



# SOLIHULL

## GCSE Booklet 2024-26

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# The GCSE Curriculum

All pupils take the following core GCSEs

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics

Plus, either

- Separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics as three separate GCSEs - all three must be taken)

or

- Combined Sciences (covering Biology, Chemistry and Physics under the Combined Science specification, and worth two GCSEs)

Plus one, two or three Modern Foreign Languages from:

- French
- German
- Spanish

Pupils then pick their remaining options to make up a total of ten GCSE subjects. Please remember that unless otherwise stated, a pupil may only opt for subjects they have studied in the Fourth Form.

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Art & Design                   | • History                                   |
| • Classical Civilisation         | • Information and Communications Technology |
| • Computer Science               | • Latin                                     |
| • Dance                          | • Music                                     |
| • Drama                          | • Physical Education                        |
| • Design and Technology          | • Religious Studies                         |
| • Food Preparation and Nutrition |   |
| • Geography                      |   |

# Factors to consider when making Subject Choices

## 1) Ensure you pick subjects that will keep your interests open for A Level and degree programmes

Firstly, some degree programmes look for a certain profile in your GCSEs. For example, we strongly recommend taking Separate Sciences at GCSE if you wish to pursue sciences at A Level and beyond.

In addition, some degree programmes require certain A Level subjects, which in turn require that you have studied them at GCSE. For example, some Classics degrees require Latin A Level, so it may be wise to take Latin GCSE. On the next page you will see which subjects are required for a range of degree programmes. Check that you are making the right choices now to keep the relevant options open for your university application. If you have any questions, please see Mrs Chillcott.

## 2) Take subjects that you enjoy and are good at

Play to your strengths. Overall, universities care more about the grades you get at GCSE than about which subject those grades were awarded in. As long as you have done the subjects you need at A Level, universities will predominantly be interested in the number of Grade 7s, 8s and 9s you have got at GCSE. Remember, we tend to be best at the subjects we enjoy!

## 3) Keep your options open

You may think now that you want to be an engineer but when you get to Maths A Level you may realise it is not for you. You may currently want to be a lawyer but then realise that you do not like memorising lots of information. Therefore, it is important at this stage to keep your options open.

**WARNING:** Don't take a subject because your friends are doing it or because you like a certain teacher. You are likely to end up with a new teacher and in a different set from your friend!

*On the next page you will find guidelines for a range of university courses for which particular subjects are recommended (or not).*

## Architecture

Most universities recommend Maths. A strong portfolio of creative work is usually required (thus ideally a candidate would take either Art or DT).

## Art

Essential to have a strong portfolio of work therefore students should do Art A Level.

## Biological Sciences

Biology is essential and most courses require a second science, with some preferring Chemistry.

## Business

No specific requirements. The ability to demonstrate analytical thinking, and a level of financial numeracy, would be useful. Business or Economics A Level is useful but not necessary.

## Chemistry

Chemistry is required and some institutions require Maths or Physics as well.

## Classics

Latin is usually required for degree level Classics courses. However, there are many Classics and Classical Studies courses which do not demand Latin or Greek.

## Computer Science

Maths is essential and some courses require Physics. Further Maths is extremely helpful. Computer Science is not essential. Other courses such as Cyber Security, Software Development and Digital Art do not require Computer Science.

## Dance

There are a variety of degree courses available in Dance, so requirements vary. All require an audition, so students will need to demonstrate a high level of technical and physical skill. Please speak with Mrs Hart for further information.

## Drama

Requirements vary. Please speak to Mrs Stafford, Head of Drama, for further information ([staffordk@solsch.org.uk](mailto:staffordk@solsch.org.uk)).

## Economics

Generally, Maths is essential and Further Maths is desirable for the most competitive courses. Economics is not essential.

## Engineering

Maths and Physics are required for most engineering courses and Further Maths is desirable for the most competitive courses. Chemistry is required for Chemical Engineering and Design and Technology can be helpful, particularly for Industrial Engineering and Product Design courses.

## English

English Literature is required.

## Geography

Geography A Level is almost always required.

## History

History A Level is almost always required.

## Human Sciences

Biology or Maths at A Level is strongly recommended.

## Law

No particular subjects but it is essential to get top grades.

## Mathematics

Maths is essential, and Further Maths is extremely important (and essential for top courses).

## Medicine

Chemistry is always, and Biology is usually, required – although some universities accept a second science (including Maths) alongside Chemistry. Three traditional sciences are an advantage for Cambridge.

## Modern Languages

Almost always require the language you wish to study unless it is a less traditional language such as Arabic, Portuguese etc.

## Music

Requirements vary. Please speak to Mr Phillips, Head of Academic Music, for further information ([phillipss2@solsch.org.uk](mailto:phillipss2@solsch.org.uk)).

## PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics)

Maths/Further Maths is highly recommended.

## Philosophy/Theology

No specific subject requirements but a subject which requires extended essay writing would be preferable.

## Physical Education/Sport Science/Sport related courses

Most courses require one – sometimes two – A Levels in the sciences (which can often include Geography and Psychology), Maths or PE. Biology is often preferred.

## Physics

Maths (including Mechanics) and Physics are essential. Further Maths is strongly recommended.

## Physics and Philosophy

Maths and Physics are essential. An essay subject and Further Maths are strongly recommended.

## Psychology

Most courses require a science or Maths, or a research-based subject e.g., Geography. Most universities accept Psychology as the science.



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# **GCSE SUBJECTS**

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Over the course of the two years, the pupils will develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. The reading component of the course will encourage the pupils to develop their ability to analyse a range of fiction and non-fiction texts from different genres and periods. In particular the pupils will learn to consider, in some detail, the ways in which writers shape meaning in texts through their use of language, imagery and form. The written component of the course will give the pupils the opportunity to write in a range of styles and genres for a variety of different audiences and purposes. In their writing, the pupils will be encouraged to consider the importance of precise, cogent expression as well as grammatical accuracy. The speaking and listening component of the course will seek to develop the pupils' ability to verbalise their ideas with sophistication and flair using an assured use of Standard English vocabulary. It will also develop their ability to listen with care and attention to detail.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE

The course will seek to develop the pupils' appreciation of literature from different periods and genres. Pupils will study a range of novels, short stories, plays and verse and be asked to read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas. They will also reflect upon the ways in which our appreciation of literary texts is illuminated through an understanding of the writers' own backgrounds and periods in which they lived. We want to encourage them to develop the habit of reading widely and often and appreciate the depth and power of the English Literary Heritage.



**Co-curricular Opportunities:** Theatre trips, English Society talks, Debating, LAMDA

Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	



# Mathematics

Mathematics is a subject with an integrated and coherent structure, and each year we build on the work done in the previous years. Thus, the syllabus really consists of all the mathematics learnt from the age of five: Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Statistics and Probability. The Mathematics iGCSE provides a broad, coherent, satisfying, and worthwhile course of study. It has been designed to encourage students to develop confidence, have a positive attitude towards mathematics and to recognise the importance of mathematics in their own lives and to society. It also provides a strong mathematical foundation for students who go on to study mathematics at a higher level post-16.

The course is designed to enable pupils to:

- develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
- acquire, select, and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
- reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences and draw conclusions
- comprehend, interpret, and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.

There is no coursework or controlled assessment for the course. However, throughout the two years of study pupils will have the opportunity to tackle longer investigations or projects. This enables the pupils to explore and investigate patterns and thus develop general theories in mathematics and to use mathematics in a practical context. We follow the Edexcel iGCSE Linear Specification (4MA1). The top sets also study for the AQA Level 2 Certificate in Further Maths.

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Intermediate Maths Challenge for top sets
- Senior Maths Challenge for top sets
- British Maths Olympiad Group – meets fortnightly to tackle challenging off-curriculum problems
- Enrichment Maths lectures once a term given by members of the department
- “Puzzle of the Month” prizes for best solutions
- Senior Maths Team open to pupils from Years 10 – 13. Compete nationally and have been regional champions five times
- Maths Clinic - twice a week at lunchtimes
- Maths conferences and lectures at universities including Oxford and Birmingham



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	



# The Sciences



Pupils must choose between taking either **Separate Sciences** (worth three GCSEs) or **Combined Sciences** (worth two GCSEs)

**Separate Sciences:** Biology, Chemistry and Physics as three separate GCSE subjects, and resulting in *three individual GCSE grades*.

**Combined Sciences:** Biology, Chemistry and Physics taught by subject specialists, but following a combined specification, resulting in *two amalgamated GCSE grades*.

Please note that we strongly advise that those considering any of the sciences at A Level should take **Separate Sciences**. Whilst it is still possible to take an A Level in one or more of the sciences from Combined Science, it is not recommended and may lead to a heavier workload initially.

This said, Combined Sciences is not a second-rate option, nor is it viewed negatively by universities, and it is still entirely possible for pupils to achieve two Grade 9s by taking Combined Sciences.

Combined Sciences might suit a pupil who either excels in other areas of the curriculum and is likely to take those subjects at A Level, or for whom the sciences are not their strongest subjects.

# Separate Sciences: Biology

The Biology course is a fascinating introduction to the amazing world of living things. Through the study of Biology you'll look at a world full of life – plants, animals and other organisms – and see how intricately their systems operate and interact.

