

2026

# Options

GCSE





# Contents

## Introduction

- 02 Choosing GCSEs
- 04 Top ten tips for choosing GCSEs

## Core Courses

- 05 IGCSE Mathematics
- 06 IGCSE English Language
- 06 IGCSE English Literature
- 08 GCSE Sciences

## Options

- 10 GCSE Modern Foreign Languages
- 12 GCSE Art and Design
- 14 GCSE Business
- 15 GCSE Classical Civilisation

- 16 GCSE Computer Science
- 18 GCSE Drama
- 20 GCSE Geography
- 22 IGCSE History
- 23 GCSE Latin
- 23 GCSE Music
- 25 GCSE Photography
- 26 GCSE Physical Education
- 27 GCSE Religious Studies

## Non exam courses

- 28 Physical Education
- 28 Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education
- 28 Frequently asked Questions

# introduction

## Choosing GCSEs

After studying a wide range of subjects, students now begin to take the first steps in specialising their areas of study. Deciding which particular subjects to pick for GCSEs is an exciting process and it is important that students choose subjects that they will enjoy throughout the two-year course.

### CORE COURSES

In Forms IV and V, students follow a chosen programme of study for their GCSE courses. Students standardly take nine or ten GCSE subjects including a compulsory core of English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Students will be strategically grouped for Science and will be guided as to whether to take Combined Science (worth two GCSEs) or all three separate Sciences (worth three GCSEs). Although the separate Sciences are an advantage, if studying any of them at A Level, it is still possible to study A Level Science if a student has secured strong grades in their Combined Science GCSEs.

### OPTIONS

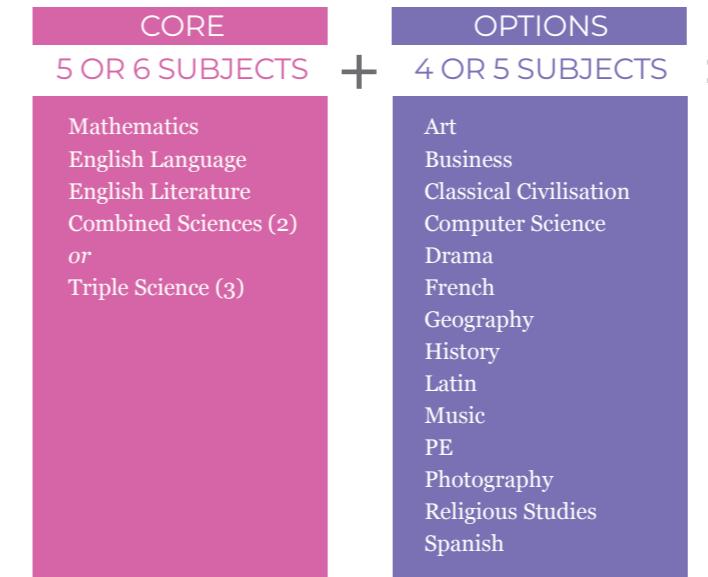
Students normally choose up to four additional subjects from a range of fifteen options. Many institutions and employers prefer a breadth of subjects at GCSE and so the School strongly recommends taking at least one Modern Foreign Language and considering a Humanities subject. Depending on provisional choices indicated by students, the subjects are arranged in blocks, and no more than one option can be taken from each block. We will ensure that the widest range of subject combinations is possible, catering for the most popular choices. If a student

doesn't take a subject at GCSE it does not necessarily mean that they cannot pursue their interest in other ways or that they cannot take the subject later at A Level. Most options can be taken at A Level even without having studied them at GCSE; for more information see the FAQs and speak to the relevant Head of Department.

On Friday 23 January 2026 the School will issue a provisional choices form which will be due for submission by Thursday 5 February 2026. This will allow us to ensure that the blocks we adopt will be suitable for as many students as possible. After that, the blocks will be finalised with the Final Options Sheet issued on Thursday 12 February 2026. This will be due in by Friday 27 February 2026. From this point forward we are unable to change the blocks. Throughout this options process the School will provide guidance and tasters of GCSE subjects, particularly for those subjects introduced for the first time at GCSE.

At Heathfield, the GCSE years are an exciting and personalised journey. We work closely with each student to ensure their curriculum is right for them, balancing their academic and co-curricular life, extending and supporting them, and ensuring that they achieve their aspirations for the Sixth Form and beyond.

We encourage students to pursue a broad and stimulating curriculum that reflects their unique strengths and interests. Through dedicated academic and pastoral support, we guide them in making meaningful decisions about their futures, ensuring they feel confident and well-prepared for the path ahead.



Education and development of the whole person require more than just academic focus, it's about exploring new possibilities and igniting passions. Our wide and diverse range of co-curricular subjects and activities evolve every year to accommodate new interests and trends. In addition, all students follow a complimentary programme of PE where they continue to develop healthy habits, learn to work as a team and strengthen friendships.

