

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

SMC form

YEAR 9 OPTIONS 2026

2026-2028
Curriculum
Guide



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A young man in a dark blue school sweater and grey trousers is sitting on a green cushioned wooden chair in a library. He is looking at a book on a shelf. The shelves are filled with books, including titles like 'THE BIRTH OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION' and 'THE SCOP OF THE WORLD'.

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where once a cloud which
blew the blanket of dark clouds
It could not possibly, I thought
Snap back to reality, I was
and suddenly there they
in the middle of right at
road, and a car
The blinding of the
The mist, the
rainbow, the
clouds.
The backbone of
the backbone
My little fingers
NOW
calling
the
the

INTRODUCTION AND PROCESS OVERVIEW

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES



Helping you make your Choices

Recently, you will have taken part in some decision-making exercises and will have been given information about the subjects available for study as you start to focus your learning in Years 10 and 11. Do not worry if you feel that you cannot take this in all at once, or if there is something you do not understand. There are lots of ways to make sense of it all – by asking your teachers and tutors; by asking Mr Dale (Head of Year 9), or any of the year office and by reading this booklet as well as talking it over with family and friends.

Some of the courses available may be new to you, for example Health & Social Care. These courses can be explained to you in greater depth by the departments who deliver them. The best way to find out more is to read the information in this booklet, watch the informational videos, and attend the Options Evening where staff of those subjects will be able to answer any questions.

If parents/carers have any specific question that they have otherwise not been able to find the answers to and would like a conversation with the Year 9 team, then they should arrange by contacting the year office.

There is a lot of help and support to help you make sure that you choose wisely. Please use it!



MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES



Important Points to Note

When selecting your subject, please bear in mind the following:

- Choose a subject that you like to do or think you would enjoy. These are usually the subjects in which you get the best results.
- There are no easy subjects! You may find them easy because you enjoy them and have a talent in that area but there are no soft options.
- Make sure you are clear about what subject content will be covered on the course and how it will be assessed.
- Do not choose a subject because your friend has done so. Your interests and abilities are not necessarily the same, nor is there any guarantee that you will be placed in the same teaching group.
- Do not choose because of a particular teacher. Again, there is no certainty as to which teachers you will have in any year group for any subject.
- Discuss your choices with your parents as well as your teachers and if you have any questions/problems, seek advice in school.
- Once you have chosen a subject, you have made a commitment to follow the course over the remainder of your secondary education.



CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



A Broad and Balanced Curriculum

Whilst reading the booklet, you will need to think carefully about the subject you would like to study for the next two years, deciding which one is going to serve you well in the future. It is important to note that at this stage the choices you make are very unlikely to affect your ability to follow any given career path. The curriculum offered by St Mary's College is closely matched to the requirements of central government who state the following:

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced, broadly based and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

With this in mind the government states that the following subjects are compulsory and must be followed by all pupils in KS4 (Years 9-11):

English
Mathematics
Science
Physical Education
Religious Education
Citizenship, relationship and sex education

Other subject areas are not compulsory but must form part of the offer available to pupils in all schools. These include:

- **The Arts** - For example, Music, Art and Design, Drama, Photography
- **Design and Technology** - For example, Food, Product Design
- **Humanities** - This comprises of Geography and History
- **Modern Foreign Languages** - For this year group, this will comprise of French and Spanish
- **Computing**
- **Health & Social Care**

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CURRICULUM MODEL



Whilst being designed to ensure that our curriculum is the most broad and balanced curriculum we can offer, its design considers the following:

- Sufficient time is allocated to the core subjects of English and Mathematics. Students must study both English Language and English Literature.
- Appropriate levels of contact time for all other subjects ensures that students can achieve strongly across the entire curriculum.

Last year students selected their humanity subject, History or Geography. We are now asking for students to select a further option subject to study, this choice is from a very broad range of subjects and allows them to personalise their study with a course they have a particular interest in.

The table below sets out how this has looked this year and over the next two years.

Subject	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
English	3	4	4
Mathematics	4	4	4
Science	4	4	5
Religious Education	3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2	2
History/Geography	3	3	
French/Spanish	2	2	4
Option Block		3	3
Computing	1		
Creative Arts	2		
Performing Arts	1		

Citizenship, relationship and sex education will be integrated into lessons from subjects across the school and will also be specifically catered for during immersive sessions.

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ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY



Technical Awards

For many years, vocational qualifications have helped millions of people develop the skills they need to progress. Following a national review, a complete overhaul of vocational qualifications has taken place. Any qualifications that meet the strict criteria for high quality and rigorously assessed programmes are now known as Technical Awards. These include BTECs, VCerts and any other accredited vocational courses.

Technical Awards give students the skills they need to either move on to higher education or go straight into employment. For instance, relevant courses in Health and Social Care have led many students from St Mary's College into a career working with children or nursing after having continued studying the subject in our Sixth Form.

General Features of Technical Awards

- Work-related qualifications suitable for a wide range of students, built to accommodate the needs of employers and allow progression to university
- Practical, real-world approach to learning without sacrificing any of the essential subject theory
- Can be taken alongside, or in place of, GCSEs and A levels
- Recognised by schools, colleges, universities, employers and professional bodies across the United Kingdom and in countries worldwide
- Continually developed and updated with, and for, industry and in response to the needs of learners
- Progress is measured throughout the course, allowing students to gauge their own performance on a continuing basis, just like in a real workplace

All accredited Technical Awards feature an element of external assessment. There are 3 common types of external assessment which are a paper-based exam, a pre released examined project or an on-screen test. The type of assessment will be appropriate to the subject. This combination of assessment provides a critical mix of ongoing reward and motivation for the student along with the rigour of external benchmarking that some employers and universities are seeking.

