

Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham

Year 9 Guidance Booklet

Key Stage 4 Courses

Commencing June 2026



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Welcome from Mrs Fletcher-Woods, Assistant Headteacher

Dear Student,

We hope you are enjoying your first year at Queen Elizabeth High School; we are really impressed by the start you have made to your studies.

We continue to offer our students a large number of high quality qualifications at Key Stage 4, and moving onto your next step at 16 is still dependent on you doing well across a range of subjects in Years 10 and 11. It remains our aim to ensure that all of our students complete their Key Stage 4 studies with at least 8 or 9 excellent qualifications necessary for progression into our Sixth Form, college or apprenticeships.

The staff at our school have a lot of experience in advising students about the courses that will suit them best. This booklet contains a lot of information about the courses available. Please read it carefully, because the subjects you choose will be taken for the next two years and you won't be able to change them from September 2026. This is an exciting time where you can make decisions about your curriculum to suit your interests and abilities.

On Tuesday 24th February 2026 there will be an opportunity to attend an information evening about the courses available and additional general guidance to support the whole process.

Good luck,



Mrs A Fletcher-Woods

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'a-fletch'.

Assistant Headteacher (Achievement & Progress KS4)

Calendar of Events 2026

The calendar for option choices is as follows:

Friday 23rd January 2026	Year 9 assembly on the subjects available in Years 10-11. The guidance booklet to be given out for students to take home (also available online).
Friday 30th January 2026	Taster Day choices deadline
Monday 9th February 2026	Taster Day Sessions (am)
Monday 23rd February 2026	Year 9 assembly on making option choices. Student data available online to parents and students.
Tuesday 24th February 2026	Parents information evening regarding option choices, including new subjects.
25th February - 12th March 2026	1:1 meetings with students during tutor time.
13th March 2026	Options deadline
March-May 2026	Timetable and Year 10 classes constructed. Parents will be contacted if further discussion is required about option choices or combinations of subjects.
Monday 15th June 2026	We aim to start the new timetable on this date. Please make every effort to ensure that you have chosen carefully. In exceptional circumstances we may allow students to change course before the end of June but this is not always possible due to class sizes. We will not allow any changes after we return in September 2026.



The Key Stage 4 Curriculum for Examination in 2028

Changes at Key Stage 4

The Government has phased in significant changes to GCSE qualifications over the last few years. This means:

- A new grading system from 1 to 9 (9 being the highest grade).
- More challenging subject content and assessments (for example, 20% of the grade for English Language is awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar).

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

At Queen Elizabeth High School we are ambitious for our students. We know that the vast majority of our cohort achieve above national standards. To secure their future progression we are committed to our students studying a broad and challenging curriculum. This curriculum includes mathematics, English and science for all students alongside at least one of the following - a language, geography, history, computing, triple science. Therefore enabling students to study subjects that will give them the breadth, depth, and ambition necessary for their success.

Most students will study 9 GCSEs including English & Maths and at least one from - French, Spanish, geography, history, triple science, or computing studies and will then select a further 4 option choices in order of preference. Students will be allocated 3 out of these 4 choices for their KS4 curriculum. We aim to guarantee preference 1 and 2.

A very small number of students identified by our SEND department will study a bespoke curriculum that is designed to be ambitious for each student whilst meeting their needs.

For some students we may decide that studying 8 GCSEs with additional support in English and maths is a more appropriate pathway. We will determine this based on their performance data which will include Key Stage 2 SATs scores, Year 9 data and information from middle school. Our goal is to ensure students can achieve well and succeed at Key Stage 4.

Types of qualification

GCSEs

GCSEs are primarily assessed through exams, but may still involve coursework, practical or speaking assessments in some subjects. These will take place throughout Years 10 and 11. Almost all GCSEs have written examinations taken at the end of Year 11. It is important for students to choose courses that suit their needs and abilities, for example taking practical or coursework-based courses may help to balance the workload and assessment during Years 10 and 11, and ease the pressure slightly at the end of the GCSE course.



The Key Stage 4 Curriculum for Examination in 2028

Vocational

These courses are made up of units of work. At least one unit is assessed during Year 10 and one will be assessed during Year 11. All vocational courses have one examination component at the end of Year 11.

Grading

The following table compares the current grading system with the previous legacy system. You can achieve a pass, merit, distinction or distinction* on OCR courses. These are the equivalent to good grades at GCSE. Students must achieve a score on each unit in order to achieve a grade at the end.

Legacy GCSEs	New GCSE Grades	OCR Qualifications	Level
A*	9	Distinction* 8.5 Distinction 7 Merit 5.5 Pass 4	Level 2
	8		
	7		
	6		
	5		
	4		
	3		
	2		
	1		
	U	Not Yet Achieved (NYA)	

Please note that all of our qualifications (GCSEs and all vocational courses) provide progression to further study in our Sixth Form or to apprenticeship or other training. They have all been accredited under the new accountability framework for students and schools.

Science at GCSE

All students will study combined science (biology, chemistry, physics), which leads to 2 GCSE grades as a minimum. This qualification can pathway students to Key Stage 5 in A Level, biology, chemistry and physics courses. It is also accepted by universities for those students who wish to study any courses needing science A Levels.

For those students who are passionate about science they have the option of doing triple science as an option choice. This will mean that they will gain a GCSE in each individual science subject, rather than two in combined science.



The Key Stage 4 Curriculum for Examination in 2028

When making your choices, take into account:

1. Your strengths and interests
 - Use your February data to judge where your strengths lie and think about which subjects you enjoy. Don't just base it on the teacher, as teaching staff are likely to change in Year 10.
 - How the course is assessed – is it coursework? Is it practical? Or is it end of course exam? Each subject page explains how the course is assessed.
 - How the course is taught – is there a lot of writing? Is there a lot of practical work?
 - Will you be able to cope with all exams being at the end of Year 11? If you would prefer to complete some of your qualification during the academic year, then consider subjects that have a higher degree of coursework or practical examination.
2. Your future plans
 - What would you like to do after your GCSEs? In our experience, there are a number of subjects which are more difficult to pick up at A Level if you have not studied them at GCSE (e.g. Art, History and Geography). For further information about our Sixth Form, please see page 9.
 - Most university courses do not require particular GCSEs, but we would advise taking certain GCSEs for some courses at university.
 - Some apprenticeships would value certain vocational skills gained through GCSE and OCR study.



