

Options 2023, Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers,

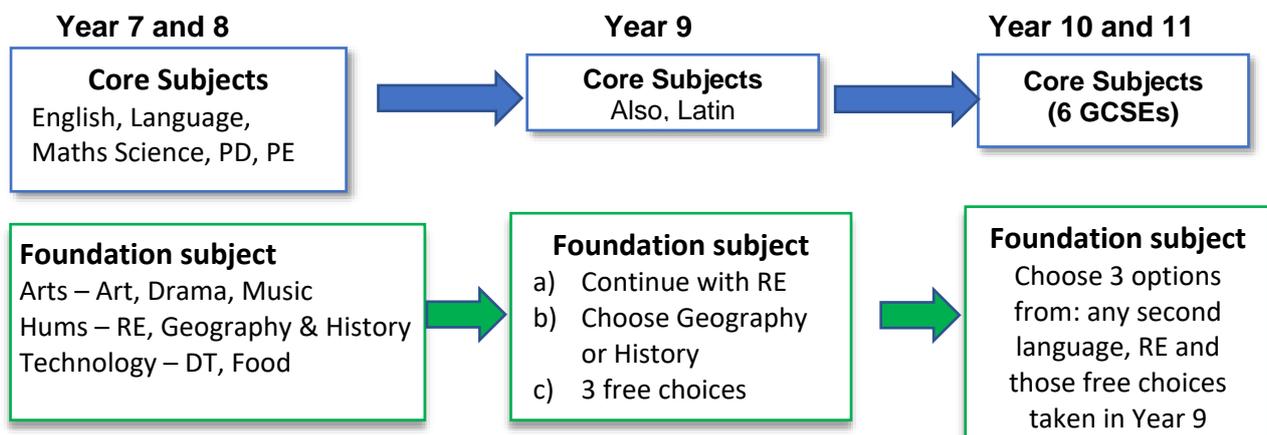
I hope you find this document useful. Choosing options is an exciting process, though a little daunting. This booklet provides an overview to our curriculum for the remaining three years of your child's time with us.

Firstly, you should be aware that pupils do not have a completely free choice! Throughout Years 9 to 11, the core subjects of English, Maths and Science will focus on the GCSE syllabi and a choice of either Double or Triple Sciences. Nearly all pupils will take GCSE English Language and Literature in our school as part of their core provision. Pupils must take part in core PE and the majority of pupils will continue to study a language. Beyond these compulsory aspects, pupils then have a choice of subjects they would like to study. It is important that pupils make informed decisions and so our option process gives plenty of opportunities for you to meet with colleagues and reflect on the options available.

The Year 9 curriculum is characterised by broader opportunities for pupils to experience new subjects such as Photography, Media Studies and Religious Education as discrete option subjects. Meanwhile, all pupils will continue their learning in Humanities to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is experienced. The School takes a varied approach to the organisation of teaching groups to ensure that the challenges of learning in different disciplines are effectively met.

By the end of Year 9, pupils will have a second opportunity to focus their learning as they choose their subjects for examination entry. In addition to the core provision, they will choose three options to take to GCSE. We would hope all pupils continue with a Humanity because alongside a range of other subject disciplines, qualifications in these disciplines are a sound foundation for post-16 learning. Where pupils have particular interests in music or sport for example, the School provides ample opportunities for them to pursue their interests even if not taken as an examination subject. Additionally, pupils may wish to continue with their Latin or second language course. We actively promote these opportunities and are keen to celebrate the achievements of our pupils in their participation of these additional learning opportunities.

Our overriding aim is to ensure that as many pupils as possible are able to study their chosen subjects. However, this is not always possible to achieve due to the availability of colleagues and the need to ensure the viability of group sizes.



The choices

All pupils study English, Maths, Science, core PE and Personal Development. These subjects take up 14 out of your child's 25 lessons each week. Option subjects take up the remaining 11 lessons. They then take 5 options in Year 9 and then you will refine this down to 3 options in Year 10 and Year 11. If your child does not take a language, they will have 1 extra free choice each year.

These are the options we offer:

Fine Art is a vibrant and dynamic subject that offers pupils the freedom to learn in ways that inspire and bring out the best in their skills and knowledge.

Computer Science has real relevance in our modern world. The course will give an in-depth understanding of how computer technology works and what goes on "behind the scenes".

Design and Technology covers core technical and designing and making principles, including a broad range of design processes, techniques and equipment.