Results for Technical Awards are currently graded as Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*. The qualifications offered are all equivalent to 1 GCSE.

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OPTIONS CHOICES



How to complete your Options Choices

Following the Year 9 Options Evening you will be sent a Google Forms Link to complete.

On this form you will be asked to select your preferred subject, and two reserve choices.

Every effort is made to ensure students receive their preferred choice however on rare occasions staffing limitations and subject popularity mean that students receive one of their reserve choices.

Where these decisions are made the selection of students for the oversubscribed course is done through a blind draw to make it as fair as possible.

If you have issues accessing the options form online, then you can telephone the Year 9 team who will be happy to complete the form over the telephone.

The deadline for the completion of this option form is **Wednesday 11th February 2026**





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OPTIONS SUBJECTS

ART & DESIGN



Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

This is a GCSE qualification and the pathway we choose to study is Art, Craft and Design. Within the two years of study, students will have the opportunity to explore, photography, textiles, printmaking, Computer Aided Design, as well as traditional art techniques.

The qualification is broken down into two components:

- Component 1 – Portfolio 60%
- Component 2 – Externally set assignment 40%, including a 10-hour exam in April/May of the final year of study.

The course is intended for those learners who enjoy art or who may wish to go into the Art and Design industry. Students will enter design competitions and will have many opportunities to visit galleries, exhibitions and places of interest.

Overview of the course:

1. Introduction to portraiture (fine art, photography, printmaking)
2. Distortion of portraiture (exploring and developing own ideas)
3. Natural forms (exploring and developing own ideas)
4. Mock exam (choice of either portraits or natural forms) where students will produce final pieces, developed from their ideas.
5. Externally set assignment (themes are released in January of the second year)

Progression:

BTEC level 3 Extended Certificate or Diploma in Art and Design.

Progress to A-level courses in Art and Design or Photography.

Leads to further training and/or employment within the field of Art & Design.



**Head of Creative Arts, Design & Media -
Ms S Howard**

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BUSINESS



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Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

You are surrounded by Business everyday of your life, this course offers you a detailed insight into the world of business using knowledge-based exercises and simulated situations.

The course follows the following aspects of business:

- Business in the real world
- Influences on Business
- Business Operations
- Human Resources
- Marketing
- Finance



Structure

Covering all the main topics students should be inspired, moved and challenged by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study and gain an insight into related sectors. The course will allow them to make informed decisions about learning opportunities and career choices.

The students will sit two examinations in Year 11, both are 1 hour and 45 minutes in length and both worth 50% of the final grade.

Activities & Learning Experiences

Knowledge and understanding will be achieved through notes, discussions, worksheet tasks, and case study activities which will be completed in class and for homework.

Homework

Business Studies is an academic subject, and you will be expected to take notes in class and pay full attention. Homework is set regularly and will extend and build upon your existing knowledge. You will be expected to use your business skills and imagination to solve real life business problems.

Opportunities at the end of the course

A-level in Business Studies and College courses can help lead you straight into many full time employment jobs.

Success and interest in this area will allow you to develop your studies further in our Sixth Form .

Head of Business Studies
– Miss V Hudson



COMPUTER SCIENCE



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Exam Board: OCR

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

Please note students must pass an academic suitability assessment to be enrolled on this course.

Course Overview:

Computing counts as a science option in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Through studying this course students will develop their understanding of current and emerging technologies and how they work; they will look at the use of algorithms in computer programs, developing them into discerning computer users. Students will have the opportunity to develop computer programs to solve problems by applying their creative and critical thinking skills. The course covers three main areas of study: the theoretic understanding of how a computer works, an investigative computing task demonstrating how certain aspects of computing can be used to solve problems and a programming task which involves developing a coded solution to a given problem.

Why choose Computing?

Computing is a great way to develop critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving skills; all of which can be transferred to further learning and everyday life. The course also offers the opportunity to develop applications for the Raspberry Pi and other innovations through an engaging and challenging programme of study.

Student Voice

'I'm currently studying Computer Science GCSE and have enjoyed all the lessons we have done, especially the practical work - coding using Visual Studio and applying the skills we've learnt through practise using the resources provided. I also find the theory interesting as it is important that I know what happens inside the computer when I run my code; our teacher helps us if we are struggling and there is a friendly and supportive atmosphere in the class'

How it is assessed

The course is assessed through two written examinations. The exams are not tiered, so allow all students to achieve their full potential.

Paper 1: Computational Thinking & Problem Solving 1.5 hour written examination 80 marks/50%	Paper 2: Written assessment 1.5 hour written examination 80 marks/50%
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This course offers clear progression to study A-Level Computer Science; but also provides the necessary skills to prepare for study of most A-Level subjects.

Head of Computer Science – Mr S Knott





Exam Board: OCR Qualification Type: Cambridge National (L1/L2)

The Qualification:

Our Cambridge National in IT raises students' confidence and understanding in the use of IT in the digital world.