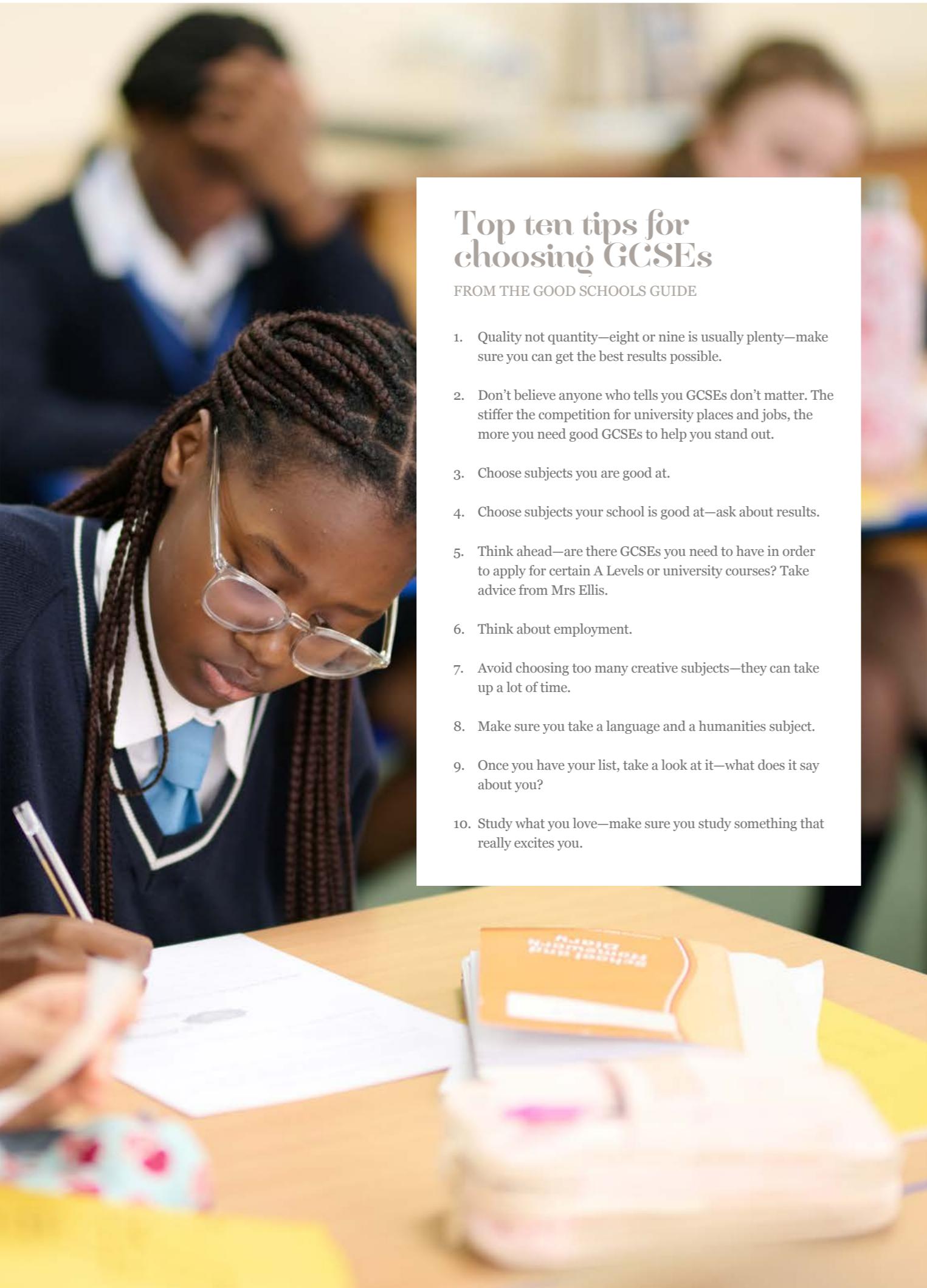
PSHEE (Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education) continues through the GCSE years, providing invaluable learning on important topics relevant to their age group. This is a time when students also learn how to be increasingly competent around their finances and personal organisation.

Discussions regarding Careers also take place in Forms III, IV and V. In Form III in PSHE, the students will explore their options using the Unifrog interests and skills tests to signpost different pathways and subjects and will be able to meet with

Mrs Ellis (Careers Coordinator) to discuss their options choices if they need further advice. In Forms IV and V, the students will continue to work on their future choices, using Unifrog psychometric testing to assist them in their decision making, along with external speakers and leaders visiting Heathfield, exposing students to new ideas and a variety of alternative career paths. Mrs Ellis encourages students to meet with her to talk about their initial thoughts and ideas around their next steps.