What should you think about when making your choices?

- Our current minimum entry requirement in the Sixth Form is a minimum of five subjects at grade 4 (or equivalent) or better including English Language. It is important that you choose subjects that give you the best chance of achieving as high as possible. Courses currently offered in the Sixth Form are as follows:

Based on a recent review of the curriculum by Trustees, the following A Level and Vocational Qualifications (AAQ and BTEC/OCR) courses are currently offered, but will be subject to further review or student demand that can't be anticipated this far in advance		
Subjects highlighted in green are open to students in Sixth Form who have not studied them at GCSE		
A Level Courses		Vocational Qualifications (AAQ and BTEC/OCR)
Art and Design – Fine Art	Geography	Human Biology
Art and Design – Graphics	History	Business
Art and Design – Photography	Mathematics	Creative Digital Media Production
Biology	Physical Education	Health and Social Care
Chemistry	Physics	Computing: Application Development
Design & Technology: Product Design	Politics	Sport and Physical Activity
Drama and Theatre Studies	Psychology	
English Literature	Sociology	
French	Spanish	
Further Mathematics		

- Don't be put off taking a course at GCSE level if it is not on the list of Sixth Form courses above. Our GCSE options provide progression routes into a number of related areas. For example, Graphics is a progression route on to other art courses; Religious Studies is useful but not a requirement for students wanting to take Sociology; Design and Technology is relevant for students interested in Product Design but also for those interested in other design and/or science courses.
- It is also important to be aware that the subjects highlighted in green are open to students in Sixth Form, who have not studied them at GCSE.
- Please note: we cannot guarantee that student demand will be high enough in the Sixth Form to run some courses offered at GCSE level. In recent years we have had to review running different A Levels on the basis of suitable demand once the Sixth Form progression process has taken place.
- Finally, don't worry too much about the Sixth Form. Most students take things one step at a time. You will do well in Years 10 and 11 if you choose courses to suit your interests and abilities now!**



Guidance on making your choices

Before you make your choices, please note the following:

- You are only allowed to take one art subject (Fine Art & Textiles or Graphic Communication).
- Students will be allowed to take Computing if they are in Sets 1 and 2 for Maths. Students in other sets may be considered for the course if they can demonstrate an interest in and enthusiasm for the subject, and have some experience of coding.
- Students can opt for OCR Business or OCR Health and Social Care as new subjects. It is important that students and families seek advice and guidance before making this choice. Fresh start subjects can be exciting but are challenging and may not suit every student.
- Students and parents/carers should note the scores for 'attitudes to learning' on the February school report. Students should choose subjects where these marks are good or higher. We would encourage students to select subjects where they are engaging well. If a student is a cause for concern or inconsistent in a subject we would advise not continuing.



Compulsory subjects with a qualification



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All students in Years 10 and 11 will take the following subjects that lead to a qualification:

Compulsory subjects with a qualification

English Language (GCSE)

English Literature (GCSE)

Mathematics (GCSE)

Science (2 or 3 GCSEs)

English Language (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs H Howard

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8700

Course Details

You will follow a specification leading to a GCSE in English Language.

The English Language GCSE course assesses your ability to:

Read material and analyse what it says, how it says it and what it means (comprehension skills). To this end you will study a range of texts including 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century non-fiction texts. There will be a focus on analysing unseen texts across the centuries.

Write in a variety of different genres: letters, articles, speeches, reports, reviews. Your ability to write for various purposes will also be assessed; for example, to entertain, to argue a case, to persuade, to describe a scene, to create a narrative. There will be a focus on technical accuracy in written tasks; mainly spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Assessment

The course will be assessed by two final examinations on a selection of texts specified below. Both examinations will take place at the end of Year 11.

You will all sit the same examination which will be graded 1–9, with 9 being the top grade.

Assessment Details

Paper 1 (50% of the qualification)

Section A: Reading – A range of questions on an unseen fiction extract.

Section B: Writing – A choice of description of an image or narrative opening writing tasks.

Paper 2 (50% of the qualification)

Section A: Reading – A range of questions on two thematically linked, unseen non-fiction extracts.

Section B: Writing – Write in a style of the given transactional form showing an awareness of purpose, audience and form (letters, speeches, articles etc). There will be a thematic link to the reading extracts.

Spoken Language assessed separately.

English Literature (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs H Howard

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8702

Course Details

You will follow a specification leading to a GCSE in English Literature.

Throughout the course, you will develop your ability to read more analytically in order to understand themes, ideas and characterisation.

You will read a wide breadth of literature, including poetry, prose and drama that is taken from different time periods.

The qualification is graded 1–9 with 9 being the top grade.

Assessment

Paper 1 - Shakespeare and 19th Century Literature

Section A: Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Students are required to analyse a short extract from the play and write a response using this extract and their knowledge of the play.

Section B: Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*

Students are required to analyse a short extract from the novel and write a response using this extract and their knowledge of the novel

Paper 2 - Modern Text and Poetry

Section A: *An Inspector Calls*

Students will have a choice of two questions, they will choose one and write a longer essay response that demonstrates clear knowledge of the play and its context.

Section B: *Comparison of two poems* from the AQA 'Worlds and Lives' cluster from the Anthology - one of which appears on the examination paper.

Section C: *Comparison of two unseen poems*

Students will be required to respond to two questions in the unseen poetry section.

