



**Alcester Grammar School**  
**GCSE options booklet**  
**September 2019 - July 2021**  
(For Year 9 Students)

**Schedule:**

**January & February - Students are encouraged to discuss GCSE work with their teachers**  
**Wednesday 20th March – Options Presentation Evening & Year 9 Parents' Evening**  
**Wednesday 27th March – subject choices made & forms returned**

January 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

### **Options Presentations and Year 9 Parents' Evening Wed 20th March 2019**

You will probably be aware that in the near future your son/daughter will be making important choices about the subjects they wish to study in Year 10 and beyond. In response to feedback we have combined the Options Presentation and Parents' Evening into a single evening.

#### **1) Options Presentations: Will be at 4:15 or 5:15 or 6:15pm (in Theatre)**

**Before** your Parents' Evening appointments, we ask you to attend a 30 minute presentation in the theatre explaining the options process in far greater detail. This is an important part of the process and attendance will be beneficial **for both students and parents**. At this presentation students will be issued with an options form for them to complete and return to school. Choose the time that is most preferable – no booking is required.

#### **2) Parents Evening**

Following on from the presentation, there will be the usual opportunity to discuss your son/daughter's progress with subject and pastoral staff. Again attendance is beneficial for both students and parents. Students will be given a blank appointment sheet from their tutor and will need to make appointments with subject staff. Please advise your son/daughter as to your preferred time and remind them to leave gaps between appointments to ensure the evening runs as smoothly as possible. Please note that appointments last for up to 3 minutes, and if there are any issues which cannot be discussed in the allotted time, a follow up appointment can be arranged. Our Careers Adviser, Debbie Perry, will be available to discuss how GCSE choices can affect future options even if you have no career ideas at present - **no appointment is required**.

#### **Key Stage 4 Option Summary**

Compulsory core:	Option subjects : Students choose three from the list (ensuring as broad a balance of subjects as possible)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>English (both Language and Literature)</li><li>Mathematics</li><li>Science (Biology, Chemistry &amp; Physics)</li><li>A Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Art</li><li>Business Studies</li><li>Drama</li><li>French, German or Spanish (as a 2<sup>nd</sup> language)</li><li>Food &amp; Nutrition</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Design &amp; Technology</li><li>Geography</li><li>History</li><li>Music</li><li>Computer Science</li></ul>
Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education / Citizenship; Physical Education/Games; Work-Related Learning and Religious Education (in which students may opt to take a short course exam in Year 11) are non-examined subjects running throughout Years 10 & 11.		

#### **Schedule:**

- January 2019 – Y9 students briefed about options process. Options booklet e-mailed to students & parents
- Throughout the process students are encouraged to discuss GCSE work with their teachers.
- Early February - Y9 students will receive a presentation about GCSE Business Studies
- Wednesday 20th March – Options Presentation (4:15, 5:15 or 6:15), followed by Parents' Evening
- Wednesday 27th March – all subject choices to be made and forms to be returned by this date.
- The school then creates a timetable based on students' choices.
- Summer term – Mr Slater checks students' choices and advises accordingly. Students are then informed of the extent to which their choices can be met.

If you have any queries regarding the above please do not hesitate to contact us at school.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Jeremy Slater - Vice Principal Mrs. Jo Turner – Assistant Principal (Years 7-11) Ms. Doone Watts – Head of Year 9

# Option Choice Form 2019

This form must be returned to your form tutor by **9am Wednesday 27th March 2019**

**ALL STUDENTS STUDY THE CORE OPTIONS: Mathematics, English Language/Literature, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, A Modern Foreign Language (French/German/Spanish), Games, PSHE** (including some RE & the option to take a ½ GCSE)

**STUDENTS THEN CHOOSE 3 OPTION CHOICES FROM A RANGE OF 12**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Form: \_\_\_\_\_

My choices of subjects to study are as follows:

## Modern Foreign Language

Tick only one of:

French	<input type="checkbox"/>
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German	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Spanish	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## Other Options

**First:** Enter 1,2,3, showing your choices in order of priority in the boxes below.

**Then:** Enter R to show a reserve choice in case we cannot provide all your choices.

Enter 1,2,3 & R	
	Geography
	History
	French (as second language)
	German (as second language)
	Spanish (as second language)
	Food Preparation & Nutrition
	Design & Technology
	Business
	Drama
	Music
	Art
	Computer Science

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (student) \_\_\_\_\_ (parent)

# Alcester Grammar School

## CURRICULUM FOR YEARS 10 AND 11

Parents and students in Year 9 are asked to study this booklet very carefully when planning their programme of study for the years leading to GCSE.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

All students must take the following subjects to the end of Year 11:

ENGLISH	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE
A FOREIGN LANGUAGE	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	PE/GAMES

Personal, Social & Health Education(PSHE)/ Citizenship / Work Related Learning

### Further Notes on Compulsory Subjects

1. English: Students will study both English Language and English Literature in a single course leading to two GCSE subject certificates.
2. Mathematics: This is the only GCSE subject to group by attainment. See the Mathematics section for further details.
3. Science: Biology, Chemistry and Physics are studied separately usually leading to the Triple Award qualification.
4. Foreign Language: At least one language must be studied, but the other language studied in Year 9 may be chosen as an option subject; so students may continue with both languages if they desire.

### OPTIONS

Students choose three subjects from the list below ensuring as broad a balance of subjects as possible:

**Art, Business Studies, Drama, French, German, Spanish, Geography, History, Music, Food Preparation & Nutrition, Design & Technology, Computing.**

All students are required to indicate a reserve subject on the options form they will receive.

### Implications for Post-16 Subject Choices

When considering choices for GCSE courses, students should already have one eye on the subjects they may wish to study after Year 11.

Whilst it is the case with some subjects that entry on to post-16 courses is dependent upon having studied that subject in Years 10 and 11, this is not always true.

This may be relevant if students are struggling to narrow their choice of GCSE subjects down at this stage. It would be advisable for students to discuss their situation with the teachers of the relevant subjects indicated in this booklet.

## Special Features of Key Stage 4

### 1. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

During this Key Stage, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) continues to play a very important role in both teaching and learning. All subject areas have identified specific ICT tasks undertaken as part of students' GCSE courses which will help to further develop their skills. In addition it is expected that all students will continue to enhance and develop their ICT capability by exploring and developing a deeper understanding of common software tools.