Students will be equipped with the confidence to apply and use skills that are relevant both to the IT sector and more widely. Students will learn about:

- the use of IT in the digital world
- the Internet of Everything (IoE)
- data manipulation using spreadsheets
- the design and implementation of human-computer interface (HCI)
- Augmented Reality

Students will develop knowledge and understanding in a number of key areas as they plan, design, create, test and evaluate/review IT solutions using spreadsheets and Augmented Reality (AR) products to meet client and target audience requirements.

The course aims to develop learning and practical skills that can be applied to real-life contexts and work situations, and to develop independence and confidence in using skills that would be relevant to the IT sector and more widely.

This course is assessed through a simple model, consisting of an externally assessed unit that focuses on knowledge and understanding and two skills based, non examined assessment units (NEA - coursework).

Through completing this course, we intend for students to be able to:

- Select the best tools and techniques to solve a problem
- Solve problems by exploring different software application tools and techniques
- Create IT solutions and digital products
- Use planning techniques to complete tasks in an organised and timely way
- Find imaginative ways to solve IT problems.

Progress To:

A-Levels, T-Levels, apprenticeships or further advanced vocational qualifications at Level 3

Head of Computer Science – Mr S Knott

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY



ST MARY'S COLLEGE

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

This is a GCSE qualification and aims to develop skills and techniques, using a range of materials and techniques in product design and manufacture. The course encourages students to design and make products with creativity and originality as well as understanding user needs, sustainable design, product evolution, industrial manufacturing and designer responsibilities.

Pupils will learn a range of both manual and CAD (computer aided design) skills and techniques and they will be able to apply these in their own creative projects. They will be able to recognise, join, manipulate, detail and finish materials to create innovative and functional products. The qualification includes an externally set assessment (NEA), and this is worth 50% of the final GCSE grade. There is also one written exam which is taken at the end of the course. It is important to note that the written paper is 15% Maths as a STEM subject.

The course structure:

NEA (non-examined assessment) 50% of GCSE

Written paper 50% of GCSE



The course is intended for those learners who enjoy designing, making and exploring the design of products in society. It is a suitable course for those students who wish to go into creative, design or engineering industries and various apprenticeships. It is also an enjoyable course for those students who enjoy creative learning.

An overview of the course content:

Materials	Components	Designer responsibility	Sustainable Design
Designer influences	Manufacturing	Product Evolution	Industrial Practice
CAD CAM	Assembly techniques	ICT in design	Systems & Control

Progression:

Progression to AS and A2 level courses in Design & Technology
 Progression to BTEC level 3 course in Art and Design & Engineering
 Leads to further education / training and/or employment within the field of Art & Design, Technology, Engineering & Manufacturing.

**Head of Creative Arts, Design & Media –
Ms S Howard**



ENGINEERING



Exam Board: OCR

**Qualification Type: Tech Award
(L1/L2)**

Course Overview

The Cambridge National in Engineering Manufacture is a practical, engaging qualification aimed at students who want to develop the hands-on skills and knowledge used in the engineering and manufacturing sectors.

This course focuses on the "making" aspect of engineering. You will develop the independence and confidence to safely plan production, operate heavy machinery, and use cutting-edge technology like Computer Numerical Control (CNC) equipment.

What will you study?

Principles of engineering manufacture (Exam – 40% Weighting)

In this unit, you will learn about different manufacturing processes (such as wasting, forming, and additive manufacturing) and materials (metals, polymers, ceramics, and smart materials). You will also study quality control systems and modern developments like "Just in Time" (JIT) manufacturing.

Manufacturing a one-off product (NEA – 30% Weighting)

You will learn how to safely plan and produce a single product using hand-held equipment and conventional machining methods (like lathes and milling machines). You will learn to interpret engineering drawings and carry out risk assessments.

Manufacturing in quantity (NEA – 30% Weighting)

This unit focuses on volume production. You will learn how to use Computer Aided Design (CAD) software and program CNC equipment (such as 3D printers and laser cutters) to create multiple components to a high and consistent standard.

Progression: Where will this take me?

Engineering Manufacture provides an excellent pathway to specialized technical careers and further education:

- **A-Level:** Design and Technology (Level 3).
- **Apprenticeships:** Fabrication and Welding, Manufacturing Operative, or Process Technician.
- **Cambridge Technicals:** Engineering (Levels 2 and 3).
- **T-Level:** Manufacturing, Processing and Control (Level 3).

Is this course for me?

You should choose Engineering Manufacture if you enjoy working in a workshop environment, are interested in how complex machines operate, and want to learn the industrial skills required to build the products of the future.

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GEOGRAPHY



Exam Board: Eduqas

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Geography is about the amazing and dynamic world we live in. Geographers study both the natural and human environment and the interactions between these.

You should study Geography because it will help you to:

- Make sense of the world around you.
- Discuss and address both global and local problems.
- Have a sense of environmental responsibility.
- Learn how to argue about controversial geographical issues and justify your decisions.
- Improve your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
- Get a job! It is highly respected by colleges, universities and employers. Geography opens the doors to a whole range of studies and careers.
- Support your other subjects and keep your future job options open! There are a lot of cross curricular links in Geography.

The course: GCSE Eduqas B

Paper 1: Content paper

Theme 1 - Changing Places: Changing Economies

This theme deals with contemporary human geography topics such as: urbanisation in contrasting global cities, global development issues and urban and rural processes in the UK

Theme 2 - Changing Environments

This theme covers essential physical geography content such as: coasts and their management, rivers and their management, weather and climate and climate change.