The course studies in detail everyday biological topics such as keeping healthy, defence against disease, drugs, the environment and genetics. It also approaches modern applications of biological principles such as embryo transplants, cloning, GM foods and stem cell technology. The course develops key scientific skills such as analysing and evaluating data. GCSE Biology will allow pupils to make fascinating and intriguing discoveries and perhaps leading you to a career in the biological sciences, law, business, accountancy and many more.

**Needed for:** Biology and PE A Levels

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Science Day at Aston University
- Science Live! trip
- Medics, Vets & Dentists Society
- Biology Clinic
- International Biology Challenge competitions



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

# Separate Sciences: Chemistry

The syllabus has been designed to stimulate pupils and to create and sustain interest in, and enjoyment of, Chemistry. It does this by illustrating the role of the chemist in society, providing a core of factual knowledge and applying this knowledge to give an understanding of the world around us. As much as possible is done through experimental work, where correct and safe laboratory techniques are developed. The course covers much traditional chemistry and is an excellent preparation for A Level.

**Needed for:** Chemistry A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Chemistry Clinics
- Science Live! trip
- Science Day at Aston University
- AS Cambridge Chemistry Challenge exam preparation
- Chemistry Olympiad exam preparation
- Medics, Vets & Dentists Society



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

# Separate Sciences: Physics

Mobile phones, safer and more efficient cars, medical imaging techniques which help to save lives, equipment to improve the performance of sports men and women - all of these benefits come from recent developments in Physics. The subject develops logical thinking and opens up exciting career possibilities. Practical applications are emphasised, including a look at Medical Physics. A number of required practical experiments have been integrated into the teaching and investigative skills play a key part over the three years.

Physics governs the natural laws of the Universe and underpins all of Science, from the electrical circuits in our brain, to explaining climate change, through to how objects move from the scale of a microbe or a galaxy. GCSE Physics will provide you the language to understand and explain the physical phenomena all around us.

**Needed for:** Physics A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Physics Challenge extension classes and competitions including Physics Challenge
- Astronomy events at Birmingham University
- Engineering and Science clubs
- Physics clinic
- Science Live! trip
- Regular Physics lectures



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



# Combined Sciences

Combined Sciences fills two option blocks and will lead to two GCSEs. The Combined Sciences course is ideal for pupils who do not currently plan to study Biology, Chemistry or Physics at A Level. This allows pupils to take a GCSE in an alternative subject area such as the Arts, Humanities or Languages whilst retaining a broad Science background understanding. Combined Sciences is run in parallel with the Separate Sciences and benefits from specialist teachers for each of the three component subjects. Combined Sciences covers all the core content of each of the three subjects and can be used as a facilitating subject for Psychology and PE A Levels.

**Needed for:** PE A Level. Can be used for Biology, Chemistry and Physics A Levels, although Separate Sciences is recommended.

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Science Day at Aston University
- Science Live trip
- Medics & Dentists Society
- Biology Clinic, Chemistry clinic and Physic clinic
- Engineering and Science club
- CREST club
- Physics Challenge extension classes and competitions
- Astronomy events



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

# Modern Foreign Languages: French

The pattern of the course emphasises the value of practical communication and the execution of linguistic tasks. We encourage all pupils to visit France or a French speaking country before the end of the GCSE course. French lessons will provide many opportunities for listening and speaking the language, and pupils are encouraged to be active participants in these lessons. We also encourage pupils to reflect upon grammatical structures, to be able to talk about language in grammatical terms and to be aware of cultural differences in the Target Language culture. Broadening intellectual horizons is a key part of the course. There is a cinema club, which we encourage pupils in the Lower Fifth and Upper Fifth to attend.

Pupils will be assessed in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. Pupils will carry out GCSE style tasks from the beginning of their French studies. They will have the opportunity to perform presentations in speaking, in front of their peers. They will also have some one-to-one practice with the French Language Assistant, as well as doing regular assessments in speaking. Writing will also be tested regularly. Reading and writing will be incorporated in lessons, as well as being set through homework.

**Needed for:** French A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Film Club
- Theatre visits
- Contact with partners in France
- Language competitions
- Trip to the Château de la Baudonnière



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	



# Modern Foreign Languages: German

German GCSE is an exciting, varied course which looks at a range of relevant topics such as social media, health and fitness, environmental and global issues, and travel and tourism (to name just a few). The students will be expected to make real inroads into the language, developing an impressive bank of vocabulary, and enhancing their grammatical awareness along the way. As such, the new course makes an excellent springboard for future language studies, it provides pupils with a deeper understanding of how their own language works, and they leave us with a valuable skill for life – communicative competence in a modern language, which is highly valued and increasingly exclusive in the world of work.