The school is well equipped with a wide range of ICT resources including a number of computer suites which are open for student use throughout the school day. The school internet and intranet sites both carry a wide range of school developed teaching and learning materials and students are encouraged to make use of these whenever possible.

### 2. Work Experience

In the final week of Year 10, all of the year group undertake a week's work experience. There are 3 main objectives for the week:

- 1) Work experience can lead to an improved understanding of how commerce and industry operate.
- 2) It can provide an opportunity to see the relevance of school subjects in the world of work.
- 3) The experience of coping in an adult world should help to develop greater self-confidence, self-reliance and general maturity.

During the week the students will be expected to work as any other member of the organisation. This will mean attending at normal working hours which, in some cases, will be quite different from school hours. As universities increasingly place importance upon the development of soft / wider skills, Work Experience plays an essential role in beginning to build up this part of our students' skill set.

Students are encouraged to find their own placement, which involves writing letters, making telephone calls and other approaches to potential employers. We consider this an essential part of the process and most students find their own placements quite easily. For those who have difficulty finding a placement or are let down, we do hold contact information for past placements (which tutors can share with students) and have a number of contacts who can help.

### 3. Duke of Edinburgh Award

Students will have already had the opportunity to apply for a place in the Bronze Level D of E Award which will be completed after their assessed expedition in the summer term of Year 9. Students will then be able to enrol for the Silver award at the start of Year 10 and the Gold award at the start of Year 12. The Duke of Edinburgh programme can be full of exciting activities and projects. Along the way, participants will pick up experiences, friends and talents that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

## Careers related issues when choosing your option subjects

It is always worth bearing in mind that the subjects you study in Years 10 and 11 could affect your career choices in the future. However, it is most important that your subjects are chosen for the right reasons and the best ones have to be that you really enjoy a subject and are good at it.

If you have a particular career in mind then it is always advisable to check which subjects are required for entry. To choose a subject that has presented difficulties in the past only because it is needed for a particular career is not such a good idea – if you get a low grade then this may not enable you to enter that career, and if the subject plays a large part in the job then it might not be the right path for you anyway. If you are considering higher education, then it is worth remembering that three or four subjects taken at GCSE might have to be studied to A Level for entry to university, meaning you are making choices for four rather than two years of study.

If you have no career ideas at present, that is perfectly normal at this stage. It is important however, to consider what career areas you could be ruling out with your choices and be sure that you are happy about them. Don't forget that there are equal opportunities in all subject choices so do not be swayed by people telling you there are 'boys' or 'girls' subjects. **Never be tempted to choose a subject because a friend is doing it – what works well for them might be a disaster for you!**

You will receive advice and information over the coming months on careers related issues through your PSHE programme, including impartial information on all the possible pathways open to you after year 11. At the end of Year 10 you will be required to undertake one week of work experience as this is crucial for developing an understanding of the world of work. It is an opportunity to gain confidence and to find out if you actually enjoy a specific job whilst developing skills and knowledge that you can sell in the future. Work Experience is also essential for some career related higher education courses such as medicine and physiotherapy.

The library is open every day and after school containing a wealth of career related information. There are also some very useful websites to aid your careers research:-

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>

[www.careerpilot.org.uk](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

[www.icould.com](http://www.icould.com)

[www.careersbox.co.uk](http://www.careersbox.co.uk)

[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors)

Every student will also get the opportunity to have a one to one careers interview with an independent careers adviser over the next two years.

**For more information please contact Mr. C. Gill (Careers Co-ordinator) or Debbie Perry our independent Careers Adviser.**

# CORE SUBJECTS

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE and ENGLISH LITERATURE (Exam Board: AQA)

English Language and English Literature are two distinct subjects assessed separately and awarded individual grades. You will have 4 hours per week of English teaching, shared between two teachers. The two subjects are delivered as a joint course, as the English Language topics will support and enhance your study of the Literature texts. However, you will be prepared for separate examinations for English Language and English Literature at the end of Year 11. A new grading system has been introduced using numbers to represent grades as opposed to letters. The new grades are on a **scale of 9 – 1** with 9 representing the highest grade and 1 the lowest.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE

You will explore:

A wide range of short literary fiction prose texts from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century - extracts from novels and short stories

Non-fiction prose texts from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries - high quality journalism, articles, reports, essays, travel writing, accounts, sketches, letters, diaries, autobiography and biographical passages.

Skills:

- Analyse and compare writers' stylistic techniques,
- Understand grammatical structures and analyse the effects,
- Explore and evaluate different viewpoints and perspectives.

Based on your studies of other writers you will develop your own:

- creative writing,
- narrative story writing,
- descriptive writing,
- argumentative and persuasive writing.

### Spoken Language Study

This is a compulsory element of the course, but does not contribute to the final English Language grade. A separate grade will be awarded for this.

You will give a **formal presentation** to a group of students and a teacher on a given topic. You will then be asked to **respond to questions** on your presentation topic. The presentation may be recorded, and sample recordings will be requested by the examination board.

### Assessment:

There will no longer be any Controlled Assessment Tasks or coursework. All assessment will be through examination at the end of Year 11.

### Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 80 marks
- 50% of GCSE

### Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 80 marks

- 50% of GCSE

# ENGLISH LITERATURE

**Shakespeare:** all students will study *Romeo and Juliet*

**Modern Text:** all students will study *An Inspector Calls* by J.B. Priestley

**Poetry:** all students will study a collection of 15 poems, thematically linked and written between 1789 and the present day.

**19<sup>th</sup> Century novel:** all students will study *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

Skills:

- exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings,
- critical reading,
- evaluation of a writer's choice of vocabulary, grammatical and structural features,
- comparing texts.

**Assessment:**

There will no longer be any Controlled Assessment Tasks or coursework. All assessment will be through examination at the end of Year 11.

**Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century novel:**

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 64 marks
- 40% of GCSE

**Paper 2: Modern Texts and poetry:**

- Written exam: 2 hour 15 minutes
- 96 marks
- 60% of GCSE

**Homework:** Tasks will vary; you will be required to read at length, research, write notes and write essays.

**How families can help:** Encourage your family to read the literary texts alongside you and to discuss them with you. Reading the news in newspaper or internet form and browsing magazines will all help.