Food Preparation and Nutrition provides an opportunity for pupils to prepare a wide variety of different dishes. We will investigate the functions of different ingredients as well as understand the foods that contribute to a healthy diet.

Drama allows pupils to develop performance skills or design skills including set design and sound. Pupils will gain confidence and experience they need for the future.

Geography gives pupils the opportunity to learn about both natural and social sciences. We will consider how geography impacts everyday life, the key opportunities and challenges facing the world.

History will help pupils understand past events and people. We believe that as a society there is importance of not just learning history but learning from history.

Latin (within the English curriculum) provides a foundation in linguistic and cultural competence, enabling pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of the Roman world through reading and responding to its language and literature. Latin can be taken either as a second language or as the main language – replacing French or Spanish

Modern Languages (French, German and Spanish) will help pupils develop their ability to write and speak in the language and to understand the language when it is written or spoken. Pupils may take a **second language** as one of their three free option choices.

Media - each time we watch television, read a newspaper or access the internet, we are exposed to the power of the Media. This dynamic and exciting subject provides pupils with an excellent tool to navigate and analyse the world we live in.

Music is constantly evolving, inspiring creativity and expression in a way that no other subject can. Our course offers pupils the chance to study a wide range of musical genres, with more opportunities for practical learning.

Photography will enable pupils to consider how ideas, feelings and meanings are conveyed and interpreted in images. Pupils will develop a knowledge and understanding of photography and cameras.

Physical Education is a combination of practical and theory work that builds pupils understanding of anatomy and physiology and the social aspects of sport. Pupils will need to be competent in three different sports.

Religious Education course involves the learning about two major world religions, Christianity and Islam and looks at their beliefs and practices, their customs and traditions, their festivals and holy days. We also learn different ethical perspectives. Meanings are conveyed in images, artefacts and products in their chosen area(s) of learning.

Sculpture - pupils will gain knowledge and understanding of how ideas, feelings and meanings are conveyed in images, artefacts and products in their chosen area(s) of learning.

Things to consider

What subjects do they enjoy?

Only your child knows the answer to this. If they like a subject, they will not mind working hard at it. Hard work is essential whatever they choose, but enjoyment makes the work easier.

What subjects are they good at?

As well as talking about this with your child, you should use the advice of their teachers and Form Tutor.

How do they enjoy working?

Some subjects will require them to do a lot of coursework. Others will be assessed mainly by exam. Consider together about which way of working they prefer.

What do they want to do when they leave school?

They may already know exactly what career they wish to follow. If so, they could choose the subjects which may be needed as qualifications. Most Year 9 pupils have no settled ideas of what they would like to do after leaving school. If this is true for your child, then help them choose a balanced set of courses which will leave them with plenty of possible careers to choose from later on.



The options timeline

There will be time for both pupils and parents to meet with subject teachers and senior colleagues in school and to take on board careers advice from a qualified advisor. Please take note of all the key dates.

10th November	Partners in Learning Evening An overview of the options process for both years – will be then shared on our website
1st March	There will be option talks recorded on our website for you to look at over the week – set aside a few hours and consider the options in the comfort of your home! The option form page will be open for you to populate your choices. You can make changes until the programme closes
Thursday 2nd March	Year 8 Options Fair and Year 9 Meet the Tutor Evening 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm Deliberately put on together so that Year 8 parents may speak with Subject Leaders and colleges and Year 9 pupils who are still unsure can look again at the options as well as speak with their Tutor
Thursday 16th March	Year 9 Parents' Evening You can then speak with teachers about your child's preferences. It may be useful for you to prioritise booking the preferred option teachers for this evening rather than English, Maths and Science.
Friday March 24th	Year 9 options deadline Closing 3pm
Thursday 27th April	Year 8 Parents' Evening You can then speak with teachers about your child's preferences. It may be useful for you to prioritise booking the preferred option teachers for this evening rather than English, Maths and Science.
Friday 28th April	Year 8 options deadline Closing 3pm

Further information about the courses

There is a detailed Curriculum booklet that can be downloaded from our website which has the information about the different GCSEs. This can be found at:

<https://www.westgate.hants.sch.uk/secondary-phase-curriculum>

There will be plenty of opportunity for both pupils and parents/carers to consider the optimum choices. We encourage you all to make maximum use of the information available, and the opportunities on offer, to engage with subject teachers and other professionals in school throughout the options process. Please do ask for further assistance or advice should you require it.

Yours sincerely

Mr P. Hurley