While they explore their passions, strive to do their best and prepare for their next steps, whatever they may be, we are here to support and inspire them every step of the way. Form Tutors are an invaluable source of information, and the Head of Year will guide students through the options process alongside Miss Huyton (Deputy Head).

In conjunction with their GCSE examinations, our students cultivate essential life skills and foster creativity, confidence and camaraderie, ensuring their own unique and successful Heathfield journey.



## Top ten tips for choosing GCSEs

FROM THE GOOD SCHOOLS GUIDE

1. Quality not quantity—eight or nine is usually plenty—make sure you can get the best results possible.
2. Don't believe anyone who tells you GCSEs don't matter. The stiffer the competition for university places and jobs, the more you need good GCSEs to help you stand out.
3. Choose subjects you are good at.
4. Choose subjects your school is good at—ask about results.
5. Think ahead—are there GCSEs you need to have in order to apply for certain A Levels or university courses? Take advice from Mrs Ellis.
6. Think about employment.
7. Avoid choosing too many creative subjects—they can take up a lot of time.
8. Make sure you take a language and a humanities subject.
9. Once you have your list, take a look at it—what does it say about you?
10. Study what you love—make sure you study something that really excites you.

## Core Courses

### IGCSE Mathematics

EXAM BOARD: EDEXCEL

#### Aims

We encourage every student to achieve their full potential in Mathematics. Students will all take an active and enthusiastic role in their lessons, learning via a variety of different teaching styles and using a mixture of guided discovery, ICT and traditional methods. We aim to develop each student's problem-solving skills and ability to think independently.

#### Specification

We are following the Edexcel Linear specification for the International GCSE Mathematics A. The specification aims to develop knowledge and understanding of topics covered in Form III and includes new topics that have not been covered before. The IGCSE course emphasises the importance of making connections between mathematical concepts and applying the functional elements of Mathematics to real life situations.

The course is split into the following six areas:

#### Numbers

- Encouraging the use of mental arithmetic, while becoming more competent in the use of a scientific calculator
- Being able to apply these methods to a range of real life and abstract problems

#### Algebra

- Modelling real life situations using algebra to solve problems
- Understanding how number operations underpin algebraic techniques

#### Geometry

- Exploring the properties of angles, circles and polygons
- Using these properties to solve problems in a real world context

#### Measures

- Applying the formulae for area, perimeter and volume of 2D and 3D shapes
- Extending these skills to include circles, cones and spheres

#### Statistics

- Calculating averages and the range of data presented in a variety of contexts
- Understanding that different types of data require different representations and being able to display the data appropriately

#### Probability

- Using fractions or decimals to represent probabilities
- Understanding complex problems involving multiple events and conditional probability

#### Assessment

The examination for this qualification consists of two papers, each worth 50% of the course and a calculator is permitted for both papers. The Higher Tier examination is sat at the end of Form V and gives access to grades 9 to 3. Some students, who are targeting a grade 5, may be offered the opportunity to take the Foundation Tier in November of Form V with the aim of sitting the Higher Tier at the end of the year if they achieve the Foundation's maximum grade of a 5.

## IGCSE English Language

EXAM BOARD: CAIE

Every student at Heathfield School is required to take English Language. The course enables learners to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively in spoken and written word. They are challenged to use a wide range of vocabulary, accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling, and to develop their own personal style in awareness of the audiences they address. Students will explore the use of language, select specific information, and evaluate ideas. These skills are assessed in two papers, Paper 1 (Reading), which focuses on various aspects of comprehension, and Paper 2 (Writing), which encompasses argumentative and creative writing.

### Assessment

**Paper 1 (Reading)**

80 marks (50%)

2 hours

**Paper 2 (Writing)**

80 marks (50%)

2 hours

### After GCSE

No matter what path students take after GCSEs, they are required to achieve a pass (at least grade 4) in IGCSE English Language. Many universities expect a minimum of a grade 5, which indicates the ability to handle texts written for undergraduate-level courses.

English Language and Literature IGCSEs provide students with the skills to tackle a host of essay-based subjects at A Level, including but not limited to English Literature and English Language.

Students at Heathfield will cover the IGCSE English Language in Form IV and sit the exam in May 2027 and then study the IGCSE Literature in Form V sitting the exam in May 2028.

Students will have the opportunity to take the Language examinations again in

May 2028 if necessary.

## IGCSE English Literature

EXAM BOARD: CAIE

Every student at Heathfield School will follow the IGCSE English Literature course. The course gives students the opportunity to study literature texts from a range of times, locations and forms, including a novel, a selection of poetry, and a play by Shakespeare. Students will engage with these texts through discussion, analysis and essay writing. They contain themes and ideas which students will explore as they develop their own unique responses to the texts.