Assessment Details

Paper 1 (50% of the qualification)

Section A: Shakespeare (*Macbeth*)

Section B: 19th Century Literature (*A Christmas Carol*)

Paper 2 (50% of the qualification)

Section A: Modern text (*An Inspector Calls*)

Section B: Poetry anthology (a comparison question)

Section C: Unseen poetry

Mathematics (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr J Blair

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8300

Course Details

By the end of Year 10, your child will have completed the first part of their programme of study that will prepare them thoroughly for the rigours of the GCSE mathematics exam, which they will sit at the end of Year 11. Their set will dictate which tier (higher or foundation) that they will be entered for. Students will be awarded a grade from 1 to 9, with 9 being the highest. The exam will consist of three papers.

The course builds on the work covered in KS3, and consists of a broad range of topics in the following proportions:

Topic Area	Foundation	Higher
Number	25%	15%
Algebra	20%	30%
Ratio	25%	20%
Geometry	15%	20%
Probability and Statistics	15%	15%

Assessment Details

Paper 1 (33⅓% of the qualification)
Non-calculator paper, 1 hour 30 minutes (80 marks).

Paper 2 (33⅓% of the qualification)
Calculator paper, 1 hour 30 minutes (80 marks).

Paper 3 (33⅓% of the qualification)
Calculator paper, 1 hour 30 minutes (80 marks).

Summary of Available Grades

It should be noted that students who fail to achieve the mark for the lowest grade available at each tier will be recorded as unclassified. This makes entry at the most appropriate level critically important.

Tier	Grade
Higher	9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4
Foundation	5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Additional Information

All students will need a scientific calculator, ideally a Casio FX-83GTCW, which is used in lessons and examinations. Calculators and revision guides are available from the LRC; these are excellent resources to accompany the course.

Students who qualify for the Pupil Premium will not be expected to pay these costs.

Time has been built into the curriculum to revise at the end of Year 11. There will also be revision sessions that we encourage all students to attend.

Combined Science: Trilogy (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Brown

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8464

Course Details

All students will follow the combined science specification leading to 2 GCSEs in science as a minimum. The Combined Science course develops practical skills alongside knowledge and understanding. The practical tasks allow students to collect, select, analyse, and interpret data in a range of contexts. Examination questions use examples that are both familiar and unfamiliar to students but are linked directly to the course content.

Assessment

There are six exam papers, all 1 hour and 15 minutes long and worth 70 marks (16.7% each). They contain multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response questions.

Students will have to complete 21 required practicals during the course which are set by the Examination Board.

Subject Content

Biology

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

Chemistry

9. Atomic structure and the periodic table
10. Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter
11. Quantitative chemistry
12. Chemical changes

13. Energy changes
14. The rate and extent of chemical change
15. Organic chemistry
16. Chemical analysis
17. Chemistry of the atmosphere
18. Using resources
19. Key ideas

Physics

20. Energy
21. Electricity
22. Particle model of matter
23. Atomic structure
24. Forces
25. Waves
26. Magnetism and electromagnetism
27. Key ideas

Assessment Details

Biology	Paper 1: Biology topics 1–4 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%). Paper 2: Biology topics 5–7 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%).
Chemistry	Paper 1: Chemistry topics 9–13 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%). Paper 2: Chemistry topics 14–18 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%).
Physics	Paper 1: Physics topics 20–23 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%). Paper 2: Physics topics 24–26 (see above), 1 hour 15 minutes, 70 marks (16.7%).

Compulsory subjects without a qualification



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This section tells you about compulsory subjects that do not lead to a qualification.

Compulsory subjects without a qualification

Physical Education (Core)

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)

Physical Education (Core)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs G Scott

Course Details

All students in Years 10 and 11 follow a programme of physical education. Students may be taught in single or mixed sex groups where emphasis is placed on participation, enjoyment, leadership and the acquisition of skills. We aim to promote both an interest in activities and an awareness of the importance of fitness for life.

The Year 10 and Year 11 programme includes a range of seasonal individual and team sports, along with health-related exercise, exercise to music and leadership. The students are given the opportunity to develop their skills and understanding of physical activity. This will involve the individual in aspects of planning, participation and evaluation of performance.

Leadership is a central focus in our Year 11 programme. Students will be given the opportunity to develop their leadership qualities. This will involve developing generic skills, as well as taking responsibility for organising activity sessions for their peers.

Our hope is that students will have developed the expertise and motivation to plan their own recreational programme.

There are several extra-curricular sports clubs, and we would encourage all students to attend where possible.

Physical Education (Core)



Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr A Hedley

At Key Stage 4, students deepen knowledge and understanding, extend and rehearse skills, and further explore attitudes, values and attributes acquired during Key Stage 3. PSHE education reflects the fact that students are moving towards an independent role in adult life, taking on greater responsibility for themselves and others.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) falls within both 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Relationships', as sexual health should always be considered as an element of health education but also taught within the context of healthy relationships.

Core Theme 1: Health and Wellbeing

- Self-concept
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Health related decisions
- Sexual health & fertility
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Managing risk and personal safety
- Sexual health and fertility

Core Theme 2: Relationships

- Positive relationships
- Relationship values
- Forming and maintaining respectful relationships
- Consent
- Conception and parenthood
- Bullying, abuse and discrimination
- Social influences

Core Theme 3: Living in the Wider World

- Learning skills
- Choices and pathways
- Work and career
- Employment rights and responsibilities
- Financial choices
- Media literacy and digital resilience

Healthy Relationships and Sexual Health and Wellbeing Project, delivered to Year 10 students



Students to take at least one of these subjects



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All students in Years 10 and 11 will take at least one of the following subjects that lead to a qualification:

Students to take at least one of these subjects

Geography (GCSE)

History (GCSE)

Languages (GCSE)

Computing (GCSE)

Triple Science (GCSE)

Geography (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Ms R Booth

Exam Board: Edexcel

Specification Code: 1GB0

Course Details

The world is always changing. Geography gives you the chance to develop an understanding of these changes. Students will develop the skills that will allow them to interpret a wide range of geographical resources and form well-rounded opinions. The course is examined at the end of Year 11.