Classroom teaching is blended with digital learning, and each student is provided with a subscription to Kerboodle, Vocab Express and Sprachenut, amongst other platforms. Furthermore, pupils will benefit from small group speaking sessions with the language assistant. Lunchtime clinics are also in place for students who need a little more support. The GCSE exam consists of four elements: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing, and there is equal emphasis on each of the four language skills.

As part of the course, pupils will have the opportunity to participate in the long-standing exchange with our partner school in Frankfurt, not only embedding language skills and cultural understanding, but also empowering pupils with wider reaching life skills and resilience. Furthermore, we regularly show German language films, and we encourage students to take part in outreach opportunities such as language competitions and events provided by local universities and the Goethe Institute in London.

**Needed for:** German A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Film screenings
- The German Exchange in Frankfurt
- Workshop at Goethe Institute in London
- Language competitions



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

# Modern Foreign Languages: Spanish

The pattern of the course emphasises the value of practical communication and the execution of authentic linguistic tasks. We encourage all pupils to visit Spain or a Spanish speaking country before the end of the GCSE course. Spanish lessons will provide many opportunities for listening and speaking the language, and pupils are encouraged to be active participants in these lessons. We also encourage pupils to reflect upon grammatical structures, to be able to talk about language in grammatical terms and to be aware of cultural differences in the Target Language culture. Broadening intellectual horizons is a key part of the course.

Pupils will be tested in four skill areas - Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. There is equal emphasis on each of the four language skills.

**Needed for:** Spanish A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Language Competitions
- Spanish themed days
- Spanish Study Visit
- Spanish Exchange
- Hosting Pupils from Argentina



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	



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# Optional Subjects

Each pupil may choose any combination of the following subjects to complete their list of ten GCSE choices.

If a pupil selects the Separate Sciences Pathway, they will select **three** optional subjects. If a pupil selects the Combined Sciences Pathway, they will select **four** optional subjects.

Please note, pupils may choose additional Modern Foreign Languages over and above their compulsory MFL option.

With the exception of Classical Civilisation and Drama, pupils must have studied the subject in the Fourth Form in order to pursue it at GCSE. Dance and Music may be pursued if pupils have studied the subject outside of school to a reasonably high level.

# ART AND DESIGN

The Fine Art course places a strong emphasis on creativity and the development of accomplished technical skill. Pupils will experiment with a range of mediums through drawing, photography, printmaking, sculpture and painting etc. Art history is a key element of the course and all artwork is underpinned by relevant contextual research. In enhancing skills and creativity pupils develop personal attributes including self-assurance, perseverance, commitment and confidence in their own ability and individual creativity. The practical nature of this course will also help them develop their organisation and independent study skills.

Recommended for: Fine Art, Sculpture, Illustration, Architecture, Design, Product Design, Graphic Design, 3D Computer Generated Imagery, Computer Modelling and Animation, Automotive and Transport Design, Fashion Design, Theatre and Costume Design, Special Effects Makeup Design, Interior Design, Art Education and many more.

**Needed for:** Art A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Lunchtime clinics
- Visiting artists
- Workshops



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓			✓		✓



# CLASSICAL CIVILISATION



How can we know who we are if we don't know where we come from? So much of Western Civilisation comes from the Greek and Roman World and this course gives students the chance to explore these societies as well as learning more about ourselves.

In lessons and for homework pupils will use a range of literary, visual and material sources in order to explore the ancient world. They will learn to interpret the information and consider any limitations of the sources in order to make judgements about these societies. Pupils will develop the skills to answer both concise factual questions and synthesise their knowledge to construct essays.

The course includes a study of the literature, culture and material remains of the Ancient World. It requires pupils to analyse and respond to different sources – literature, artefacts and sites – and then draw conclusions about the people who lived in, wrote about, and created art in the Ancient World.

GCSE Classical Civilisation firstly explores Myth and Religion in both Greek and Roman society, and examines the Greek and Roman gods, the hero Heracles/Hercules, temples and sacrifice, festivals and foundation stories, and death, burial and the underworld.

The second unit is a study of the Homeric World. The Greek themselves recognised the world of Homer's poems as the birthplace of Greek literature and civilisation, and this unit really allows pupils the chance to explore the 'real' world of heroes such as Odysseus, Achilles and Agamemnon. In this unit we will be looking at the Mycenaean cities of Homeric Greece, including Mycenae, Tiryns and Troy, as well as investigating the life of the Mycenaeans themselves, as warriors, politicians and ordinary people. We'll be looking at the decorative arts they produced, and how they dealt with their dead, by building extraordinary tombs for them.