# MATHEMATICS

Exam Board: EDEXCEL

## Aims of the Subject

We hope that the transition into your GCSE studies will be a smooth one as you build upon the mathematical skills and understanding that you will already have developed by the end of Year 9.

You will learn new mathematical techniques and develop problem solving, creativity and reasoning skills. You will also develop your decision making when selecting appropriate methods to solve mathematical problems. You will be given opportunities to work on challenging and open ended tasks which require you to combine all your skills. Over the course you will be asked to work independently and in groups on a wide variety of activities that we hope will develop your enjoyment of the subject.

## Setting Arrangements

At the end of Year 9 each student's attainment and progress in Mathematics will be carefully considered. Your work in class, your homework and your performance in tests, will all help us to place you into the most appropriate group at the start of Year 10. The year group will be divided into parallel and enrichment sets. The enrichment groups will seek to go into topics in greater depth and offer more of a challenge. The smaller parallel groups will benefit from increased personal attention and more time to consolidate and enhance their learning. Classes will consequently be somewhat smaller than in Years 7-9. All groups will cover the same material over the two years of the course and all will take the higher tier exam at the end of the course.

We aim to place each student in the set where the level and pace of the work will best suit their attainment and confidence. You will be consulted about this in the summer term. Over time, a student's work may consistently suggest that they are misplaced. If this happens then it is possible, in consultation with their teacher, for students to change sets. It is worth noting that there is no reason you cannot successfully continue on to A-level mathematics regardless of the set you are in for your GCSE.

## Course Description

A new GCSE Mathematics course started in September 2015 which was first tested in the summer of 2017. There are several differences between the old and new GCSE courses. The points below outline the main differences:

- 1) There is more emphasis placed on **problem solving, reasoning and communication**.
- 2) **More content has been added** to the higher tier syllabus to challenge and stretch the most able students and to help prepare them for A-level mathematics.
- 3) There are **three papers** each lasting an hour and a half. One of these is non-calculator and the other two are calculator papers. Each of these papers consists of 80 marks.
- 4) A new grading system has been introduced using numbers to represent grades as opposed to letters. The new grades are on a **scale of 9 - 1** with 9 representing the highest grade and 1 the lowest.
- 5) There are **more formulae** that students will need to **memorise** for their examinations.
- 6) The teaching time has been increased by 1 hour per week to a total of **four hours**.
- 7) The weighting of the assessment objectives (AO) have changed:

Assessment Objectives		Weighting
AO1	Use and apply standard techniques.	40%
AO2	Reason, interpret and communicate mathematically.	30%
AO3	Solve problems within mathematics and in other contexts.	30%

The course will develop your understanding of: Number, Algebra, Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change, Geometry and Measures, Probability and Statistics. It will also introduce new materials including: Sampling, Irrational numbers, Surds, Circle Theorems, Trigonometric graphs, Volume of cones and spheres.

In Year 11 students will be given the opportunity to purchase revision guides, practice papers and revision DVDs to help them prepare for their exams. Extensive use is also made of past examination questions. In Years 10 and 11 students will be invited to take part in the United Kingdom Intermediate Mathematical Challenge. During the course students regularly use the 'mymaths' website to help them consolidate the topics studied in lessons.

Students will be expected to bring their own mathematical equipment to lessons. A scientific calculator is sufficient for GCSE though it should be noted that students will not be able to use them in one of the final exam papers. Large screen (graphical) calculators are not necessary at this level.

### Assessment Methods

Students can be entered for one of two tiers:

**Higher Tier** Possible grades 4 - 9 (*we intend that all AGS students will take this tier*)

**Foundation Tier** Possible grades 1 - 5

There is no coursework in GCSE mathematics.

### Homework

Homework is a vital part of the learning process in Mathematics. It gives students the chance to practise skills learnt in class and to find out whether or not they have really understood the work for themselves. It is set weekly and will typically take the form of:

- written work from a text book exercise or worksheet,
- a problem solving exercise,
- research into a particular topic,
- revision for a test.

### Families can help by:

- Talking to students about the mathematics they are learning and asking them to explain their methods of solving problems.
- Encouraging students to pursue a personal enjoyment of the subject by broadening their reading and experience - there are many good puzzle and problem books available.
- Encouraging students to use the 'mymaths' website if they do not understand a topic.
- Encouraging students to come and ask for help if they have any problems.

**For more information please contact Mrs K. Farrelly (Head of Mathematics).**

# SCIENCE Exam Board: AQA

All Y10 students will study three separate science GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics (Triple Award).

## Aims of the subject:

- To stimulate curiosity, interest and enjoyment in science;
- To develop scientific understanding through practical techniques;
- To develop an understanding of 'how science works';
- To understand the importance of science in the real world;
- To explore social and ethical scientific considerations.

## Course description

Students have been studying the new GCSE Science courses since September of Year 9 for Physics, and January of Year 9 for Biology and Chemistry; these differences take into account the amount of time needed to ensure all content can be covered comfortably. The new grades are on a **scale of 9 - 1** with 9 representing the highest grade and 1 the lowest.

In science the emphasis is on understanding concepts through experimental work and the new GCSE specifications include a minimum number of core practicals through which pupils will demonstrate their practical competences. A wide variety of teaching styles are used to develop ideas, including role play, class presentations, data-logging, debating, model making, carrying out your own experiments and the use of ICT.

## Assessment

At the end of Year 11 students will be assessed through 2 written papers in each of the three subjects. Each paper will be 1 hour 45 minutes and contribute to 50% of their overall result. These papers will include multiple choice, short answer, longer written response and calculations. Students will be provided with some of the formulae in the examinations however they will also be expected to learn a number of them.

The exam papers will also include questions on the core practicals students will have completed as well as general questions on working scientifically.

## Topics covered

### BIOLOGY

Cell biology, organisation, infection and response, bio energetics, homeostasis and response, inheritance, variation and evolution and ecology

### CHEMISTRY

Atomic structure, the periodic table, bonding, properties of matter, quantitative chemistry, chemical changes, energy changes, organic chemistry, chemical analysis, chemistry of the atmosphere and using resources.