Paper 1: Global Geographical Issues

This unit considers some of the key global geographical issues and includes three topics. 'Hazardous Earth' focuses on tropical and tectonic hazards. It then investigates the natural and human causes of climate change and the impacts it will have across the globe. 'Development Dilemmas' looks at global inequality. Students will study the emerging country of India and learn how its development is affecting the environment, its people and relations with the wider world. 'Challenges of an Urbanising World' explores the rapid urbanisation across the world and focuses on the megacity Mumbai in India.

Paper 2: UK Geographical Issues

This unit focuses on key contemporary geographical issues in the UK. It includes topics titled 'The UK's Evolving Physical Landscape', which studies coastal and river processes, and 'The UK's Evolving Human Landscape', which studies the changing and varied human landscapes of the UK. The city of Newcastle will be studied in depth. The final topic, 'Geographical Investigations', will involve two pieces of fieldwork and research in Jesmond and Benwell and another piece of rivers fieldwork on flood risk in Hexham. The skills and knowledge acquired from these field trips will be assessed through a series of questions at the end of this exam.

Paper 3: People and Environment Issues – Making Geographical Decisions

In this unit, students will develop their knowledge and understanding of the interactions between people and environment. 'The People and the Biosphere' topic investigates the importance of the biosphere to humans. 'Forests Under Threat' involves a detailed study of tropical rainforests and the Taiga looking at the issues relating to their sustainable use and management. The final topic, 'Consuming Energy Resources', studies renewable and non-renewable energy in terms of supply and demand, access and energy security issues as well as its sustainable use and management.

Assessment Details

Paper 1 (37.5% of the qualification) and Paper 2 (37.5% of the qualification)
1 hour 30 minutes each paper. Both exams include a variety of tasks and question types ranging from multiple choice questions up to 8-mark extended writing tasks. Spelling, punctuation and grammar will also be assessed.

Paper 3 (25% of the qualification)

1 hour 30 minutes. Same as above with the addition of a decision-making task at the end of the paper.

History (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Hodgson

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8145

Course Details

GCSE History helps you understand how past events have shaped the world we live in today. Through a mix of British and international topics, you'll explore key people, turning points, and ideas that changed societies. The course builds your skills in explanation, analysis, source evaluation, and writing clear arguments — all of which are valued in many future careers. If you enjoy investigating real stories, debating ideas, and understanding how change happens, History is an excellent fit.

Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World

Conflict Between East and West, 1945 - 1972 (Cold War)

After WWII, tensions between the USA (capitalist) and USSR (communist) grew into a global rivalry. Key early issues included disagreements at Yalta/Potsdam, Soviet control of Eastern Europe, and the Truman Doctrine/Marshall Plan. Major crises followed: the Berlin Blockade (1948–49), the Korean War, the Hungarian Uprising (1956), the Berlin Wall (1961), and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962). By the late 1960s, relations slowly improved, leading towards détente.

Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and Dictatorship

Germany changed dramatically from the Kaiser's authoritarian rule to the fragile Weimar Republic after WWI. Weimar faced huge problems: the Treaty of Versailles, uprisings, and hyperinflation, but recovered in the late 1920s. The Great Depression helped the Nazis gain support, and Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. The Nazi regime then created a dictatorship, controlling society through propaganda, repression, and persecution, leading Germany into WWII and eventual defeat.

Paper 2: Shaping the Nation

Power and the People (c.1170–present)

This unit is all about how ordinary people in Britain gradually gained more rights and influence over government. It looks at key turning points like Magna Carta, the Peasants' Revolt, the English Civil War, the American Revolution, campaigns for abolition, Chartism, and the long struggle for democracy through the Reform Acts. It continues into the 20th century with movements such as the Suffragettes, the trade unions, and the fight for civil rights and equality. The main theme is how ideas about freedom, representation, and protest changed over time.

Restoration England (1660–1685)

This depth study covers the return of Charles II after the collapse of Cromwell's rule. You explore how England rebuilt itself culturally, politically, and socially after years of civil war and republican government. Key topics include the restoration of the monarchy, the roles of the King and Parliament, the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, religious tension, plots and conspiracies, and the rapid changes in science, theatre, and everyday life. It ends with the political crisis around the Exclusion Crisis and the lead-up to James II.

Assessment Details

Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World (50% of the qualification) *Written exam, 2 hours.*

Key topics: Germany 1890–1945 Democracy and Dictatorship

Conflict and tension between East & West, 1945–1972 (Cold War)

Paper 2: Shaping the Nation (50% of the qualification) *Written exam, 2 hours.*

Key topics: Power and the People (c.1170–present)

Restoration England 1660–1685

Languages: French (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Hall

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8652

Course Details

The languages department offers dynamic GCSE courses in French and Spanish.

Our aim is to equip students to use their languages effectively in a variety of contexts, by developing the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in order to maximise achievement. By focusing on these key communication skills, students are able to obtain a useful qualification and simultaneously enhance their literacy skills in their own language.

Students will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the language through a range of challenging and exciting activities, as well as learn about the culture behind the language; food, film, literature, and many other aspects of real life.

Our very successful and popular trip to Paris is an optional part of the course which allows students to take their learning beyond the classroom in order to experience French culture, practice using the language in real-life settings and travel abroad.

The course is divided into a number of interesting topics including family, free time, the environment, tourism, education, and celebrity culture. Students are encouraged to express their own ideas, take responsibility for their learning and develop independent study skills, all of which contribute to achieving a high level of success.

The languages department promotes enjoyable language learning and helps students to recognise that their linguistic knowledge will allow them to take their place in a multilingual, global society. The course also provides students with a sound basis for further study, makes them more marketable in a challenging economy and inspires a practical use of their chosen language.

Assessment Details

All of the assessment in French is exam-based.