Once we have explored the society of the Bronze Age, we will turn to the literature. We will read selections from The Odyssey, Homer's great poem detailing the story of the hero Odysseus, who fights at Troy and then struggles to return to his home in Ithaca. The selections will not only tell us the tale of Odysseus, and the adventures and monsters he faces, but also enable us to explore the concepts of xenia (kindness to strangers) and kleos (the desire to increase your glory), as well as considering key themes such as homecoming, family, civilisation, barbarism, leadership and what it means to be a hero. Homer's work is the basis of all Western literature, and underpins much of our thoughts about ourselves and our societies today.

**THIS COURSE DOES NOT REQUIRE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE SUBJECT**

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- The Classics Society – regular day trips to museums, exhibitions, sites and drama
- Trips to explore the Ancient World - Pompeii and the Bay of Naples October 2024
- Lunchtime sessions as and when pupils request/demonstrate a need for them



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓		✓				

# COMPUTER SCIENCE



The Computing and ICT department are pleased to offer IGCSE Computer Science to our pupils who have a desire to design, develop and apply the software and hardware for the programmes that are required to function in the digital age.

## The qualification enables students to;

- Understand and apply the fundamental principles and concepts of computer science, including abstraction, decomposition, logic, algorithms and data representation
- Analyse problems in computational terms through practical experience of solving such problems, including designing, writing and debugging programs
- Think creatively, innovatively, analytically, logically and critically
- Understand the components that make up digital systems, and how they communicate with one another and with other systems
- Understand the impacts of digital technology to the individual and to wider society
- Apply mathematical skills relevant to computer science.

The examination requires that pupils are able to assess theoretical knowledge and understanding of computer science principles and consider the practical application of computational thinking, for example create, use and adapt existing algorithms to solve problems in a given situation.

## Key skills and qualities required;

- Ability to independently research problems and provide complex solutions
- Attention to detail, patience and tenacity
- A clear and demonstrable aptitude for mathematics and programming
- A strong desire to further develop programming skills
- Good level of literacy, analytical skills and an interest in logical problem solving.

*Please note – this subject cannot be taken with ICT*

**Needed for:** Computer Science A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Perse Coding Challenge
- Silicon Valley Trip, San Francisco October 2024
- Digital day workshop
- Additional courses delivered at lunchtime such as CISCO System accredited cyber-security course
- Enrichment courses at the University of Oxford
- BEBRAS challenge
- HM Cybersecurity programme



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



# DANCE



GCSE Dance is a powerful and expressive subject which encourages pupils to develop their creative, physical and intellectual ability. This qualification is linear; therefore, students will perform their practical component and sit their written exam in their second year of study.

The AQA specification recognises the role of dance in young people's lives, and pupils will study a range of dance styles and fusions. Apart from the performance of two set phrases, as long as it meets the assessment criteria, students can choose any style or fusion in which to perform or choreograph.

Through blended learning, students will theoretically acknowledge the skills required for practice and performance and will analyse and evaluate their own work. The study of the professional works anthology will develop their ability to analyse, and critically appraise six diverse pieces of repertoire.

DANCE EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY FOR THIS COURSE: Please speak to Mrs Hart if you wish to check your suitability.

## Component 1: Performance and choreography (60%)

### Performance

- Set phrases through a solo performance (approximately one minute in duration)
- Duet/trio performance (three minutes in a dance which is a maximum of five minutes in duration)
- 30% of GCSE 40 marks

### Choreography

- Solo or group choreography- a solo (two to two and a half minutes) or a group dance for two to five minutes (three to three and a half minutes)
- 30% of GCSE 40 marks

## Component 2: Dance Appreciation Written Exam (40% In a 1 hour 30 minutes examination)

- Knowledge and understanding of choreographic processes and performing skills
- Critical appreciation of own work
- Critical appreciation of professional works

**Useful for:** Further professional training; dance journalism/media, dance in education, dance science, dance in film, production, dance choreography, community dance practitioner.

### Co-curricular Opportunities:

- International Day of Dance
- Annual Dance Show
- Dance Captain Roles
- Solihull School Dance Company
- School Musical
- Teaching Opportunities (Senior/Prep)
- Professional Visiting Practitioners
- Watching Live Performance



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

# DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Every product, vehicle and building that we use each day has been designed. In short designers and engineers play an essential role in our lives. In a changing world, design and engineering professions are amongst the least likely to be replaced by AI or automation. Design and Technology challenges its pupils to work independently, both inside and outside the confines of school. It is hugely rewarding not only academically, but also personally.

The GCSE course mixes creativity with technical knowledge in order to design and make prototypes that solve real and relevant problems, considering your own and others' needs. The subject places an emphasis on understanding, prototyping, testing and improvement to develop and refine a product.