## PHYSICS

Energy transfers, , energy resources, electricity, waves, radiation, forces and motion, momentum, light, sound, electromagnetism and the universe.

### Homework

Homework is an essential part of the course and will be set weekly in each science. Tasks include:

- Practising skills,
- Comprehension exercises,
- Structured questions,
- Researching information (using journals, the internet and the school library),
- Developing presentations,
- Preparing for debate,
- Analysis and evaluation of data,
- Revising for end of topic tests.

### How families can help

The media so often portray scientists negatively, forgetting all the beneficial work which improves life and health for all. Families can help students gain a wider understanding of Science by discussing current issues, highlighting relevant television programmes / press articles / weblinks and encouraging students to form opinions based on scientific understanding.

### Examples currently in the news include:

- Should we be investing in 'Fracking'?
- Are antibiotics being over prescribed?
- How will the Greenhouse effect change our world?
- Should we ban genetically modified food?
- Is there life in our universe?

**For more information please contact Mrs L. Bond (Head of Science)**

# MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – FRENCH/GERMAN /SPANISH

Exam Board: AQA

## Aims of the subject:

- To develop the ability to communicate confidently, coherently and with increasing accuracy with native speakers in speech and writing;
- To deepen knowledge about how language works and enrich vocabulary to increase independent use and understanding of extended language in a range of contexts;
- To enable students to express and develop thoughts and ideas spontaneously and fluently;
- To develop language skills and strategies to understand and respond to authentic spoken and written material;
- To develop awareness and understanding of the culture and identity of the countries and communities where the language is spoken;
- To enable students to recognise that their linguistic knowledge, understanding and skills help them to take their place in a multilingual global society and also provide them with the suitable basis for further study and practical use of the language.

## Course description:

Students will study all of the following themes on which the assessments are based:

- Identity and culture;
- Local, national, international and global areas of interest;
- Current and future study and employment.

Students will have already met some of these areas in Key Stage 3. They will now be extended and developed to increase the range of expression and understanding in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in the target language.

## Assessment methods:

There are no longer any Controlled Assessment tasks. All assessment will be through examination at the end of Year 11. All four examination papers must be taken at the same tier.

**Higher Tier:** Possible grades 4 - 9 (*we intend that most, if not all, AGS students will take this tier*)

**Foundation Tier:** Possible grades 1 - 5.

## Paper 1: Listening

(Comprehension questions in target language and in English)

Higher Tier: 45 minutes

50 marks

25% of GCSE

**Paper 2: Speaking**

(Role play, photo card and general conversation)

Higher Tier: 10 - 12 minutes                      60 marks                      25% of GCSE

**Paper 3: Reading**

(Comprehension questions in target language and in English, translation from target language into English)

Higher Tier: 1 hour                      60 marks                      25% of GCSE

**Paper 4: Writing**

(Structured writing task, open-ended writing task, translation from English into target language)

Higher Tier: 1 hour 15 minutes                      60 marks                      25% of GCSE

**Homework**

Weekly homework is an essential part of the course. Tasks include:

1. Learning vocabulary and spelling.
2. Learning grammatical rules and structures.
3. Learning tenses and irregular verbs.
4. Writing tasks in a variety of styles.
5. Preparation for class speaking work - role-plays/question and answer work/presentation and conversation/ presentation of a photograph.
6. Reading or listening texts and answering questions.
7. Translation exercises.

**How families can help**

- By encouraging a positive attitude towards learning a language.
- By encouraging students to take part in one of our school trips abroad.
- By ensuring that the appropriate time and effort has been given to the homework set.
- By assisting so that vocabulary is learned regularly and that spellings are memorised.
- By encouraging students to check their work carefully, especially when writing in the target language.
- By listening to students practising their spoken language.
- By providing access to a good French/English, German/English or Spanish/English dictionary.
- By encouraging students to use Kerboodle and other recommended suitable Internet based language learning material and apps regularly.
- By checking that students are engaged in thorough revision for end of unit tests and exams.
- By encouraging students to work through any commercially available revision guides, if these have been bought.

**For more information, please contact Mrs J Rose, Head of Modern Foreign Languages.**

# **PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH & ECONOMIC EDUCATION**

## **Aims of the Course**

1. To develop confidence and responsibility and make the most of your ability.
2. To develop a healthy, safe lifestyle.
3. To develop good relationships and respect the differences between people.
4. To gain knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen.
5. To develop skills of enquiry and communication.
6. To develop skills of participation and responsible action.

## **Course Outline**

The Course includes the following topics:

- Social responsibility;
- Alcohol and drug abuse;
- Health related fitness;
- Personal relationships;
- Financial risk and reward;
- Law ( crime & punishment);
- Human rights and International law;
- The European Union, Commonwealth and United Nations;
- Strategies to reduce road accidents;
- Diversity and the need for mutual respect and understanding (British Values).

## **Format of Lessons**

The lessons are varied and lively. They include internet research, videos, discussion, role play drama and workshops with external organisations.

**For more information please contact Mrs. C. Spencer - Head of PSHE**

# Religious Studies: Philosophy & Ethics (Short Course) Exam Board: AQA

All students follow this course, starting in Year 9 and continuing in Years 10 and 11 as part of the PSHE programme. The course explores religious, ethical and philosophical issues using Critical thinking skills.

Students in Year 10 will be given the option of obtaining a half GCSE qualification.

## Aims of Subject

- to encourage you to think about the 'big questions' in life
- to consider the ways in which people have attempted to answer these questions
- to understand and explore cultural and ethical issues that are in the news today
- to gain a knowledge and understanding of one or more living religions
- to help you gain a clearer picture of your own beliefs and those of others

## Aims of Course

- to think critically and present a logical argument
- to express yourself clearly in discussion and in written form
- to develop conceptual thinking skills in order to explore ideas
- to develop the ability to evaluate evidence and understand different viewpoints
- to be able to support conclusions with reasons and evidence
- to become reflective thinkers

## Course Description

**Section A: The study of religions:** beliefs and teachings of the following two religions:

- Christianity
- Islam

**Section B: Thematic studies:** religious, philosophical and ethical studies:

- Theme A: Relationships and families
- Theme B: Religion, peace and conflict

This course raises a wide range of topical questions: Why do people believe in God? Is violence ever justified? Is same sex-marriage?, If God exists why is there evil and suffering? Was the universe created by God? Each area is considered from the perspective of Christianity and one other religion.