Listening (25% of the qualification)

Reading (25% of the qualification)

Speaking (25% of the qualification)

Writing (25% of the qualification)

Students will take either higher or foundation papers in each skill.

Languages: Spanish (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Hall

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8692

Course Details

The languages department offers dynamic GCSE courses in French and Spanish.

Our aim is to equip students to use their languages effectively in a variety of contexts, by developing the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in order to maximise achievement. By focusing on these key communication skills, students are able to obtain a useful qualification and simultaneously enhance their literacy skills in their own language. Students will have the opportunity to develop their understanding of the language through a range of challenging and exciting activities, as well as learn about the culture behind the language; food, film, literature, and many other aspects of real life.

Our trip to Madrid is an optional part of the course which allows students to take their learning beyond the classroom in order to experience Spanish culture, practice using the language in real-life settings and travel abroad.

The course is divided into a number of interesting topics including family, free time, the environment, tourism, education, and celebrity culture.

Students are encouraged to express their own ideas, take responsibility for their learning and develop independent study skills, all of which contribute to achieving a high level of success.

The languages department promotes enjoyable language learning and helps students to recognise that their linguistic knowledge will allow them to take their place in a multilingual, global society. The course also provides students with a sound basis for further study, makes them more marketable in a challenging economy and inspires a practical use of their chosen language.

Assessment Details

All of the assessment in Spanish is exam-based.

Listening (25% of the qualification)
Reading (25% of the qualification)
Speaking (25% of the qualification)
Writing (25% of the qualification)

Students will take either higher or foundation papers in each skill.

Computing (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr O Williams

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8525

Course Details

This course will give you an in-depth understanding of how computer technology works. It goes beyond traditional ICT and is a very technical course. An aptitude for maths is very important in this subject.

You will develop your critical thinking and analysis skills and should enjoy solving problems. You will learn a range of programming languages and techniques that you will have to demonstrate in one of the assessments. All languages/platforms used will be freely available and you should expect to commit time at home to hone your skills. Across the units, you will have opportunities to:

- Develop your understanding of current and emerging technologies and how they work.
- Look at the use of algorithms in computer programs.
- Become an independent and discerning user of IT.
- Acquire and apply creative and technical skills, knowledge and understanding of IT in a range of contexts.
- Develop computer programs to solve problems.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of computer programs/solutions and the impact of computer technology in society.

Delivery

Approximately half of your lessons will be classroom-based focusing on the theory of the course and the other half will be based in a computer room learning and demonstrating your programming skills.

Programming, algorithms and data representation

You will develop understanding of algorithms and programming techniques and skills. You will look at data representation and computational logic as well as translators and facilities of programming languages.

Computer systems, computer networks and cyber security

Topics include hardware, types and roles of key software, computer communications/network protocols and security.

Ethical, legal and environmental issues

This looks at current impacts and risks of digital technology on society, including data privacy issues.

Relational Databases

This looks at the structures and uses of relational database, and covers basic use of SQL.

Assessment Details

Part 1 (50% of the qualification)

Exam, 2 hours (written assessment). A mix of multiple choice, short answer and longer answer questions assessing programming, practical problem-solving and computational thinking skills.

Part 2 (50% of the qualification)

Exam, 1 hour 45 minutes (written assessment). A mix of multiple choice, short answer, longer answer and extended response questions assessing SQL programming skills and theoretical knowledge.

Triple Science (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Brown

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8461, 8462, 8463

Course Details

This course provides students with an opportunity to study a wider range of science than is covered in the combined science curriculum, including space in physics, the structure of the eye and brain in biology and nanoscience in chemistry.

Students will answer questions such as:

- How do fuel cells in hydrogen powered engines work?
- How do plant shoots grow up and roots grow down?
- How are Newton's laws used to develop safety features in cars?

Subject Content

Students will gain 3 GCSEs in science if they study this option, 1 in each science.

There are two papers for each science of an equal size which assess knowledge and understanding. There are foundation and higher tiers for each science, with multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open resource questions.

Knowledge of and skills learnt in practical sessions will be assessed within these papers. Students will complete the ten required practicals during the course which are set by the Examination Board.

Students will sit 6 exam papers, 2 in each science, and will be awarded a GCSE grade for each science separately. All papers are 1 hour 45 minutes and have 100 marks.

Assessment Details

Biology	Paper 1: biology topics 1–4 (cell biology; organisation; infection and response; and bioenergetics), 100 marks (50% of biology qualification). Paper 2: biology topics 5–7 (homeostasis and response; inheritance, variation and evolution; and ecology), 100 marks (50% of biology qualification).
Chemistry	Paper 1: chemistry topics 1–5 (atomic structure and the periodic table; bonding, structure, and the properties of matter; quantitative chemistry, chemical changes; and energy changes), 100 marks (50% of chemistry qualification). Paper 2: chemistry topics 6–10 (the rate and extent of chemical change; organic chemistry; chemical analysis, chemistry of the atmosphere; and using resources), 100 marks (50% of chemistry qualification).
Physics	Paper 1: physics topics 1–4 (energy; electricity; particle model of matter; and A atomic structure), 100 marks (50% of physics qualification). Paper 2: physics topics 5–8 (forces; waves; magnetism and electromagnetism; and space physics), 100 marks (50% of physics qualification). Questions may draw on understanding of energy and electricity.



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Art & Design: Fine Art & Textiles (Art, Craft & Design GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Ms A Shotton

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8202

Course Details

This innovative course provides students with a wide range of creative, exciting and stimulating opportunities. Students can explore their interest in both fine art and textiles in ways that are personally relevant and truly developmental in nature.

The visual arts affect all aspects of our daily lives. Ask yourself who created:

- The clothes that you wear?
- The artwork on your favourite album cover?
- The architecture that impresses you the most?
- The surface patterns found in the painting in a gallery that caught your imagination?

