Want to improve their confidence and develop their social, and communication skills.
- Enjoy learning about many cultural aspects of different countries where the language is spoken.
- Want to improve their problem-solving skills.

Pre-requisites

You will need to demonstrate resilience and be willing to make mistakes in order to learn from them.

You should have an interest in learning about other cultures including traditions, foods, festivals and popular culture.

What will pupil's study?

The Edexcel GCSE Spanish specifications are divided into six main subject areas (themes): My personal world, lifestyle and wellbeing, my neighborhood, media and technology, studying and my future and travel and tourism

The course involves learning how to express opinions in the foreign language, analyse texts and listen to authentic resources to improve communication.

Assessment

The exam is divided into the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Each one of these has its own separate exam, in the form of an end of course externally marked paper or speaking assessment which are worth 25% each.

Course enrichment

During the two-year course we will have the opportunity to speak to local businesses that use languages regularly, make links with a school from a Spanish speaking country and some pupils may be selected to work more closely with our primary feeder schools to support the teaching of languages.

Where could studying Spanish lead to?

Further studies in languages can lead to careers in Business and Finance (international organisations), International Law, Armed Services, Fashion, Travel and Tourism (pilots/ air hostesses), Hotels and Catering, Advertising and Market Research, Retail Management, Sales and Marketing, Teaching, Broadcasting (BBC/ ITV), Journalism, Publishing, Technical Services Science and IT, Shipping Services, Freight Forwarding, Voluntary Organisations and Charities and many more.

COURSE SPORT



Head of Department: Miss Edwards
Exam Board: Pearson's Edexcel
Qualification: BTEC Tech Award in Level 1/2 Sport

BTEC Sport is right for pupils if they:

- Enjoy learning about the science behind sport
- Want to understand how the body responds and adapts to exercise
- Have a keen interest in Sport
- Good communication and IT skills

What will you study?

BTEC Tech award in Sport has been designed primarily for young people aged 14 to 19 who may wish to explore a vocational route throughout Key Stage 4, but it is also suitable for other learners who want a vocationally focused introduction to this area of study. It has been developed to:

- Encourage personal development through practical participation and performance in a range of sports and exercise activities.
- Give learners a wider understanding and appreciation of health-related fitness, sports and exercise through a selection of optional specialist units.
- Encourage learners to develop their people, communication, planning and team-working skills by having the opportunity to select from optional units available in the qualification structure.
- Provide education and training for sport, leisure and

recreation employees.

- Give full-time learners the opportunity to progress to other vocational qualifications, such as the Pearson BTEC Level 3 Nationals in Sport or Sport and Exercise Sciences, or on to GCE AS or A level, and, in due course, to enter employment in the sport and active leisure sector.
- Give learners the opportunity to develop a range of skills and techniques, personal skills and attributes essential for successful performance in working life.

Assessment

The course is divided into three components. One externally assessed written exam 40% and two portfolio based pieces of work worth 60%. There is a small element of practical experience needed.

Course enrichment

The content of this specification is designed to enable you to enjoy and understand the benefits of living a healthy and active lifestyle. As such opportunities to participate and run sporting events will be available to pupils taking this course.

Where could BTEC Sport take you?

The qualification provides a route to further study in further education awards, such as A levels and/or the new Diplomas, and to Higher Education in PE as well as to related career opportunities.

COURSE

3D DESIGN (ART)



Head of Faculty: Miss H Howorth
Head of Department: Miss H Howorth
Exam Board: AQA
Qualification: GCSE in Art & Design (3D Design)

GCSE 3D Design is right for pupils if they:

- Enjoy working with different tools, techniques and materials to design and make products in 3D.
- Enjoy prototyping and modelling or making of primarily functional and aesthetic products and objects, drawing upon intellectual, creative and practical skills.
- Prefer subjects where you are encouraged to develop your own strengths and interests in a topic and follow your own lines of enquiry.
- Enjoy studying a creative subject that is relevant to current life and experience.

Pre-requisites

Pupils opting for GCSE 3D Design should have a keen interest in how to use 3D techniques and processes, appropriate to their intentions, for example: model making, constructing, surface treatment, assembling and modelling. Pupils should ideally have an ability to draw in 3D and be able to communicate their thoughts and ideas through drawing and written communication.

What will pupils study?

At GCSE, pupils will study two components, comprising a 'Portfolio of Work' selected from the course of study and an 'Externally Set Assignment'. The two components provide a range of creative, exciting and stimulating opportunities to develop and explore your personal interests in 3D design. Pupils will be introduced to a range of materials and processes to enable the creation of a product that the pupil has designed.

Pupils will produce a portfolio that must include a sustained project developed in response to a subject, theme, task or brief that is set by your teacher. Each project or theme gives the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to evidence a creative journey from the initial idea to the realisation of intentions and final piece.

Assessment

Portfolio of Work – 60%. Pupils will be assessed on their ability to complete the following tasks as a standard minimum:

- AO1: Research and analyse the work of artists and designers in relation to the product brief
- AO2: Develop, refine and experiment with materials, techniques and processes.
- AO3: Create observations drawings and recordings from other sources as well as the pupils own design ideas.
- AO4: Create a final product and realise intentions using written annotation.
- Pupils will sit a 10-hour exam, over 2 days. In this exam, pupils will create a final piece developed in response to the exam brief. Externally set assignment – (40%).

Course enrichment

As part of the portfolio of work pupils will be required to complete a selection of further work resulting from activities such as trials and experiments; skills-based workshops; mini and/or foundation projects; responses to gallery, museum or site visits; work placements and independent study.

Where could studying 3D Design lead to?

Further studies in 3D Design can lead to careers in Architectural Design, Sculpture, Ceramics, Product Design, Jewellery and Body Adornment, Interior Design, Environmental/Landscape/Garden Design, Exhibition Design, 3D Digital Design, Designer for Theatre, Film and Television, Graphic Design and many more areas.

NB: Art & Design and 3D Design are the same exam. Therefore, pupils cannot select both of these courses.



HUMILITY
COMPASSION
HONESTY
INTEGRITY
GRATITUDE
COURAGE
RESPECT
JUSTICE

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