## How the course will help me

The course complements other subjects very well. This is the case in the Humanities, especially History, as we consider a lot of the same issues (war and peace and prejudice and discrimination) from an ethical and religious perspective. The subject also provides insights into topics covered in Science and English. Philosophy is a popular degree subject either on its own or combined with Politics and Economics or Psychology or Religious Studies. The knowledge and social skills developed are valued in a range of careers that involve people (Police, Social work, Teaching), and the evaluative skills are helpful in areas such as Law and Journalism.

### Course structure and assessment methods

During lessons the emphasis will be on active participation with students joining in paired or small group work, discussion and debate as well as reading and responding in written form to video clips and a variety of texts.

### Assessment Methods

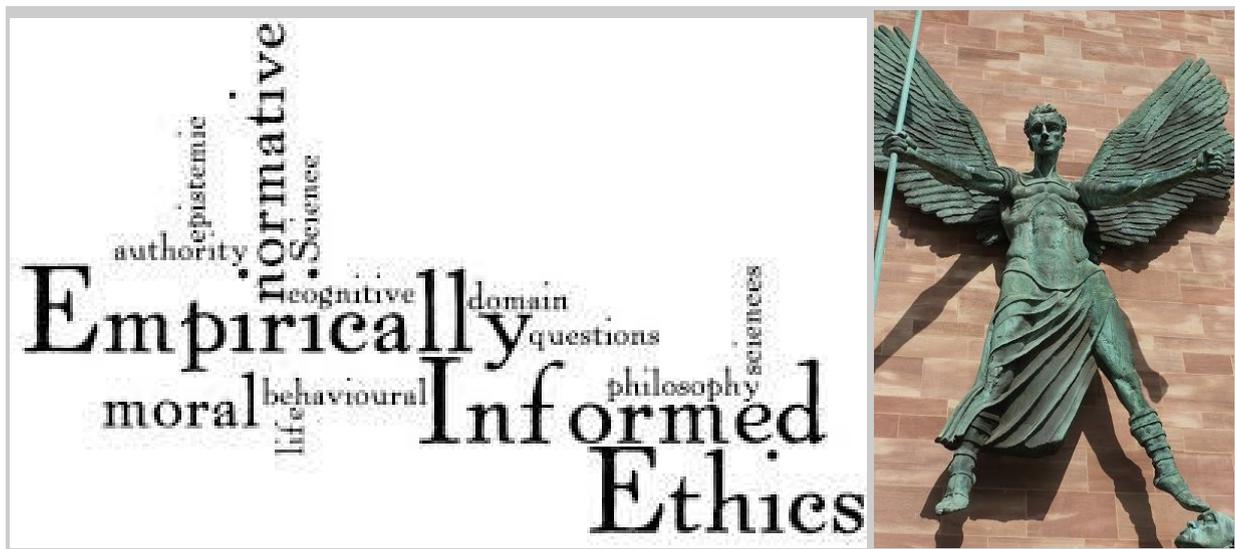
The course is assessed by one written exam of 1 hr 45 minutes.

Candidates will answer all the questions in the form of short and longer answers.

There is no written homework during Years 10 and 11 and the course is offered without controlled assessment.

### How families can help

- By encouraging students to read widely and drawing their attention to stories with an ethical or religious theme in the news media.
- By discussing issues and encouraging students to express themselves in a thoughtful way.



For more information please contact Mrs. C. Hemus - Head of Philosophy, Religion and Ethics

# PHYSICAL EDUCATION and GAMES

## Aims of the Subject

It is the aim of the P.E. Department to:

- promote enjoyment of the subject;
- encourage you to strive for, and to enable you to achieve, your potential;
- motivate you to wish to participate in recreation outside school and after leaving school;
- help you to see the value of regular, sometimes hard, training.

The programme will build upon existing knowledge, skills and understanding and encourages you to take a more active role in the organisational, safety and health-related aspects of physical activity.

A wider range of activities will be on offer and there will be an element of choice.

In years 10 and 11 we introduce other sports, yet recognise the popularity of those already tried and still build them into our programme of study. We feel that the P.E. Department plays a vital role in the life of the school and are sure that the intensity of the academic work done in the school needs such a counterbalance.

## Assessment Methods

Each of the nine practical modules across KS4 will be assessed via collaborative discussion and debate amongst staff. Furthermore the member of staff taking any given module will have notes on each student and feed them back during grading.

## How families can help

- encourage interest and positive attitudes towards physical activities,
- encourage your son/daughter to participate in school teams, clubs and out of school activities,
- ensure that your son/daughter has the correct clearly named kit and that he/she looks after it at all times and brings it to school when required,
- give a handwritten note to your son/daughter if they are ill or injured, so that an activity of appropriate nature can be organised for the student. Please ensure they still bring their kit with them.

**For more information please contact Mr. C. Thomas – Head of PE.**

## OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

### **FOOD PREPARATION and NUTRITION** Exam Board: AQA

**NB: THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE TEXTILES**

#### **Course Description**

This GCSE in Food Preparation and Nutrition is an exciting and creative course which focuses on practical cooking skills to ensure students develop a thorough understanding of nutrition, food provenance and the working characteristics of food materials.

At the heart of the qualification is a focus on nurturing students' practical skills and a robust understanding of nutrition. Students can master the science behind food via investigations and improve their knowledge and understanding of the functional properties and chemical processes of food.

Skills are integrated into five core areas:

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

#### **Assessment**

**Non exam assessment (NEA)** accounts for **50% of the final grade** (undertaken in Year 11)

##### **Task 1: Food Investigation**

Assesses students understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

##### **Task 2: Food preparation Assessment**

Assesses students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the planning, preparation, cooking, presentation of food and application of nutrition related to the chosen task.

**Written Examination** (1 hour 45 minutes) accounts for **50% of final grade** (undertaken at the end of Year 11)

#### **Homework**

Homework will normally be set each week and may involve research, planning, gathering materials, testing food products and writing evaluations.

N.B. Students will be expected to provide ingredients to make a range of dishes (usually once a week). These will be used to improve their practical skills/knowledge for the food investigation and food preparation assessments.