Theme 3 Environmental Challenges

Students develop a crucial knowledge of: ecosystems and how they function, why ecosystems are under threat, water resource management and desertification.

Assessment:

Paper 1 is assessed by a 1 hour 45 minute exam worth 40% of the qualification.

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GEOGRAPHY



Paper 2: Problem Solving Geography

This unit will assess content from all three themes (above) and takes the format of a decision making paper. Students have to make and justify a decision on a controversial issue. This unit is a great opportunity for students to learn how to argue and justify their choices! Students will also greatly enhance their mathematical skills as Geography involves the use of statistics, map skills and analysis of data.

Assessment:

Paper 2 is assessed by a 1 hour 30 minute examination worth 30% of the qualification.

Paper 3: Applied Fieldwork

Students will experience a local fieldwork trip to learn about Geography outside the classroom in two contrasting locations. The fieldwork experience will then be tested in paper 3.

Assessment:

Paper 3 is assessed by a 1 hour 30 minute examination worth 30% of the qualification.

Lessons:

Students will be taught by creative Geographers who use videos, debates, GIS, case studies, group work, play dough, problem solving exercises and many more exciting teaching and learning tools.

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Head of Geography – Miss P Lewis



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE



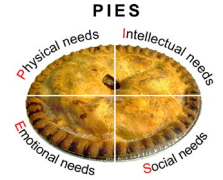
Exam Board: CACHE

Qualification Type: Tech Award

Units studied

There will be 8 topics to study during this course. You will be assessed by completing 1 Synoptic Exam based on all of the 8 units, as well as 1 internal controlled assessment based on some of the 8 topics. Each of these will be worth 50% of your total grade. The topics you will study include:

- Topic 1: Health and social care provision and services
- Topic 2: Job roles in health and social care and the care values that underpin professional practice
- Topic 3: Legislation, policies and procedures in health and social care
- Topic 4: Human development across the life span
- Topic 5: The care needs of the individual
- Topic 6: How health and social care services are accessed
- Topic 7: Partnership working in health and social care
- Topic 8: The care planning cycle



Progression

- A T-level course in Health or a T-level in Education & Childcare
- Joining the Medical, Health & Social Care Academy at St Mary's College 6th Form.
- Further training and employment within the Health Care, Social Care and Early Years sectors.

Work Experience

Although it is not a requirement of the course it is strongly recommended that students opt for a health and social care or early years work experience placement in Year 10 to help them put theory into practice.

Why study Health and Social Care

- You will be given opportunities to;
- Develop independent learning and self-assessment skills.
 - Develop a greater understanding of the skills needed for a career in the health, social care or early years sector.

Health and Social Care is delivered by an experienced and dedicated staff who provide coursework support sessions at lunchtime/afterschool to help you reach your full potential. The specifications can be accessed from the CACHE website: www.cache.org.uk

**Head of Social and Health Sciences Faculty –
Miss P Lewis**



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Exam Board: Edexcel

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Why should I choose GCSE History?

1. You are interested in the past, but want to know more.
2. You want to understand the world you live in.
3. You enjoy discussing different points of view.
4. You enjoy using detective skills to question evidence.
5. You like expressing your own opinion.
6. You like lessons to be varied, exciting and well taught.
7. You are willing to work hard.
8. You want to get a good result.
9. You want a respected qualification that demonstrates your ability to evaluate and interpret information and write coherently.



Paper 1: Medicine in Britain, c1250 - present and the Western Front:

This topic looks at serious diseases across time and how people have tried different methods to cure them. We study such varied topics as the Black Death, outbreaks of cholera, the Great Plague of 1665, Jenner and the development of vaccinations. More modern advances in medicine include "magic bullets", heart transplants and the development of antibiotics. We then study medical advances in the context of the Western Front in World War One. Through studies of major battlefields such as the Somme and Ypres we examine the terrible injuries caused by weapons and the awful diseases caused by conditions in the trenches.

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Paper 2: Early Elizabethan England, 1558 - 88 and The American West, c1835 - c1895:

For this paper we examine some of the major changes taking place in England during the time of Elizabeth I. You will study the thorny question of Elizabeth's marriage and the foreign powers that threatened England at this time. We study the Spanish Armada as well as the gruesome execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Finally, we examine how the Elizabethans explored the world and helped found what would become the USA.

In the second part of this paper we examine the American West and the lifestyle of the Indigenous Peoples including their attitude towards war and religion. You will then examine the effects that the migrations of white people had on the lifestyle of the Indigenous peoples in events such as the Gold Rush of 1849, the Mormon Migration and the Donner Party. This inevitably brought a clash between these two cultures so we study the Plains Wars and events such as the Sand Creek Massacre. Finally, you will look at cowboys and law and order in the American West.

Paper 3: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918 - 39:

For this paper we examine the tumultuous interwar period in Germany which began with the revolution against the Kaiser and led to Germany in the 1920s becoming the most free and liberal country in Europe between the wars. We look at how many people tried to overthrow the democratically elected government in the early 1920s and then how culture flourished as the economy stabilised. Then, when all seemed to be going so well, we look at the cataclysmic Depression which led to the rise of the Nazis and the establishment of the terror state.