Why have artists throughout history felt the urge to draw upon surfaces, from caves to canvas, or place giant sculptures in the built and natural environment? The Fine Art & Textiles course provides an introduction to the rich spectrum of historical art and offers students an exciting, challenging and flexible experience through the development of personal expression.

Using contextual links to continue creative journeys throughout the course Fine Art & Textiles is a varied and stimulating course covering drawing, painting, sculpture, print-making, innovative fabric work, fashion and mixed media.

Students will be encouraged to show evidence of working in a variety of fine art and textiles methods such as:

- Fabric and paper-based printing
- Observational drawing
- Painting
- Collage
- image transfer
- Spraying/dying
- Fabric construction and manipulation
- Stitching and fusing

This course provides students with a strong foundation and knowledge to progress their imagination, skills and techniques up to A Level and beyond.

The GCSE Art & Design course will incur the following costs:

- Students will be required to purchase 3 sketchbooks during the course. As a guide, it will be approximately £16.
- There will also be a voluntary contribution to the printing costs, which is £15 for the academic year.
- Students who qualify for Pupil Premium will not be expected to pay these costs.

Assessment Details

Component 1: Portfolio (60% of the qualification)

Set by the centre. The portfolio must include both a sustained project developed in response to a subject, theme, task or brief; and a selection of further work resulting from activities such as trials and experiments, workshops, visits, or independent study. The deadline is at the end of April 2028.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment (40% of the qualification)

Set by AQA. Supervised time of ten hours to produce final outcome. Students respond to their chosen starting point to produce a personal response. The unit begins in January of Year 11 and completes at the end of the ten hours in March 2028.

Art & Design: Graphic Communication (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Ms A Shotton

Exam Board: AQA

Specification Code: 8203

Course Details

Graphic communication affects all aspects of our daily lives. Ask yourself who designed:

- The TV advertisements for your favourite products?
- The poster for your favourite film?
- Websites and packaging for online fashion stores?

Whilst studying graphic communication, students will be introduced to a variety of experiences exploring a range of graphic media, techniques and processes, including both traditional and emerging technologies.

This course provides a strong foundation to students considering further study in A Level art subjects and subsequently a career in the advertising, architecture, media and communication industries.

Drawing, research and development activities are fundamental to all aspects of the course. Students will be encouraged to:

- Develop their ideas in an imaginative way.
- Present their preparation work in sketchbook form.
- Respond to a range of source material.
- Attend 'Art Drop-In', a popular extra-curricular activity.

The GCSE Art & Design course will incur the following costs:

- Students will be required to purchase 3 sketchbooks during the course. As a guide, it will be approximately £16.
- There will also be a voluntary contribution to the printing costs, which is £15 for the academic year.
- Students who qualify for Pupil Premium will not be expected to pay these costs.

Graphic communication aims to offer students:

- An exciting opportunity to explore relevant imagery, designers and resources relating to a range of graphic communication from past to present times.
- Areas of study to include: illustration, packaging design, advertising, design for print, typography, photography, image manipulation, computer generated imagery such as Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator.
- An opportunity to use their imagination and engage people with innovative ideas about the products around them.

Assessment Details

Component 1: Portfolio (60% of the qualification)

Set by the centre. The portfolio must include both a sustained project developed in response to a subject, theme, task or brief; and a selection of further work resulting from activities such as trials and experiments, workshops, visits, or independent study. The deadline is at the end of April 2028.

Component 2: Externally Set Assignment (40% of the qualification)

Set by AQA. Supervised time of ten hours to produce final outcome. Students respond to their chosen starting point to produce a personal response. The unit begins in January of Year 11 and completes at the end of the ten hours in March 2028.

Business (OCR Level 2)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs Z Farthing

Exam Board: OCR

Specification Code: J837

Course Details

The course will take you through all of the steps you would need to follow to set up your own successful business or work in a variety of departments within a business. You will learn how to come up with a business idea, research and analyse the market, learn how to meet customer needs, manage finances, promote and advertise the business, develop a brand, how to manage staff and how to keep ahead of the competition. There will be some group work and some individual work. You will complete written coursework using IT and also take part in verbal/visual presentations called 'pitches'. You will be introduced to a range of successful entrepreneurs and businesses. You will be assessed by coursework and one exam in Year 11.

Course Content

R067: Enterprise and Marketing Concepts

- Characteristics of Enterprise
- Market Research
- Financial viability
- Marketing mix
- Business start-up

R068: Design a Business Proposal

- Identifying customers needs
- Developing a customer profile
- Product development/design
- Financial viability

R069: Market and Pitch a Business Proposal

- Develop a brand identity
- Plan a promotional campaign
- Pitch your enterprise idea
- Review your pitch and business proposal

Assessment Details

R067 (40% of the qualification)
External assessment/written exam in year 11

R068 (30% of the qualification)
Internal assessment/coursework

R069 (30% of the qualification)
Internal assessment/coursework

Design & Technology (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mr M Wilde

Exam Board: Edexcel

Specification Code: 1DT0

Course Details

Are you considering a career in design, engineering or architecture? The GCSE design and technology course provides a perfect foundation of skills and knowledge at the start of your journey towards your chosen career.

Design and technology is at the heart of modern society. This course is an engaging and inspiring qualification that reflects the demands of a truly modern and evolving world. The subject offers a balanced combination of

- creative designing skills
- applied subject knowledge
- practical skills

GCSE design and technology combines a broad range of topics and draws on disciplines such as mathematics, science, engineering, computing and art.

You will learn how to use your drawing skills, creativity and imagination to design and make prototypes that solve real and relevant problems. You will have the opportunity to develop and practise specialist technical skills that will allow you to make your own product. In addition, you will learn essential subject knowledge including: material properties and uses, the impact of design and technology on our world, industrial and commercial processes, and careers in related industries, as well as developing core transferable skills such as collaboration and communication.

For successful students, the course provides an excellent foundation of knowledge and skills needed for continued study of design and technology at an apprenticeship, A Level and beyond.