A key skill is the ability to discuss the ways in which writers achieve their effects, which is developed through the study of the set texts; students have the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of this in the Unseen Paper, where they are offered the choice between an unstudied poem or prose extract and invited to comment on how it creates its effects. This course enables students to develop the critical skills required to study English Literature at A Level.

### Assessment

**Paper 1: Poetry and Prose (Open Text)**

50 marks (50%)

1 hour 30 minutes

**Paper 2: Drama and Unseen (Open Text)**

50 marks (50%)

2 hours



## GCSE Sciences

EXAM BOARD: AQA

Every student at Heathfield School is required to take Science up to GCSE level, either as three separate subjects or as part of the two GCSE Combined Science course. Students begin the GCSE content in Form III, and all cover separate Science GCSE material initially. In Form IV students are placed into Separate or Combined sets, based on ability and independence demonstrated in Form III. For those sitting the Triple Science course this will be reviewed again for Form V to give every student the best chance of success.

### Separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics GCSEs

All students in separate sets in Form V will be entered for the three Science GCSEs. This will not involve any extra Science lessons but will mean that content within the lessons will be covered at a faster pace. If a student is struggling it is more appropriate for them to be on the Combined Science course, worth two GCSEs. Much of the content is transferable as a large percentage of the work covered is common to both routes.

All three GCSEs are assessed at the end of Form V with six written papers in total, each being 1 hour 45 minutes long. To assess their experimental skills, students are required to complete a set number of experiments, about which they could be asked in their papers. At the end of the course students are awarded a grade from 1-9 (9 being the highest), one each for Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

The table below outlines the specification topics assessed in each examination paper.

Biology	Chemistry	Physics
Paper 1 Topics 1-4 (50%)	Paper 1 Topics 1-5 (50%)	Paper 1 Topics 1-4 (50%)
Paper 2 Topics 5-7 (50%)	Paper 2 Topics 6-10 (50%)	Paper 2 Topics 5-8 (50%)

### Combined Science Trilogy (worth 2 GCSEs)

Students in Combined sets will continue their study of the three Sciences and will be examined in June of their Form V year, when they will have to complete six written papers, two in each of the Sciences. These are shorter than the Separate Papers at 1 hour 15 minutes. To assess their experimental skills, students are required to complete a set number of experiments, about which they could be asked in their papers. Students are awarded two grades at the end of the course from 1-1 to 9-9. This creates 17 potential grade combinations, with the possibility of numbers being different e.g. 5-4. For some students the option to take Foundation Tier may be appropriate, focusing on core concepts and providing a more manageable route to achieve a good grade.

The table below outlines the specification topics assessed in each examination paper.

Combined Science		
Biology 1 - Topics 1-4 (16.7%)	Chemistry 1 - Topics 8-12 (16.7%)	Physics 1 - Topics 18-21 (16.7%)
Biology 2 - Topics 5-7 (16.7%)	Chemistry 2 - Topics 13-17 (16.7%)	Physics 2 - Topics 22-24 (16.7%)

### After GCSE

Students who take Combined Science will still have the option of studying any of the Sciences for A Level providing they have achieved at least a grade 6-6 in their science examinations. Students who have taken the Sciences separately are required to have at least a grade 6 in the Science they wish to take, and one other science. All students should also be proficient in Mathematics (Grade 6 or above).



## Options

### GCSE Modern Foreign Languages

EXAM BOARD: AQA

The Modern Foreign Languages Department offers GCSE courses in French and Spanish.

Every student at Heathfield School is strongly encouraged to take either French or Spanish at GCSE. Students in the top set are stretched beyond the standard GCSE level, using the expertise of native teachers and having plenty of oral practice. Foundation tier students are encouraged to acquire the basic language skills required for success at GCSE. The confidence that students gain from the oral work also benefits other subjects a great deal. No matter what students want to study after their GCSEs or what career they choose, having modern foreign languages improves opportunities later in life.

The majority of students take their language GCSE examinations in Form V, although fluent or near-fluent speakers may be allowed to sit their GCSE at the end of Form IV. We believe that it is usually better for students to wait if there is any doubt; the added maturity helps them to earn the Grade 9, which they might forego by rushing through the course. Although we aim to cater for all cases, it is not possible to enter the GCSE course as a complete beginner.

In addition to French and Spanish, other languages (currently Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Japanese, Portuguese and Russian) may be studied to GCSE level as paid for extra lessons (subject to the availability of teaching time and a suitable teacher). Further details can be obtained from the Modern Foreign Languages Department.

The new GCSE specifications allow students to develop their ability and ambition to communicate with native speakers in speech and writing. Through studying a modern language, they should also broaden their horizons and develop new ways of seeing the world.