Further details will be issued to students at the beginning of their course.

**For more information please contact Mrs H. Williams, Head of Food & Nutrition.**

# DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY Exam Board: AQA

## Overall Aims

All of the products we use in our everyday lives have been designed by someone - houses, furniture and consumer products. As consumers we face the challenge of coping with an increasingly sophisticated and technological world, we need to become more design aware so that we are better equipped to make informed decisions about our purchases.

This course will:

- require you to combine designing and making skills with knowledge and understanding in order to design and make good quality products,
- encourage you to consider the effects and implications of technology,
- give you the opportunity to develop your creative practical abilities and the confidence to design, make and modify products,
- encourage you to develop your critical and aesthetic abilities in order to evaluate design and technology activities,
- expand your commercial awareness, understanding the life cycle of products and the importance of incorporating sustainable values at the design stage.
- help you to analyse products to aid decision making to support your designing.

## Course Description

This course has been designed to provide students with the creative opportunities to expand upon their skill, knowledge and understanding through a variety of materials within the discipline of Product Design. Year 10 is used to deliver high end skills and abilities covering all sections of the marking criteria in preparation for the final controlled assessment year. The knowledge will be developed through application in the world of business and industry, whilst meeting the requirements of GCSE criteria for Design Technology. The course has a small maths and science element which are standard skills needed to develop material and technical knowledge.

**Assessment:** Students are assessed on two elements:

### 1) Coursework (controlled assessment) 50% of total mark

Candidates are required to produce a portfolio of work which addresses the assessment objectives, and includes a major project which runs throughout Year 11.

The controlled assessment coursework allows students to specialise in the focus area of product design where they will learn to build upon their creative practical abilities and exercise initiative, independence, imagination and resourcefulness. In Year 11 students are required to submit a 3-dimensional product or outcome and a concise project portfolio which can be submitted digitally. They have the freedom to design from a wide selection of AQA briefs including kitchen, furniture and lighting products and even architectural models. Please note : This is not a fashion or textiles course.

### 2) Written Examination. One paper (2 hour duration) 50% of total mark

The paper will test both core and specialist technical principles as well as designing and making principles which are common to the practises of product design. The three section paper contains a combination of mathematics, design and technical drawing elements, in addition to contextual knowledge. The majority of theory lessons are integrated alongside controlled assessment coursework in order to maximise the quality of manufacture. There is a small element of multiple choice questions in section A in addition to a more analytical and detailed requirement in both sections B and C.

**Homework:** Students will be expected to continue their assignments, giving them the opportunity to expand upon their technical knowledge of materials and develop their independent manufacturing skills.

**For more information please contact Mr. M. Pickering (m.pickering@alcestergs.com).**

## **ART** Exam Board: AQA (Endorsed Fine Art)

If you've enjoyed Art at Key Stage 3 then the chances are you'll enjoy it at GCSE. That enjoyment factor is really important because that's what will drive your creative work over the course. We follow the AQA Fine Art syllabus which involves a wide variety of media and approaches, from traditional skills like painting and drawing to new digital skills in photography and image-processing. Most of the work produced is two dimensional, although there are opportunities to tackle three dimensional work as well.

Unlike virtually every other subject at GCSE level, Art is not syllabus or content driven. This means that you take a much more active role in deciding what you want to do. Although we cover some skills with structured exercises, most of the time you're choosing the direction that you want your work to go in a series of theme-based projects. The staff will guide, advise and support you, but, as well as enjoyment, you'll need to develop the confidence to undertake the creative decision-making. If you're the kind of student who likes to be spoon-fed by your teachers then this course won't suit you.

In the past some students have been put off taking Art because they have assumed it would be too time consuming and would encroach on their homework time for other subjects. In fact if you are efficient and decisive in your approach, then Art homework shouldn't take any more time than any of your other subjects.

If you're thinking that Art is just about making pretty pictures and has no relevance to life skills and the qualities that universities are looking for, then think again. Did you know that as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, the UK has the largest creative industries sector in the world? Developing ideas, experimenting (this is one of the very few subjects that actually encourages you to genuinely take risks!) and recording what you see, think and feel are what this course is all about. Your final challenge is then to bring all these elements together to produce art that really engages and excites a viewer, aesthetically, emotionally and/or conceptually. Being creative in today's fast-moving, tech-driven world requires a particular set of skills that goes beyond fact-based learning. Problem-solving, creative thinking and the ability to experiment, fail and try again are the skills needed by the UK's creative industries. They contribute almost £90bn net to GDP and account for one in 11 jobs, a rate rising more quickly than all other parts of the economy.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/01/creative-industries-key-to-uk-economy>



**For more information please contact Mr. D. Smith, Head of Art.**

# BUSINESS

Exam Board: OCR

## Why study Business?

Business (previously called Business Studies) is a fascinating subject to be studying in the current commercial and economic climate. The syllabus allows students to apply their knowledge to practical situations and develop their spirit of entrepreneurship. The course is divided into two units both of which are assessed by exams at the end of Year 11.

Each unit covers interesting topics including: Marketing; Enterprise & Entrepreneurship; Finance; Ethics; Employment; Competition and Economic & External Factors. Students are encouraged to develop a keen interest in current affairs and bring their own knowledge and experiences to the classroom.

## Aims of the subject

This course will enable students to:

- Understand how various organisations operate,
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the working world,
- Evaluate data in order to make informed judgements,
- Develop an understanding of the economic and political environment within which business activity takes place,
- Develop transferable skills including: Presentation Confidence; Data Handling; Problem Solving; Numeracy; and Research.



## Assessment Methods

Unit 1 and Unit 2 are two 90 minute written exams that are assessed at the end of Year 11, each with an equal weighting of 50% of the GCSE. There is no longer any controlled assessment or pre-release material.

## Homework

Homework will normally be in the form of a short exercise based on the previous lesson, a research investigation, or revision for a test.

## How families can help

- Encouraging students to have an interest in the business world and in how the government can control the economy. This could be through reading newspapers, journals, watching news and current affairs programmes on television, use of the internet etc.
- Talking with students about businesses that they could focus on for their homework.
- Getting students interested in businesses that the families work for or have dealings with. There could be overlap here with work experience in Year 11.
- Helping students to meet deadlines.