In the first year you will investigate a wide range of theory topics such as modern and smart materials alongside focused tasks to develop graphical, modelling and manufacture skills. In the second year a major project is then selected from one of three themes for your controlled assessment. Pupils submit a portfolio of design and research along with a working prototype of high quality.

The department has excellent facilities and teaching expertise. It is therefore able to utilise the latest processes such as 3D printing and has comprehensive equipment for working in a range of materials. Dedicated computer suites, plus access to commercial software such as OnShape allow pupils to develop impressive e-portfolios.

**Useful for:** Engineering, Product Design, Architecture, Materials Science, Theatre/set Production and Computer Aided Design careers

**Needed For:** A Level Design and Technology

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Regular practical sessions are available for keeping controlled assessment on schedule
- Relevant trips and visits



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

# DRAMA

The GCSE Drama syllabus encourages creativity, teamwork and independent learning; it facilitates discussion surrounding the key issues of the day, and the big questions of what it means to be human. It also helps pupils to acquire and develop performance and/or design skills. **All practical elements can be attempted as a performer or as a designer.** The course is assessed in three main areas:

## Written Paper

Pupils will study a performance text in detail answering questions on the process of creating and developing a performance, working as a director, performer and designer, as well as the performance of a character from the text. Pupils will also analyse and evaluate a live theatrical production they have seen during the course, using subject-specific terminology and theatrical knowledge.

## Devised Work

Pupils are required to create their own piece of original drama in small groups based on a stimulus. In order to do this, they must work closely together to create their own piece of drama, designing their own sets and costumes and operate their own sound and lights. They can be assessed as either a performer or designer. Pupils must develop their reflective and evaluative skills in order to constantly improve their piece and deliver the intended outcomes for the audience. In addition to the performance, students will be marked on an accompanying portfolio with evidence of research and analysis of the process and decisions made whilst creating and developing their performance. They will also produce an evaluation of their final performance.

## Text Work

Pupils are required to perform (or design for) two extracts from a chosen play, they will have to research the play, it's social and historical context as well as it's style and prepare their contributions (as a performer or designer) with great care. Pupils will be required to produce an accompanying concept document which outlines their intentions for the performance. The extracts will be marked by a visiting examiner.

**Useful for:** Acting, Costume Design, Drama, Drama Education, Drama Therapy, Film Studies, Media Studies, as well as any literary or humanities subjects.

**THIS COURSE DOES NOT REQUIRE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE SUBJECT**

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- At least four theatre trips
- Workshops with visiting professionals
- Theatre tours
- Option to be involved with school plays and musicals



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

# FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

Food Preparation and Nutrition is a popular, exciting and creative course which focuses on knowledge of nutrition, food traditions and kitchen safety. Investigation skills and practical cooking techniques are developed to ensure pupils gain a thorough understanding of food provenance and the working characteristics of food materials.

The GCSE covers five main topics:

- Food, nutrition and health
- Food science
- Food safety
- Food choice
- Food provenance



The first year of the course is designed to inspire and motivate pupils whilst developing their practical and nutritional knowledge as well as food science and food safety skills. Taught by specialist staff who encourage students to develop an array of technical culinary skills

The second year of the course focuses upon Non-Examination Assessment (50% of the GCSE) where candidates can develop their investigative skills to show their understanding of the working characteristics and functional properties of food. The second task is where they showcase nutritional knowledge and understanding as well as producing high-quality practical cookery skills in relation to the planning, preparation, and presentation of food

Throughout the course further “soft skills” will be developed: time management, meticulous planning, reasoning, knowledge application, research methods, adaptation of ideas and critical evaluation skills. Refining these skills can further enhance knowledge and performance in all subjects of the curriculum.

Unlike catering courses, there is a greater degree of theory work in this subject which will help prepare pupils for a wider range of careers such as a nutritionist, dietitian, and other medical professions as well as the more obvious roles in the catering industry such as food technologist.

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Optional biannual international trip to experience cuisine through the provenance of local ingredients
- Food tasting and practical cookery opportunities
- Lunchtime workshops
- Food council
- Visiting speakers
- National and internal competitions



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



# GEOGRAPHY



Geography has been termed 'the subject of our times' (The Guardian, 2020). Spanning both the social and physical sciences, Geography explores a vast array of contemporary topics; students can be tasked with exploring the impacts of climate change on Arctic Sea ice, before analysing global migration patterns or the ever-changing geopolitical landscape. As a consequence, Geography is now viewed as one of the most employable subjects to read, providing those who study it with the attributes required to understand the increasingly complex world in which we live.

Geographers form unique world viewpoints, combining political and economic aspects of place with an understanding of the physical processes which underpin the world around us. Geography develops the ability to combine scientific principles with economic awareness, environmental concern and an appreciation and tolerance of people's attitudes and values. Pupils are encouraged to understand their role in society, by considering different viewpoints, values and attitudes.