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Head of History – Miss R Wickenden

HOSPITALITY & CATERING



Exam Board: WJEC

**Qualification Type: Tech Award
(L1/2)**

This qualification aims to develop skills in using a range of ingredients and culinary techniques to produce food products and meals. The course teaches safety in the kitchen, how to work efficiently in terms of timings and ingredients and how to apply quality control procedures. Students will test, modify and evaluate to produce quality products for intended users.

Pupils will learn about the functional and nutritional properties of foods and the effects of combining ingredients. They will be able to plan and cook in response to an external brief. Pupils will learn about the Hospitality & Catering industry and all factors involved in its success.

The Course Structure:

1. Coursework Portfolio (60% of the qualification). This includes evidence of menu planning in response to a brief, practical work and demonstrating understanding of nutritional values of foods. It also demonstrates understanding of balanced diets and application of Food safety and hygiene procedures.
2. 1 x 2 hour exam in the final year of the course (40% of the qualification). This exam tests understanding of the hospitality and catering industry including roles, business management and factors affecting the success of the industry.

The course is intended for those learners who enjoy cooking, designing dishes and experimenting with different foods and culinary techniques. It is a suitable course for those students who wish to go into sport science, nutrition, dietetics and the hospitality and catering industries.

An overview of the course content:

Safety - Social & Economic issues - Types of service - Business Management
- Culinary techniques - Balanced diets - Sustainability
Nutrition - Adapting/refining recipes - Food Storage - Cultural issues

Progression:

AS and A2 level courses in Food Preparation & Nutrition.
Catering courses.

Apprenticeships within the catering, healthcare and hospitality industries.
Further education/training and/or employment within Food Science and Nutrition.

**Head of Creative Arts, Design & Media –
Ms. S Howard**



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MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES



Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Why pick a second Modern Foreign Language?

Languages are fun, challenging and exciting. Being able to speak one foreign language is a real asset to you for your future but you cannot call yourself a true linguist until you speak at least two foreign languages. Picking a second foreign language is for those who are enthusiastic about languages and the world we live in and are keen to learn as much as they can about how to communicate with as many different people across the world. There are approximately 196 countries in the world; 33 speak French as their first language, 88 speak English and approximately 400 million people speak Spanish across the world. If you can speak all three, you can travel confidently and widely in Europe and beyond and communicate in their language. How amazing is that?!

In addition, scientific research shows that bilingualism enhances mental abilities and critical thinking skills are improved through the study of Modern Foreign Languages. Globalisation is shrinking the business world; those who speak more than one language will really have the edge.

Why pick French?	Why pick Spanish?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paris is the most visited city in the world. • 80 million people visit France every year. • French is very similar to English; 50% of current English vocabulary is derived from French. • French is spoken on every continent. • French is an official language of the United Nations, European Commission, Médecins Sans Frontières and The Red Cross. • The French economy is ranked 5th in the world (just in front of Britain). • France is the third destination for foreign investment in the world. • French is the third most used language on the internet. • The sixth biggest French speaking city in the world is London! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 400 million native Spanish speakers in the world. • More than 50 million people visit Spain every year. • Spain is the fourth most visited country in the world. • It is the 4th most commonly spoken language in the world (after English, Hindi and Mandarin). • Spanish is easy to learn – the words are pronounced exactly as they're seen. • There are 41 million Spanish speakers in the USA and 18% of New Yorkers speak Spanish. Spanish speaking people travel widely and settle in all parts of the world; the chances are you already know at least one Spanish speaking person already.

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MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES



Course Structure

This is a GCSE course. There are examinations at the end of the course in all 4 skills.

Listening 25%
Reading 25%

Speaking 25%
Writing 25%

Subject Content

- People and lifestyle
- Popular Culture
- Communication and the world around us.

Levels Available

There are two levels of entry available for each paper, Foundation and Higher. Performance during the course, up to and including the mock examinations in December of Year 11 will allow for guidance on the appropriate level to be taken for the examinations in June of Year 11.

Level Possible Grades

Foundation 1-5
Higher 4-9

Opportunities

Trip to Alicante (in Spain)
Trip to Paris
Spanish visitor exchange programme

Language skills are very significant in the modern world. We need to be able to communicate with people everywhere. At St Mary's College, we believe that students benefit greatly from studying one, even two languages, as we develop ever more interlinks. It is important that all students learn to look beyond their immediate environment and to be tolerant and positive about other cultures. Learning languages is fun, satisfying, offers you lots of opportunities and enriches your life.

Who can take this subject?

Many students choose to continue with their first language to GCSE but also have the option of picking a second language (French if you already study Spanish and Spanish if you already study French).

Head of Modern Foreign Languages – Mrs A Scott

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Exam Board: Eduqas

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Course Overview

The GCSE Music course allows you to engage with music critically and creatively. Whether you are an aspiring musician or simply enjoy listening to and creating music, this course offers a mix of practical coursework and academic study.

Course Requirements

Component 1: Performing (30% of qualification) This component assesses your practical ability on your chosen instrument or voice.

The Task: You will be asked to record a performance (or performances) which lasts for a minimum of 4 minutes. This is typically a combination of a solo piece and an ensemble piece.

Skill Level: You will ideally need to be of a secure Grade 3 or 4 standard on your instrument by the end of the course to enable you to gain the best possible result.

Component 2: Composition (30% of qualification) Your composition work makes up the remaining 30% of your qualification. You will learn how to write your own music and develop your own style.