**For more information contact Mrs G. Dolphin (Head of Business Economics & Business).**

# COMPUTER SCIENCE

EXAM BOARD: OCR

## Aims of the subject:

- to develop Computational Thinking and Programming Skills;
- to foster an interest in, enjoyment of, and confidence in the use of computing;
- to develop the ability to solve problems using computing techniques;
- to develop an awareness of the place of computer science in society and issues that arise from computing;
- to gain a firm understanding of the basic techniques and knowledge required for computing applications;
- to develop a desire to use computers within other interest areas.

## Course Description:

The OCR Computer Science syllabus gives students a real, in-depth understanding of how computer technology works. It offers an insight into what goes on 'behind the scenes' including computer programming. It's a great way to develop critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving skills which can be transferred to further learning and to everyday life. OCR Computer Science is an ideal foundation for further study at A Level. Please note that there is a strong programming element to this course.

## Assessment methods:

This course is based upon two terminal exams (taken in Year 11) and a programming project (conducted in Year 11). The programming project is designed to allow students to learn about a high-level programming language and have the opportunity to show that they can use it to solve problems. It is a requirement of the course but does not contribute directly to the final marks.

**Computer Systems 01:** Theoretical Paper. This written paper contains short-answer and structured questions. 50% of total marks.

**Computational Thinking, Algorithms & Programming 02:** Theoretical Paper involving aspects of algorithm design & interpretation. This written paper contains short-answer and structured questions. 50% of total marks.

**Programming Project 03:** Programming Project. Students will design, develop and test a solution to a problem within the OCR set scenario.

## Homework:

Regular homework will be set and this will take the form of:

- specific questions to ensure understanding;
- preparation of presentation about specific topics to share in the classroom;
- past paper practice questions;
- reading of appropriate supporting IT and Technology news stories and case studies;
- there will also be regular end of topic tests to test understanding of computing theory.

## How families can help:

- Encouraging students to take an interest in the news and especially articles about the use of ICT by organisations and emerging technologies. This could be done by regularly reading articles posted on the departmental blog page from trusted and reliable sources such as:

BBC Technology, Guardian Technology and the New Scientist and by subscribing to appropriate Youtube channels such as FWThinking, Veritasium & Vsauce.

- Taking an active interest in the subject through discussion about topical issues and related technology.
- Downloading and installing Python and other free programming languages on home computers and encouraging students to create programs to solve real-world problems (e.g. Creating a Christmas-card mailing list or creating a weekly shopping list to see how money could be saved)

**For more information please contact: Mr A. Briggs-Davies, Head of Computing.**

# DRAMA

Exam Board: Edexcel

## Aims of Subject

- To develop students' understanding of a range of dramatic skills and theatrical techniques.
- To develop devising skills & perform creative work both individually and as part of a team.
- To explore texts and Dramatic Practitioners practically and innovatively.
- To develop imaginative, creative, cognitive, communication and social skills.

## Content and assessment overview

### **Component 1: *Devising, writing and performing your own play. 40% of qualification.***

- 20% writing and performing your play in the theatre. This will include directing, acting and designing your own unique production based around an exciting number of stimuli given to you.
- 20% script and devising log. You will type up a portfolio of 2000 words that will include how you created your play, your influences, research and evaluation of your play.

### **Component 2: *Two Performances from a Scripted Play - 20% of qualification.***

- Students will perform two key extracts from a free choice of performance text that contrasts with their Component 1 text. This is a performance exam that is marked by an external examiner.

### **Component 3: *Written examination - 40% of qualification.***

- **Section A:** Bringing Texts to Life - Four questions focusing on a the performance and design of a chosen extract from a selection of set text options
- **Section B:** Live Theatre Evaluation - This section focuses on the work of theatre makers reflecting on a piece of live theatre seen.

## Course Description

Students will gain experience of creating theatre through performing in, writing for and designing productions. They will encounter a range of stimuli as a basis for dramatic exploration, and explore other theatrical skills such as make-up, costume, design and lighting. Self-devised work will be an important part of the course, as will frequent visits to the theatre. Throughout the course students will learn how to review their own work and that of others with a positive critical awareness, using appropriate subject specialist terminology. In addition they will learn to identify thematic and technical links between theatre of different genres, periods and cultures.

## How will the course help me?

In Drama you need a creative imagination as well as an ability to work with others to develop ideas into a practical form. This is a hands-on and problem-solving subject that requires you to be a team player, prepared to work with anyone and develop leadership skills. Students will emerge with a toolkit of transferable skills and the confidence to manage, organise and help people. It is also a fantastic platform for going into an arts or media forum. Ultimately drama is about the study of people and finding brilliant and creative ways of demonstrating humanity and inspiring others with your own imagination.

## Theatre Trips

Pupils will be expected to attend a number of theatre trips throughout the 2 years of study.

## Homework

You will have an hour a week to complete various tasks including completing a drama log, play writing, reviewing performances, learning lines and extensive research in order to build a well-rounded theatrical knowledge.

## How your family can help?

They can aid with line learning, build on discussions around the topics we cover and encourage confidence when expressing creative ideas vocally.

**For more information please contact Ms. A. Swan (Head of Drama).**

# GEOGRAPHY Exam Board: AQA

## Aims of the Subject

- To focus on the geographical processes that shape our world through the study of human and physical geography.
- To encourage students to relate to and learn from the world around them.
- To appreciate the threats to the planet and evaluate suitable solutions.
- To develop a variety of skills including – map work, fieldwork, ICT, numeracy and literacy.
- To use a wide range of teaching and learning activities.
- To build on the Geography covered in KS3 and provide a stepping stone to further study and career opportunities.