Assessment Details

Exam (50% of the qualification)

Two sections: Core content (40 marks) and Material category (60 marks).

Each section contains a mixture of different question styles, including open response, graphical, calculation and extended open response questions.

Non-exam Assessment (50% of the qualification)

Substantial design and make task. This is based on contextual tasks provided by the exam board. These tasks allow you to approach the design and make process in a creative manner, including investigating, designing, making, and evaluating. You will produce a working prototype and a portfolio of evidence (20–30 pages).

Drama (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs L Pollock

Exam Board: Edexcel

Specification Code: 1DR0

Course Details

Drama GCSE offers you the opportunity to:

- become more creative in your life;
- be nurtured and supported as you grow in self-esteem and confidence;
- share your view of the world you live in through drama;
- find out about the professional world of performing, devising, directing and designing;
- discover a growing awareness of your own:
 - analytical skills
 - experimental skills
 - critical skills
 - interpretative skills
 - investigative skills
 - communication skills
- learn how people in different times used drama to come to terms with the world they lived in socially, culturally and politically.

Component 1: Devising

Create and develop a devised piece from a stimulus. Students are assessed on both the performance of this piece of theatre and the portfolio which accompanies it. The portfolio can be comprised of written evidence, verbally recorded evidence, or a combination of both. This work is all internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated.

Component 2: Performance from Text

Students will perform in or design two key extracts from play texts. This can take the form of group, partner or individual work. The performances or design work is assessed by an external examiner.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice

A 1 hour 45 minutes' written exam that assesses the student's ability to evaluate live theatre, and tests their knowledge of how to bring texts to life. This work is marked by an external examiner.

Assessment Details

Component 1: Devising (40% of the qualification)

Internally assessed, externally moderated. This unit includes performance and portfolio assessments.

Component 2: Performance from Text (20% of the qualification)

Externally assessed by a visiting examiner. This unit includes performance examinations.

Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice (40% of the qualification)

Externally assessed written exam, 1 hour 45 minutes.

Health and Social Care (OCR Level 2)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs G Scott

Exam Board: OCR

Specification Code: J835

Course Details

Are you considering a career in the caring sector? Do you want a course that is flexible enough to lead to further study, apprenticeship and employment? This may be the course for you!

Mandatory Units

RO32: Principles of care in health and social care settings - Exam

In this unit you will learn about the importance of the rights of service users, person-centred values and how to apply them. You will also learn about the importance of effective communication skills when providing care and support for service users in health and social care settings and the procedures and measures used to protect individuals such as safeguarding, hygiene and security.

RO33: Supporting individuals through life events - Non Exam Assessed

In this unit you will learn about life stages and the factors that affect them. You will understand expected and unexpected life events and the impact they will have on physical, social/emotional and socioeconomic aspects in an individual's life. You will research the service providers and practitioners that can support individuals, recommend support and justify how this will meet the needs of a specific individual.

Examples of Additional Units

Unit R035: Health promotion campaigns

In this unit you will have the opportunity to explore the various public health challenges the country faces, the approaches used to encourage health and wellbeing and the importance of this to society. You will understand the factors affecting a healthy lifestyle so that campaigns can be designed to target different groups of people. You will also learn how to plan and deliver your own small-scale health promotion campaign and how to evaluate your planning and delivery.

Unit R034: Creative therapies

In this unit you will learn about a range of creative activities and therapies that are available in health and social care settings and understand the physical, intellectual, emotional and social benefits of these. You will learn how to plan and deliver a creative activity with an individual or group and evaluate your planning and delivery.

This course is ideally suited to those who wish to progress into employment or training in the health, social or early years areas. It can also lead to specialised further education courses and successful students can progress to Sixth Form study at Level 3 that, in turn, could lead to higher education. Students wishing to take this subject at Level 3 (BTEC National Extended Certificate) should aim to achieve at least a Merit grade.

Assessment Details

RO32: Written exam, 1 hour (60 marks).

RO33: Centre-assessed tasks, OCR moderated (60 marks).

Additional Units: All units are centre-assessed tasks which are OCR moderated. Each of the optional units are worth 60 marks.

IT (OCR)

Curriculum Leader: Mr O Williams

Exam Board: OCR

Specification Code: J834

Course Details

The Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Creative iMedia course has been designed to engage and enthuse young people with an interest in creative computing, for example digital graphics and animations, interactive multimedia products and computer games.

This course has been designed to teach digital design skills and enable young people to use digital tools to express their creativity in an informed and responsible way.

There are three units:

Creative iMedia in the media industry
In this unit, students will learn about the sectors, products and job roles that form the media industry. They will learn the legal and ethical issues considered and the processes used to plan and create digital media products. They will learn how media codes are used within the creation of media products to convey meaning, create impact and engage audiences. They will learn to choose the most appropriate format and properties for different media products.

Completing this unit will provide students with the basic skills for further study or a

range of creative job roles within the media industry.

Visual identity and digital graphics

In this unit, students will learn how to develop visual identities for clients. They will also learn to apply the concepts of graphic design to create original digital graphics which incorporate their visual identity to engage a target audience.

Completing this unit will introduce the foundations for further study or a wide range of job roles within the media industry.

Digital games

In this unit, students will learn to interpret client briefs to devise original digital game concepts. They will learn to plan digital games effectively and to use a game design document to create engagement among developers and clients. They will learn to create, edit, test and export playable digital games which they have designed.

Completing this unit will provide students with the basic skills for further study or a range of creative and technical job roles within the media industry.

Assessment Details

Creative iMedia in the media industry (40% of qualification):

Written exam, 1 hour 30 minutes, taken in the summer of Year 11

Visual identity and digital graphics (25% of the qualification) and Digital Games (35% of the qualification):

Centre-assessed practical tasks in the context of an assignment set by OCR.

Music (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Miss L Tindall

Exam Board: Eduqas

Specification Code: C66OQS

Course Details

What is GCSE Music all about?