Geography helps to improve pupils' communication skills; graphical and cartographical skills; technological skills including ICT and GIS; interpersonal skills through debate and discussion; literacy and numeracy; problem solving skills; entrepreneurial skills and awareness of career possibilities. Furthermore, the study of Geography allows the opportunity for personalised and independent learning, where students can begin to unpick their role in modern society through a geographical lens. As a consequence, it is often referred to as a 'facilitating subject'.

Pupils always cite residential fieldwork as a highlight of the subject and we are thrilled to be able to incorporate this into our GCSE teaching. There will be a residential field course to a coastal location in the summer term of the Lower Fifth year.

Recommended for: International development; environmental science; surveying, environmental consultancy, conservation, climatology, national and global policy, sustainability, waste and water management, environmental planning, aid worker, hazard management, tourism, international relations, cartography, town planning, geographical information systems, recycling systems, landscape architect, transportation planner, accountancy, law, civil service, teacher, politician, academia and research.

**Needed For:** Geography A Level

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Optional international fieldtrip to Iceland
- Geography clinic
- Enrichment through reading and film
- 'Geography in Action' lecture days
- Involvement with Eco Council
- LAFF club
- RGS and GA subject days
- External and internal lecture opportunities
- National and international competitions



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

# HISTORY



GCSE History is a very popular option. It covers a wide range of topics, and is very helpful for understanding the world we live in today. It is very much a skills-based course – the emphasis is on thinking for yourself rather than learning vast amounts of information. We begin with a look at America: how did it expand from New York to California and what was the impact on the native American population? Then we look at the story of medicine from the Middle Ages to the present day which provides a really interesting overview of lots of different developments and is great for medics!. Then we look at the Russian Revolution and Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union, and finally we go back to Elizabethan England and look at how Elizabeth I became one of England's greatest rulers. The course is assessed by three exams, and there is no coursework.

**Needed For:** History A Level

**Recommended for:** Law, Business, the Media, Politics, Journalism, International relations

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Optional overseas trips
- Academic enrichment through the opportunity to attend the extension group
- Book club and film club discussions
- Contribute to Marginal Gains, the student Politics publication



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓		✓				



# INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

With the ever-increasing use of technology in our modern-day world, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) course focuses on both the essential knowledge and skills necessary to prepare pupils for future studies and employment. The specification therefore encourages pupils to develop lifelong skills including:

- The ability to understand and implement new and emerging technologies within a business environment.
- How to analyse, design, implement, test and evaluate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems.
- Considering the impact which new technologies will have on ways of working and the social, economic and ethical issues associated with them.
- Awareness of the ways ICT can help in practical and work-related scenarios.

## Assessment;

- Paper 1 - Theory paper: 1 hr 30mins: 50%- Written paper based on knowledge and understanding
- Paper 2- Practical: 3 hours: 50%- Application of Software skills – database management, spreadsheets, HTML, presentations, word processing, graphics

**Please note – this subject cannot be taken with Computer Science GCSE**

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Digital day workshop
- Silicon Valley Trip, San Francisco October 2024
- Weekly clinic
- Bi-annual trips to support the course
- Enrichment opportunities such as Bebras
- Entry to competitions
- Reynolds Cross workshop



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓



# LATIN

The course includes a study of the language, literature and culture of the Roman world, and requires pupils to evaluate the material read and studied, as well as drawing comparisons between the ancient world and later times.

GCSE Latin is made up of three units. The first unit focuses on the Latin language and tests comprehension and translation skills, as well as grammatical understanding, through stories taken from both mythology and Roman history. The language work is not simply an intellectual exercise, but serves to demonstrate the importance of Latin as the foundation language of Europe, and helps to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of other languages they are studying, including English.

The second and third units introduce pupils to Latin literature. Students enjoy a rare opportunity to study Latin poetry and appreciate the beauty of Latin in its original form. The reason we learn Latin is so that we can read what the Romans wrote and understand how it influenced generations of literature; this paper gives students that opportunity. We will look at a wide variety of Roman authors, including Tacitus and Cicero, Caesar and Pliny, Ovid and Catullus, and Horace and Virgil. Pupils will develop not only their knowledge and understanding of Latin, but also their literary criticism skills and appreciation of Roman authors.

**Needed for:** Latin A Level

**Highly recommended for:** Classics Degree

**Co-curricular Opportunities:**

- The Classics Society
- Regular day trips to museums, exhibitions, sites, drama
- Trips to explore the Ancient World – Pompeii and the Bay of Naples October 2024.
- Lunchtime sessions as and when pupils request or demonstrate a need for them



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓		✓		

# MUSIC



At GCSE you will study music in more depth than you will have done in school up to this point. The further you develop your understanding of music from around the world and across the centuries the more accessible music becomes to you.