Both French and Spanish courses concentrate on developing the skills necessary to understand and communicate in the language. Vocabulary and grammar work are important parts of language learning and enable students to perform well at GCSE, to prepare for the greater demands of A Level or further examinations and to be able to use their knowledge in a travel or work situation. Each syllabus aims to foster understanding and awareness of the relevant countries, their people and their way of life, to provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation.

The GCSE course is a two year course. French and Spanish benefit from the same structure for the final examination. These qualifications are linear which means that students will sit all their language examinations at the end of the course. Each paper (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) counts for 25% of the overall marks. GCSE languages have a Foundation Tier (Grades 1-5) and a Higher Tier (Grades 4-9). At the end of the two years, a tier is chosen and all four question papers must be taken at the same tier. The GCSE also includes translation from and into the target language, which is assessed in the reading and writing examinations. Literary texts in the Reading assessment form part of the stimulus materials. The speaking assessment is conducted with the classroom teacher but marked externally.



## Options

### GCSE Art and Design

EXAM BOARD: EDEXCEL

General outline: GCSE Art and Design

Students will follow one or more of the following artistic pathways: Drawing, Installation, Digital Photography, Mixed Media, Land Art, Painting, Printing, Sculpture, Illustration, Constructed Textiles, Installed Textiles, Fashion Design, Stitched or Embellished Textiles, Jewellery, Animation and Film.

Although practical skills are taught throughout the course, the development is extremely flexible and tailored to each individual. Support for this is provided through co-teaching and 1:1 tutorials, which are highly adaptive to accommodate emerging interests and talents.

#### UNIT 1 PERSONAL PORTFOLIO: 60%

The Personal Portfolio (coursework) is produced during the three terms of Form IV, and the first term of Form V. An overarching theme for the Personal Portfolio is given, for example, 'Identity', 'Superstition', 'Similarity and/ or Difference', which is deliberately broad and open-ended, and encourages students to develop project ideas with originality and personal insight.

#### Form IV Michaelmas Term

With the examinations board's renewed focus on observational drawing, much of this term is given over to refining drawing skills to ensure that students are able to meet the requisite standard, irrespective of which artistic discipline they prefer. Students are taught how to draw using a range of methods to suit individual learning.

#### Form IV Lent Term

Students embark on a series of taught workshops in a variety of skills, which the student is then able to use to fit their preferred discipline. For example, a workshop in printing could be adapted onto fabric for a student interested in Textiles, onto paper for Fine Art, onto clay for Ceramics, or onto found objects for a student interested in Sculpture. Stop-frame animation could just as easily be produced with textiles as it could with painting or clay.

**Form IV Summer Term & Form V Michaelmas Term**  
Students will work with more independence to develop their theme in whichever discipline they are best suited to. A series of outcomes will be produced during this time, and which will offer a creative conclusion to themes researched and explored.

#### UNIT 2 EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT: 40%

The Externally Set Assignment (examination project) is released by Edexcel at the beginning of the Lent Term in Form V, and culminates in a 10 hour examination in the Summer Term.

With 1:1 support, students will have the freedom to develop this theme according to their interests, and in whichever discipline they have shown aptitude. In Form V, students are given the opportunity to attend optional paid Life Drawing classes.

Although the 10-hour examination may sound intimidating, all preparatory studies (30%) are produced in advance. Students are also encouraged to make a final piece prior to the examination, so that there can be no surprises when reproducing the piece under timed conditions (10%).

#### Assessment

Work is internally marked and externally moderated.

#### Please note the following:

Work is marked synoptically and holistically across all four of the Assessment Objectives. This means that students will begin the course at Level 0 and continue to increase this as they build and refine their portfolio of work, over the five terms of the course. It would be expected that most students would have reached a Level 4 by the end of the first year.

25% of the marks are awarded to 'Developing' ideas. This means that students must be able to evidence perceptive critical thinking and independent review, of both their own and others' artwork.