Year 10 (Free Composition): You will compose a piece in the style of your choice. This allows you to explore the genre that interests you most.

Year 11 (Set Brief): The exam board will send 3 or 4 tasks (briefs), and you will compose a piece to answer one of these.

Component 3: Listening & Appraising (40% of qualification) This is a written exam taken at the end of the course.

Set Works: You will answer questions about two set pieces which you will have studied in depth during the course.

Unfamiliar Music: You will also be asked to answer questions on pieces of music you've never heard before. This tests your ability to identify musical elements by ear.

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The Four Areas of Study

To prepare for the listening exam, you will study four specific areas of music history and culture:

- **Area of Study 1: Musical Forms and Devices** You will engage with a variety of music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras. The focus is on understanding how music is created, structured, and developed by the great composers of the past.
- **Area of Study 2: Music for Ensemble** You will study a range of styles including Musical Theatre, Jazz, Blues, and Chamber Music. This area explores how instruments are used within ensembles and how musicians interact with one another.
- **Area of Study 3: Film Music** You will study how music for film is created, specifically looking at the techniques composers use and the impact that the music has on an audience.
- **Area of Study 4: Popular Music** You will explore a variety of different styles of popular music. You will uncover how songs are written, how instruments are used, and how recording techniques have developed over time.

Is this course for me?

You should consider GCSE Music if:

- You play an instrument or sing and want to dedicate time to improving your skills.
- You enjoy the creative process of writing your own songs or music.
- You are interested in understanding how music is constructed and the history behind different genres.



Music Curriculum Leader – Mr D Zobkiw

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MEDIA STUDIES



Exam Board: Pearson

**Qualification Type: Tech Award
(L1/2)**

Who is this qualification for?

The Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 Tech Award in Creative Media Production is ideal for you if you would like to develop creative skills and learn more about the creative media sector. This course offers a practical introduction to life and work in the media sector. The qualification is the same size and level as a GCSE.

The creative sector

The skills developed through an education in creative media are integral to many roles within the creative sector, which is a collection of exciting and vibrant industries including film, television, games, web and app development, and publishing. As digital technology continues to evolve, media techniques have become more sophisticated and media products are becoming more advanced. However, what hasn't changed is that media products still have the power to enthral, intrigue and affect audiences. Collectively, the creative sector in the UK contributed nearly £112 billion to the economy in 2019, and have grown by 7.4% since 2017, a rate of growth 5 times that of the overall UK economy.

What does the qualification cover?

This qualification will offer you the opportunity to build the range of knowledge, understanding and practical skills you need to progress to further learning, and will also give you an engaging and stimulating introduction to the world of creative media. You will explore some of the key areas within the creative sector, learning how to address the needs of clients and create media work that meets creative project briefs. Everyone taking this qualification will study three components, covering the following content areas:

- Component 1: Exploring media products - investigating different media products, such as audio/moving image, print and interactive design, considering their style, design, audience, and context.
- Component 2: Developing digital media production skills - exploring and developing creative media production processes and practices by generating ideas, and planning production and post-production processes.
- Component 3: Create a media product in response to a brief - applying digital media production skills and techniques to develop a response to a client brief.

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MEDIA STUDIES



Where will this take me?

Once you have completed the qualification, you will have developed a practical understanding of the creative media sector. You will have built useful skills, which are not generally covered in GCSE courses, and you will have developed a good understanding of whether the creative media sector is for you, and if so, which part of it you might want to study further. If you decide to go on to further study in creative media, the best option for you will depend on the grades you have achieved in this and the other qualifications you have taken, and what you enjoy doing. You could progress to a Level 2 Technical Certificate or to a Level 3 programme, such as A Levels, a T Level or a BTEC National, either on its own or in combination with A levels.



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**Head of Creative Arts, Design & Media –
Ms S Howard**



PERFORMING ARTS



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Dance

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

GCSE Dance is an energetic, creative and challenging subject for students who love moving, performing and expressing ideas through physical theatre and choreography.

Throughout the course, students will develop their technical skills, confidence and performance quality while learning how to create original choreography both independently and as part of a group. They will also study professional dance works, exploring how choreographers use movement, music, staging and lighting to communicate powerful ideas and themes.

Lessons are highly practical and studio-based, supported by written and spoken analysis that helps students think critically about performance and refine their own work. Pupils will be encouraged to take risks creatively, work collaboratively and build resilience - all vital skills for further study and future careers.

GCSE Dance suits students who are motivated, imaginative and committed to regular rehearsal and physical activity. No formal dance training is required, but enthusiasm, reliability and a willingness to push themselves are essential.

This qualification provides an excellent foundation for A-Level Dance, BTEC Performing Arts and a wide range of creative pathways, as well as developing transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership and self-discipline.



PERFORMING ARTS



ST MARY'S COLLEGE



Drama

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9–1)

GCSE Drama is a lively, creative and thought-provoking subject for students who enjoy performing, storytelling and working as part of a team.

Across the course, students will explore a wide range of theatre styles and practitioners while developing acting, movement and vocal skills. They will take part in practical workshops, create their own original performances, and perform scripted work for an audience. Alongside this, students learn how to analyse live theatre and written plays, gaining a deeper understanding of how directors and actors bring stories to life on stage.

Lessons are mainly practical and studio-based, supported by written work both in class and in regular Homework that helps pupils reflect on their creative choices and improve their performances and written outcomes. Students will grow in confidence.