- You will be aware of more happening in the music you listen to.
- You will become aware of more styles of music and this will lead to a wider and richer selection of music that you like to listen to.
- You will be more informed about how to perform music to bring out the full effect of the piece.
- You will improve your instinct for how notes can be made to fit together when improvising or composing your own music.

If this sounds good to you, then you will find much to enjoy over your GCSE course. This may well be the start of a long adventure exploring the world's musical traditions and developing your skills as a musician.

## Component 1: Understanding Music (exam - 40%)

You will listen to music from four different periods and styles of music and learn to accurately describe musical elements and use musical language to analyse the set pieces.

## Component 2: Performing Music (30 %) Two pieces required - one solo and one ensemble.

**Component 3: Composing Music (30%)** Two compositions required. One is composed to a set brief and the other is a free choice. For example:

1. Compose a piece in ternary form that is to be performed at a school awards ceremony;
2. Compose a piece for three instruments to be performed in a showcase event at the local music college;
3. Compose music for the opening scene in a new action movie to be premiered at the local cinema;
4. Compose a pop song aimed at raising money for charity in a local Music for Youth concert.

**Needed for:** Music A Level

### Co-curricular Opportunities:

- Composition clinics
- Grade V Theory classes
- Joining a range of school ensembles
- Informal concert opportunities
- External concert visits



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓



# PHYSICAL EDUCATION



GCSE Physical Education is open to all pupils who wish to pursue the subject from an academic perspective. (Please note that this does not replace weekly PE lessons, which remain core for all pupils)

The qualification enables pupils to:

- Study the amazing world of sports performance. Pupils will have the chance to perform in three different sports through the NEA component, as well as develop a wide range of knowledge into the 'how and why' of physical activity and sport.
- Understand how to improve their own sporting performance through the application of the theory content.
- Explore different topics related to the subject including Anatomy and Physiology, Socio-cultural Issues and Sports Psychology.

Key skills and qualities required:

- The ability to apply and understand scientific principles to sports performance.
- The ability to perform practically in three different sports to a good standard (please speak to Mrs Wana if you wish to check your suitability)
- A clear understanding and awareness of the sporting world and the contextual issues within it.
- An interest and passion for the sporting world.

Assessment process:

- 2 x 1hr papers: Physical Factors Affecting Performance, and Socio-Cultural Issues and Sports Psychology (60%)
- Practical Performances (30%)
- Analysis and Evaluation of performance (verbal presentation) 10%

Practical sporting performance is essential for this course

**Recommended for:** A level PE, Psychology, Biology, Business.

**Co-curricular Opportunities:**

- Regular participation in the schools' sports teams is essential.
- Annual trips and visits.



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The RS GCSE consists of two examinations of 1 hour 45 minutes each, one based on the study of two religions and the other on themes in the philosophy of religion and ethics.

Pupils will be challenged with questions about belief, values, meaning, purpose and truth, enabling them to develop their own attitudes towards religious issues. They will also gain an appreciation of how religion, philosophy and ethics have shaped history and culture, and be required to articulate a wide range of opinions and beliefs in the form of structured and clear arguments, supported by evidence.

The exams will test pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices as well as their ability to apply religious and non-religious ideas to a variety of real-life issues.

RS gives pupils the opportunity to think and talk about the most profound and difficult questions in life. What happens when we die? What rights should we give unborn children? Can it ever be right to kill? Do religions do more harm than good? In addition, the course gives a solid grounding in understanding the key beliefs and practices of the two largest religious faiths in the world, Christianity and Islam.

## Thematic studies

- Religion and life (including the origins of the universe and life, abortion, euthanasia and environmental issues)
- Religion, peace and conflict (including war, justice and forgiveness)
- Religion, crime and punishment (including the use of prisons and the death penalty)
- Religion, human rights and social justice (including prejudice, discrimination and financial ethics)

## Study of two religions – Christianity and Islam

- Key beliefs
- Teachings from scripture and other authorities
- Worship and practices
- Understanding God
- Rites, rituals and festivals

The course is open to all pupils and will be equally accessible to those of all faiths and none. All that is needed is an enquiring mind and a desire to engage with the issues.

## Co-curricular Opportunities:

Visiting speakers from groups such as Amnesty International and Trussell Trust Food Banks; annual Spirited Arts national competition; Holocaust Education opportunities; national thinking skills competitions including Philosophy and Ethics Cup.



Factual Essays	Creative Writing	Analysing info / text	Understand Processes	Recall of lots of detailed info	Maths skills	Problem solving	Oral skills	Practical work
✓		✓		✓			✓	