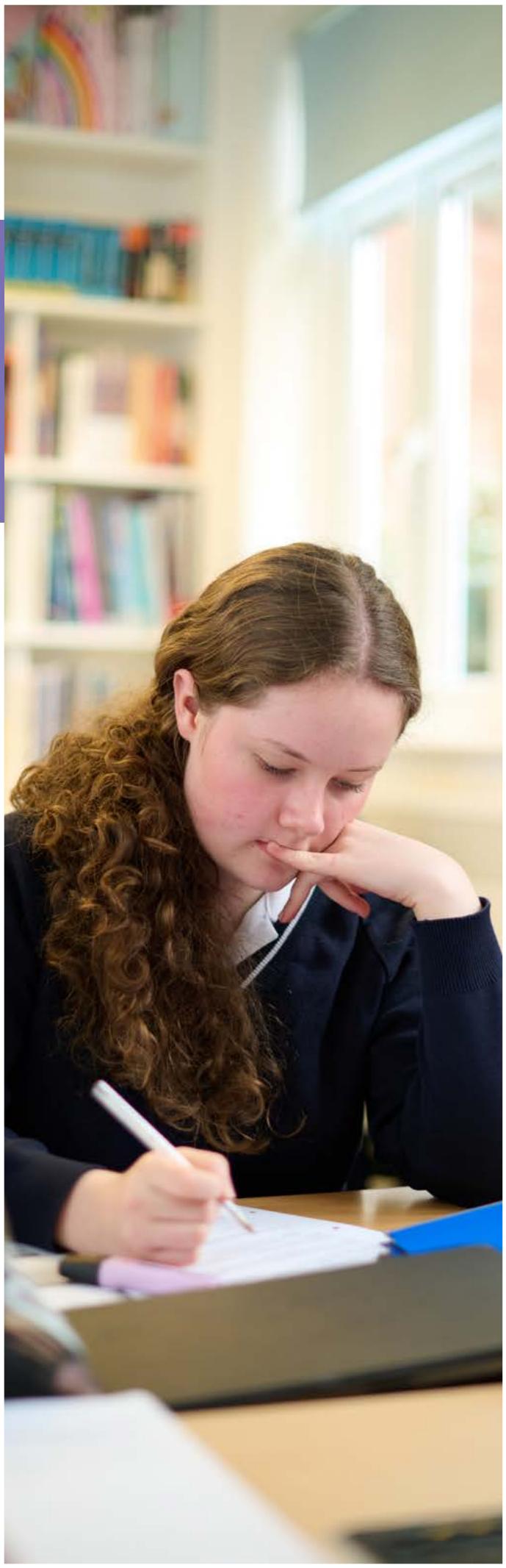
25% of the marks are awarded to 'Recording', meaning that highly skilled drawing and photography needs to be evidenced if students are to secure a high level at the end of the course.

#### Partnerships and Relationships

Falmouth School of Art: Heathfield is the first school in the UK to have a Creative Partnership; the Art Department works in collaboration with Senior Tutors on the BA Fine Art and BA Drawing.

Parsons Paris: Heathfield are in a collaborative agreement with Parsons Paris which is the only agreement of its kind in existence in the world. It is in recognition of the exceptional standard of work produced in fashion and textiles. Students taking GCSE Art and Design will have access to a Fashion Designer in Residence from Parsons Paris and will receive a 10% discount on summer programs they offer.





## GCSE Business

EXAM BOARD: EDEXCEL

The aim of this course is to provide an interesting and inspiring qualification which reflects the demands of a truly modern and evolving business environment. It allows students to develop as commercially minded and enterprising individuals.

The qualification consists of two externally examined papers which must be taken in one sitting in May/June in any single year.

### Theme 1: Investigating small business

Written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes  
50 percent of the qualification, 90 marks

#### Content overview:

Enterprise and entrepreneurship | Spotting a business opportunity | Putting a business idea into practice | Making the business effective | Understanding external influence on business

Assessment overview. The paper is divided into three sections:  
Section A: 35 marks Section B: 30 marks Section C: 25 marks

The paper will consist of calculations, multiple choice, short-answer and extended writing questions. Questions in Sections B and C will be based on business contexts given in the paper. Calculators may be used in the examination.

### Theme 2: Building a business

Written examination: 1 hour 45 minutes  
50 percent of the qualification, 90 marks

#### Content overview:

Growing the business | Making marketing decisions | Making operational decisions | Making financial decisions | Making human resource decisions

#### Assessment overview

The paper is divided into three sections:  
Section A: 35 marks Section B: 30 marks Section C: 25 marks

The paper consists of calculations, multiple choice, short answer and extended-writing questions. Questions in Sections B and C will be based on business contexts given in the paper. Calculators may be used in the examination.

Business is a useful GCSE subject to take, both as a preparation for the A Level and out of general interest and, as such, students will become critically aware of current affairs. It helps to build skills that will be of practical use in later life. For example, students will be able to analyse a business scenario and form a justified recommendation/option. A good level of mathematical ability is required and questions also rely on reading comprehension and being able to write clearly and concisely.

## GCSE Classical Civilisation

EXAM BOARD: OCR

Classical Civilisation is a study of the civilisations and empires of the ancient world that have shaped and influenced humanity to the present time. The languages, politics, economics, religions and literatures of the western world and beyond owe much in particular to the ancient Greek and Roman civilisations. The subject is an enquiry into the past with which we have a shared cultural heritage. Students who like studying literature, history, religion, drama and culture will enjoy Classical Civilisation.

Topics studied at GCSE level include life in the cities of Athens and Rome, Greek and Roman mythology and religion, archaeology of ancient Greece and Homer's epic poetry.