GCSE Drama suits students who are imaginative, reliable and willing to rehearse outside lessons when needed. No previous experience is required - just a commitment to trying new ideas and working constructively with others.

This course provides excellent preparation for A-Level Drama, BTEC Performing Arts and future careers within the creative industries, as well as developing highly transferable skills such as public speaking, leadership, problem-solving and empathy.



Head of Performing Arts – Mr B Lancaster

PE & SPORT



PE GCSE

Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

BTEC Level 1/2 First Award in Sport

Exam Board: Pearson

**Qualification Type: Tech Award
(L1/2)**

Students choosing the Physical Education and Sport option will be selected to study either the AQA GCSE in Physical Education or the Pearson BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 in Sport. The PE department will assign courses based on the learning and performance needs of each student and matching them to the most appropriate qualification. We do this with the sole aim of maximising every pupil's chances of making better than average progress and achievement by the end of the course.

Throughout the options process students will be provided with on-going information, support and guidance from their PE teachers in order to help them identify if the PE and Sport option is most suited to their strengths as a learner and sports performer. We are confident in our ability to guide all of our students in the right direction and hope that the following information will support parents, carers and students in making well-informed option choices.

Please take a look at the information below that covers our requirements for this option and the information on the two courses available. It is important to look closely at the content of each qualification, the method of delivery and method of assessment.

Requirements:

- A genuine interest plus regular involvement in sport as a performer, coach and/or official
- Clear commitment and a positive attitude towards Physical Education
- Willingness to participate in extra-curricular opportunities inside/outside of school
- Appetite for studying the theory of PE and Sport
- Positive approach to final assessment at the end of Year 10

Delivery:

Both courses delivered through the PE and Sport option involve a significant amount of theoretical study; therefore, students must be prepared to spend a large majority of their time in the classroom. Practical lessons are scheduled around the specific units being studied at that time so this can vary throughout the course.

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PE & SPORT



PE GCSE

Content:

The GCSE in Physical Education comprises of two units:

<p>Unit 1: The Theory of Physical Education - 30%</p> <p>Paper 1 - The Human Body and Movement in Physical Activity & Sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied anatomy & physiology • Movement analysis • Physical training • Use of data <p>Paper 2 - Socio-cultural Influences and Well-being in Physical Activity and Sport - 30%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports psychology • Socio-cultural influences • Health fitness & well-being • Use of data <p>= 60% of GCSE</p>	<p>Unit 2: Performance in Physical Activity & Sport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical performance in 3 different sports of activities 30% • Analysis and evaluation of performance. 10% <p>= 40% of GCSE</p>
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Requirements:

The course requires pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of PE and physical activity in relation to balanced healthy lifestyles. Students will also develop knowledge in relation to performance in physical activity and how a healthy lifestyle contributes to the growth and development of body systems and structures. In addition to this, pupils will fulfil a performance role as player/performer, and be required to analyse and evaluate performance. Pupils will be assessed on their performance in 3 different practical activity areas. Pupils should have a high level of practical ability in a variety of sports. Due to the practical nature of this pathway pupils should be actively participating in competitive sport either inside/outside of school and have an interest in further developing their skills in extra-curricular sport clubs.

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PE & SPORT



Pearson - BTEC Level 1/2 First Award in Sport

The BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 in Sport is designed to develop applied knowledge and practical skills, enabling learners to demonstrate aptitude and gain a clear understanding of progression opportunities. The qualification prepares learners to be work-ready for post-16 pathways and future employment within the sports sector. Assessment is carried out through a range of methods, including coursework, practical activities and an external synoptic assessment. The external synoptic assessment features multiple-choice, short-answer and matching questions, allowing learners to demonstrate their understanding of the unit in a fully synoptic and holistic way.

Component 1	Preparing Participants to Take Part in Sport and Physical Activity	Internally – external moderation
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Learning content

- The different types of physical activity and providers, the needs of participants, barriers to participation and ways to overcome these barriers.
- Equipment and technology required to take part in sport is also included.
- Learners will also develop an applied understanding of physiology and anatomy as they learn how to plan and deliver a warm-up to prepare participants to take part in sport and physical activity

Component 2	Taking Part and Improving Other Participants Sporting Performance	Internally - external moderation
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Learning content

- The components of fitness and how they are used in different types of sport;
- practical participation in sport and the rules and regulations in sport.
- Ways to improve other participants' sporting performance through planning and delivery of sports drills and conditioned practices.

Component 3	Developing Fitness to Improve Other Participants Performance in Sport and Physical Activity	External Synoptic
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Learning content

- Developing Fitness to Improve Other Participants Performance in Sport and Physical Activity requires learners to use theoretical knowledge and understanding of applied anatomy and physiology.
- Movement analysis and physical training so that they can use this knowledge to analyse and evaluate performance and devise informed strategies for improving/optimising their own practical performance.

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Director of Physical Education – Mr D Wilson



PHOTOGRAPHY



Exam Board: AQA

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Within the two years of study, students will have the opportunity to use high quality photography equipment, learn how to compose images, use Creative Cloud applications (including photoshop), as well as CAD. Students will learn how to conduct shoots and develop effective images through digital, traditional, artistic and technical methods.

The qualification is broken down into two components:

- Component 1 – Portfolio 60%
- Component 2 – Externally set assignment 40%, including a 10-hour exam in April/May in the final year of study.