## Course Description

The Geography course is divided into physical (p) and human (h) units:

- **Natural hazards (p)** including earthquakes, volcanoes, tropical storms & climate change
- **The living world (p)** focusing on tropical rain forests and cold environments
- **UK physical landscapes (p)** including rivers and glaciation
- **Urban issues and challenges (h)** using Mumbai and Birmingham as case studies
- **Changing economic world (h)** with in depth study of the UK and Nigeria
- **Resource management (h)** focusing on energy

## Assessment

Paper 1: Living with the physical environment	+	Paper 2: Challenges in the human environment	+	Paper 3: Geographical applications
<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <p>3.1.1 The challenge of natural hazards, 3.1.2 The living world, 3.1.3 Physical landscapes in the UK, 3.4 Geographical skills</p>		<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <p>3.2.1 Urban issues and challenges, 3.2.2 The changing economic world, 3.2.3 The challenge of resource management, 3.4 Geographical skills</p>		<p><b>What's assessed</b></p> <p>3.3.1 Issue evaluation, 3.3.2 Fieldwork, 3.4 Geographical skills</p>
<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes</li> <li>• 88 marks (including 3 marks for spelling, punctuation, grammar and specialist terminology (SPaG))</li> <li>• 35 % of GCSE</li> </ul>		<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes</li> <li>• 88 marks (including 3 marks for SPaG)</li> <li>• 35 % of GCSE</li> </ul>		<p><b>How it's assessed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes</li> <li>• 76 marks (including 6 marks for SPaG)</li> <li>• 30 % of GCSE</li> <li>• Pre-release resources booklet made available 12 weeks before Paper 3 exam</li> </ul>

## Fieldwork

There will be a 3 day residential fieldtrip to Snowdonia in Y10 costing around £150 and other fieldwork opportunities during the two year course.

## Homework

Homework is set on a weekly basis and will involve a variety of activities including reading, writing, processing information, research, fieldwork preparation and write-up and exam practice.

## How families can help

- Encouraging an interest in local, national and world affairs (follow us on Twitter),
- discussing relevant issues that may arise in the local area or at a holiday destination,
- taking an interest in homework.

**For more information please contact Mr O. Mann (Head of Geography)**

# HISTORY

Exam Board: Edexcel

## Aims of the Subject

1. To understand some of the key developments and changes in History from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century.
2. To develop the ability to evaluate historical evidence.
3. To develop enthusiasm for History and to spark a life long interest in the subject.
4. To develop vital skills, such as critical thinking and the ability to present a logical argument.

These skills are valued highly in a wide range of careers, from Law and Journalism, to Business Management and Teaching.

## Course Description

The GCSE course is made up three units. These put many modern issues into an historical context. Are we living in a more dangerous age? What systems of punishment are appropriate? How do power structures work in different political systems? How are minority groups treated?

### 1. **Thematic Study and the Historic Environment: Crime and Punishment in Britain c.1000-present**

This studies the nature of crime and the development of law from the medieval period through to the present day. Were the Middle Ages lawless and violent? What really led to accusations of witchcraft in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? When and why were public executions ended? How far did living conditions in Whitechapel in the 1880s prevent the police catching Jack the Ripper?

### 2. **Period Study and British Depth Study: The American West, c.1835-c.1895 and Henry VIII and his Ministers**

The British unit covers the nature of power at Henry VIII's court. What was the King's 'Great Matter'? What impact did the Reformation have? What kind of monarch was Henry VIII and how did power operate in his court?

The American unit studies the development and expansion of the American West and the conflicts this caused. How 'wild' was the 'Wild West'? How were native Americans treated?

### 3. **Modern World Depth Study: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39**

This unit explores political developments in Germany after the First World War, leading to the rise of Hitler. How did Hitler exploit the political and economic crisis of the 1930s? How did he manage to gain mass support in Germany? Why was there so little resistance to Hitler?

## Assessment Methods

3 Examination Papers

## Homework

Homework will be set twice a week and will involve a variety of activities.

## How families can help

Parents who simply take an interest in their son or daughter's work can help with their progress. The department encourages students to visit museums and historical sites wherever possible. It is always useful to encourage students to watch historical programmes on television.

**For more information please contact Ms. N. Bowles (Head of History).**

# MUSIC

Exam Board: EDEXCEL

## Why study Music if you learn an instrument anyway?

Music is an exciting, creative, challenging, and versatile subject: one which universities and employers regard highly. Studying Music supports holistic cognitive development and therefore drives academic achievement. It is unique in being both a highly creative and academic subject.

GCSE Music is 60% coursework and 40% written examination. It is divided into the following three units:

### Performance 30%

- Two performances - one solo and one ensemble of at least one minute in length each.
- Both performances must add up to a minimum of four minutes.
- These can be in *any* style from classical to thrash metal!
- You don't have to perform in front of anyone but Ms James or Mr Chapman-Palmer.

### Composition 30%

- Two compositions.
- One is to a brief based on the Areas of Study which you will complete in Year 11
- The other composition is a free composition in a style chosen by you.
- Both compositions must add up to a minimum of three minutes.
- In this unit you will become skilled with music technology software such as Sibelius 7, Pre-Sonus Studio One and Cubase.

### Listening 40% (May/June of Year 11)

- The listening examination will develop your aural and analytical skills and enhance your understanding of music history and theory.
- It is based on four Areas of Study, each with two set works (listed below).
- You will learn how to identify features of music from a variety of genres which will also develop your own composition skills.

Area of Study	Set works
Instrumental Music 1700 - 1820	Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 (3 <sup>rd</sup> movement) Beethoven: Pathetique Piano Sonata (1 <sup>st</sup> movement)
Vocal Music	Purcell: Music for a While Queen: Killer Queen
Music for Stage and Screen	Wicked: Defying Gravity Williams: Main Title from Star Wars Episode IV
Fusions	Afro Celt Sound System: Release Esperanza Spalding: Samba Em Preludio

### **What do I need to take GCSE Music?**

- Students opting for GCSE Music need to be approximately Grade 3 standard on their main instrument. **You do not need to have Grades, just be playing at this standard.**
- Knowledge of music theory is essential. We run booster sessions in the department to help support anyone interested in developing their music theory further.
- It is really important that you enjoy music in any way, shape, or form: listening to it, making it, or performing it as this will drive your creativity and thirst for learning.

### **How families can help**

- The performance aspect of the course must be supported by instrumental tuition, taken in or outside of school. **Students should practice their instruments regularly.**
- As a requirement of the course, students are also expected to become actively engaged in at least one musical activity outside lesson times in school so as to encourage their progress, develop their ensemble skills, and to demonstrate their commitment to the subject. Our GCSE students take part in concerts and events which they can credit on their CVs.
- By encouraging students to listen to a wide variety of music at home.

**For more information please contact Ms. O. James (Director of Music).**