GCSE Classical Civilisation contains two examination papers. Each paper has equal weighting (50%) and each examination is one hour and thirty minutes long.

#### EXAM PAPER 1: THEMATIC STUDY

##### Myth and Religion

Many learners come to Classical Civilisation due to a love of the mythology of the ancient world, and so this forms a central part of this thematic component. Students will study myths regarding the role of the gods and heroes in the founding of Athens and Rome and the importance of Heracles/Hercules to both the Greek and Roman world. These are well known stories that students will enjoy engaging with and studying in increased depth. Myth as a symbol of power will also be explored, as will ever-popular myths about the underworld.

Students will also look at the role of religion in the everyday lives of ancient Greeks and Romans. The study of temples, sacrifice, festivals, death and beliefs in the afterlife will give a broad overview of religion in the ancient world, and provides opportunity for the study of a wide variety of material remains, including remarkable temples and works of art. Students will be required to make informed comparisons between Greek and Roman ideas, including the characteristics of the different societies, and the impact of the different cultural contexts on the theme studied. They will also be expected to use literature and visual/material culture in conjunction with one another in order to inform their judgements, including discussion of why or how the sources may present things differently from each other.

#### EXAM PAPER 2: LITERATURE AND CULTURE

##### The Homeric World

The Greeks themselves recognised the world of Homer's poems as the cradle of Greek literature and civilisation, and this component provides the opportunity for the study of a fascinating period of history and a work of literature with great enduring appeal.

The Culture section involves a study of life in Mycenaean times. This is a very diverse area, allowing the study of particular sites, their archaeology and the valuable role they play in our understanding of the age. The Mycenaean Age is also rich in sculpture, frescos and jewellery, as well as the famous tombs and their accompanying treasure, meaning that students can study a wide range of fascinating materials. Everyday life in Mycenaean times is also explored, allowing students to consider what life was like for real people in this period, rather than simply focusing on the exploits of epic heroes. However, since the exploits of epic heroes are one of the most popular areas of study for students, Homer's *Odyssey* has been chosen to form the Literature half of this component. The selection of books chosen for study in this component combines the fantastical and enjoyable tales of Odysseus' journey, with those which give a possible insight into everyday life, including aspects such as palace life and the lives of women. The final books, which focus on the battle between Odysseus and the suitors, are exciting in themselves and also pose interesting questions about revenge and punishment.

**Extra-Curricular:** Students will have the opportunity to visit classical sites and exhibitions to support classroom learning and even excursions abroad; the Classics department has run trips recently to Athens, Delphi and Rome and we aim to run a trip every two years.

## GCSE Computer Science

EXAM BOARD: OCR SYLLABUS: J277

Studying GCSE Computer Science offers students a myriad of compelling reasons to engage with this dynamic and rapidly evolving field. Firstly, in an increasingly digital world, possessing a foundational understanding of the Computer Sciences equips students with essential skills for the future job market. The course cultivates problem-solving abilities, logical reasoning, and computational thinking, fostering a mindset that transcends the boundaries of programming.

Moreover, the GCSE Computer Science provides a gateway to creativity, enabling students to develop and implement their ideas through coding and software development. As technology continues to play a pivotal role in diverse industries, students who study GCSE Computer Science gain a competitive edge, not only in terms of employability but also in their capacity to comprehend and shape the technological landscape that impacts our daily lives. Beyond the pragmatic advantages, the subject fosters a deep appreciation for the ethical considerations and societal impacts of technology, nurturing responsible digital citizens.

In essence, studying GCSE Computer Science is an investment in intellectual growth, practical skills and a holistic understanding of the digital world. Additionally, it offers a deep understanding of computational thinking and the ability to apply it to any chosen programming language.

### What will I study?

In Form IV, there is a strong emphasis on procedural programming in Python. Students will engage in an authentic programming experience which supports their learning and exam preparation. Students will analyse problems in computational terms through practical experience and devise creative algorithms by designing, writing, testing, debugging and evaluating programs whilst ensuring their code is well-written, efficient and conforming to coding conventions and standards.

In Form V, the concentration will shift to theoretical study. Students will develop their understanding and application of the core concepts which will be put into perspective, considering the thorough and robust understanding from the practical component in Form IV.