The course is intended for those learners who have a keen interest in photography, media and art and wish to go into the creative / digital industries. Students will enter competitions and will have many opportunities to visit galleries, exhibitions and places of interest.

Overview of the course

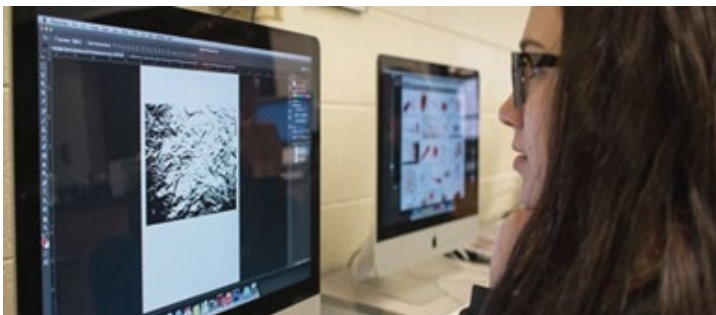
1. Introduction to a camera (how to compose an effective photograph, use of camera settings and kit, Photoshop editing techniques)
2. Portraiture and Distortion (Lighting techniques, manipulating images using different methods.)
3. Still life (specialist equipment, exploring and developing own ideas)
4. Mock exam to produce a collection or final piece from refining own work.
5. Externally set assignment (themes are released in January of the final year).

Progression

BTEC level 3 Extended Certificate or Diploma in Art and Design.

A-level Photography course.

Leads to further training and/or employment within the field of Photography, Media, Art & Design. For information please contact:



**Head of Creative Arts, Design & Media –
Ms S Howard**

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STATISTICS



Exam Board: Edexcel

Qualification Type: GCSE (9-1)

Why Choose GCSE Statistics?

GCSE Statistics provides students with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the world around them through data. In a world increasingly driven by information, being statistically literate is an invaluable skill. This course is designed to enable students to acquire transferable skills, engaging with the Statistical Enquiry Cycle to solve real-world problems. Whether it is interpreting the news, understanding trends, or analysing patterns, this course equips students with practical tools for everyday life and further study.

This course is ideal for students who enjoy problem-solving, are curious about data, and want to develop a greater appreciation of how statistics are used in science, business, economics, and society.

What Will You Learn?

The course content follows the Statistical Enquiry Cycle, guiding students through the iterative process of planning, collecting, processing, and interpreting data. Key areas of study include:

- **Planning and Data Collection:** Designing investigations, formulating hypotheses, and understanding constraints such as bias, reliability, and ethical issues.
- **Processing and Representing Data:** Organising data using modern techniques, including an understanding of how technology and spreadsheets are used to visualise large datasets.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Performing calculations such as standard deviation, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, index numbers (such as CPI/RPI), and time series analysis.
- **Probability:** Understanding probability theory, including Binomial and Normal distributions, and calculating risks and estimates.
- **Interpretation:** Evaluating findings to make informed decisions and critically assessing the reliability of conclusions.

The course builds on key mathematical skills while introducing unique statistical methods, supporting the development of critical thinking and the ability to communicate findings clearly.

How Is It Assessed?

GCSE Statistics is assessed through two written examinations. Both papers allow the use of a scientific calculator and are weighted equally.

- Paper 1: 1 hour 30 minutes (50% of the qualification, 80 marks).
- Paper 2: 1 hour 30 minutes (50% of the qualification, 80 marks).

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STATISTICS



How Does It Support Other Subjects?

Studying Statistics strengthens performance in:

- **Mathematics:** Builds confidence with quantitative methods, graphical representation, and algebraic reasoning.
- **Science (Biology/Psychology):** Reinforces skills in experimental design, hypothesis testing, and data analysis.
- **Humanities & Social Sciences:** Vital for Geography, Economics, Sociology, and Business, where analysing trends and demographics is essential.

Who Should Take GCSE Statistics?

- Students who enjoy handling data and problem-solving.
- Those looking to develop transferable skills relevant to A Levels in Sciences, Social Sciences, and Maths.
- Anyone considering careers in medicine, finance, engineering, marketing, or research, where quantitative methods are heavily utilised.

A Future-Proof Choice

With data becoming one of the world's most powerful resources, statistical knowledge opens doors. From helping companies understand consumer behaviour to informing public policy and academic research, statisticians are in high demand. GCSE Statistics is a stepping stone into this dynamic field, fostering the "systems thinking" and "critical thinking" skills required by modern employers.

A Strong Companion to GCSE Maths

While GCSE Statistics complements GCSE Maths by reinforcing data handling and analytical skills, it is a separate qualification with its own distinct curriculum. It delves deeper into context, interpretation, and specific statistical distributions that are not covered in standard Mathematics. Studying both provides a comprehensive and robust mathematical foundation.

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Head of Mathematics – Mr. Dodgson



DISCLAIMER



Disclaimer

At the time of printing this Guide, the information contained in it is correct.

Please note however, that any of the courses described may be altered, added to or removed from our programme in the light of changed circumstances and/or in response to central government directives in what is increasingly a rapidly changing education environment.

Whilst we work very hard and do all we can to ensure pupils follow the courses they want to, we cannot guarantee all students their first choice of subjects, though in the vast majority of cases this will happen. We will consult with students on an individual basis where they may not be able to follow their chosen subjects.

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