GCSE music is about making and listening to music. You will be assessed on performing, composing and listening to a wide variety of musical styles. There are opportunities to use music notation software to create compositions. This software allows easy editing of your compositions and turns your notes into high quality instrumental sounds.

During the course you will study 2 main pieces, Bach's Badinerie and Toto's Africa. You learn to describe the pieces, and to analyse them in good detail. This knowledge is then used to help students learn to compose their own pieces, as well as to prepare for the Year 11 exam.

For this new syllabus the exam focus is building a comprehensive understanding of terminology for the main elements of music: Harmony, Melody, Texture and Rhythm.

Will I enjoy this course?

You will enjoy this course if you want to study a subject that:

- credits your ability to perform (compulsory solo and ensemble coursework);
- involves listening to and learning about all kinds of music;
- involves composing music;
- gives you the opportunity to learn more about and use specific music composition software.

How does it follow on from what I have learned before?

You will improve your skills in performing and composing different types of music. You will listen to a wide variety of music and learn more about how and why it was written and/or performed. The notation skills you have developed in Year 9 along with the basic knowledge of chord construction will be a great start to your course.

Assessment Details

Part 1: Performance (30% of the qualification)

You will perform (play or sing) pieces for two separate assessments. One will be a solo performance in any style and on any instrument. The other performance will be with other players. They will be recorded and marked by your teacher.

Part 2: Composition (30% of the qualification)

You will compose two pieces, one in response to a brief given by Eduqas, the other a free choice. You may use software to record work and produce printed scores and parts. Compositions will be assessed by your teacher.

Part 3: Exam (40% of the qualification)

You will listen to audio in the exam and answer questions on 2 set works, as well as questions on two unfamiliar pieces where you apply your skills to describe music. This paper will be marked externally by Eduqas' examiners.

Physical Education (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Mrs G Scott

Exam Board: OCR

Specification Code: J587

Course Details

GCSE Physical Education involves students in learning about and understanding a range of physical activities. Students who are keen and interested and who display a competent level of physical ability will enjoy and gain success through this subject.

Students will be encouraged to improve their ability to plan, perform, analyse and evaluate a range of physical activities in group, class and individual work.

Students will be assessed on their knowledge and understanding of the following areas:

Component 1: Physical factors affecting performance

- Applied anatomy and physiology
- Physical training

Topic areas include location of major bones/muscle groups, structure and function of cardiovascular/respiratory systems, short and long-term effects of exercise, principles of training, and prevention of injury.

Component 2: Socio-cultural issues and sports psychology

- Socio-cultural influences
- Sports psychology
- Health, fitness and well-being

Topic areas include physical activity and sport in the UK, commercialisation of sport, types of guidance and feedback, diet and nutrition, ethics, drugs and violence in sport.

Component 3: Performance in physical education

- Performance of three activities: one individual, one team, and one other from either category.
- Analysing and Evaluating Performance task.

The list of individual activities to choose from is: amateur boxing, athletics, badminton, canoeing, cycling, dance, diving, golf, gymnastics, equestrian, kayaking, rock climbing, rowing, sculling, skiing, snowboarding, squash, swimming, table tennis, tennis, and trampolining.

The list of team activities to choose from is: association football, badminton, basketball, camogie, cricket, dance, Gaelic football, handball, hockey, hurling, lacrosse, netball, rowing, rugby league, rugby union, squash, table tennis, tennis, and volleyball.

Assessment Details

Component 1 (30% of the qualification)
Written exam, 1 hour (60 marks).

Component 2 (30% of the qualification)
Written exam, 1 hour (60 marks).

Component 3 (40% of the qualification)
Non-exam assessment: practical performance and the Analysis and Evaluating Performance task (80 marks).

Religious Studies (GCSE)

Curriculum Leader: Ms B Buxton Collins

Exam Board: Eduqas

Specification Code: C120P3

Course Details

Religious Studies prepares you to be able to think critically and argue convincingly about many of the key issues being faced in the world around us. You will be further enabled to live in an increasingly diverse society, as well as experiencing parts of life in a multi-faith community that you may not otherwise, through our visits to various places of worship in Newcastle centre, as well as to Walsingham; a key English place of pilgrimage for Christians. Within lessons, you will be able to develop your opinion through discussion, debate and the analysis of different religious texts, drawing on cross-curricular skills as well as skills from our studies in Year 9 and pushing them to the next level.

Component 1: The 'Issues of...'

The study of four philosophical and ethical themes:

Relationships: Is sex before marriage allowed? Can remarriage after divorce be accepted? What have gender roles been and what should they be? What issues do people in same sex relationships face and what is the history of same sex attraction in the UK?

Life and Death: can science and religion really work together? How did the world begin? What is our purpose on it? Where/when does life begin and how do we value life? Is abortion ok? Can we allow euthanasia, or is hospice care the only answer? How might funerals reflect our beliefs about the afterlife?

Good and Evil: What is morality? Is it possible to live a completely good life? What are the aims of legal punishments? How should a prison work? Why might prison reform be necessary? Is it acceptable to sentence someone to death?

Human Rights: what rights do we have just because we are alive? How might racism and discrimination affect someone's life? Can religion free us? Why does extremism happen? What responsibility do the rich have to look after the poor?

These look at the different philosophical/ethical issues that people face in their lives and ask you to think about the different responses to them, as well as how religious people would respond to these questions.

Component 2 and 3:

The study of **Christian** and **Islamic** beliefs and practices.

In these components we study the beliefs and teachings of these religions, as well as how these are reflected in religious practices and pilgrimages. We also examine the issues these religions face in the UK today, such as declining attendance at places of worship, as well as different denominational approaches to beliefs and practices.

Assessment Details

- "Issues of..." Paper: 50% of the qualification. 2 hour written exam.
- Christianity paper: 25% of the qualification. 1 hour written exam.
- Islam paper: 25% of the qualification. 1 hour written exam.



Queen Elizabeth
High School

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