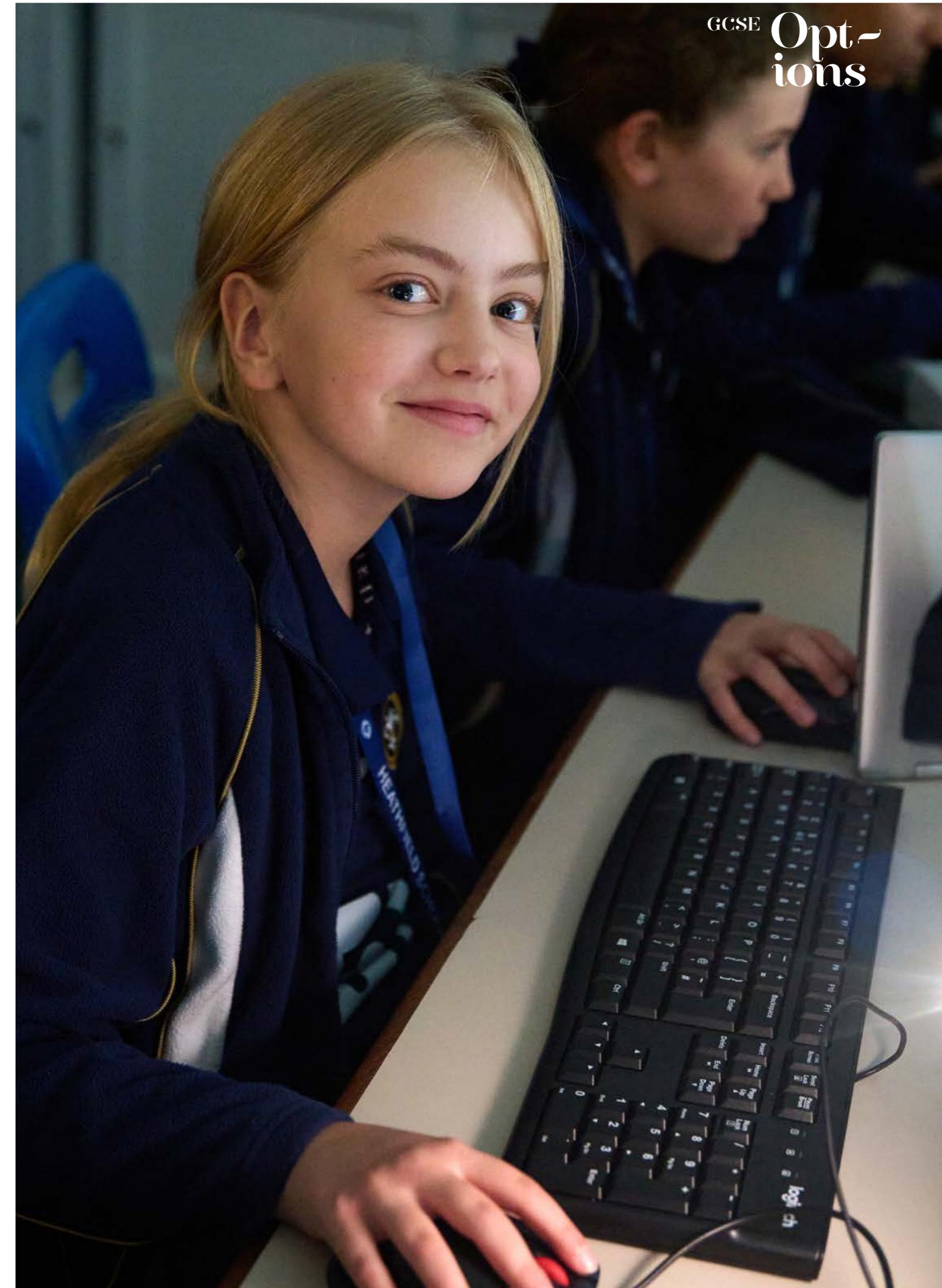
### Assessment

Paper 1 (50%) written theoretical

Paper 2 (50%) written programming, with theory of programming

### After GCSE

Studying Computer Sciences will enable students to develop valuable analytical and critical thinking skills, which are transferable to any field of study. Being able to think creatively, innovatively and logically is an attractive asset in the modern workplace. There are many disciplines that incorporate the Computer Sciences.



## GCSE Drama

EXAM BOARD: EDUQAS ( WJEC)

The study of Drama aims to nurture creativity, personal growth, self-confidence, communication and analytical skills through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and exercise of the imagination. It promotes students' involvement in and enjoyment of Drama as a performer, deviser, director and designer.

Students will have the opportunity to attend professional and community dramatic performances, and develop their skills as an informed and thoughtful audience member. Throughout the course, students will be given opportunities to participate in and interpret their own and others drama. Investigating the forms, styles, and contexts of drama, learning to work collaboratively to develop ideas, to express feelings, experiment with technical elements and to reflect on their own and others performances.

### Course Content

#### COMPONENT 1: DEVISING THEATRE

40% of qualification. Internally assessed/externally moderated

This component involves the creation, development and performance of a piece of devised theatre. Students will be assessed as actors or designers, and must produce a finished piece of theatre; together with a portfolio of supporting evidence and an evaluation of the final performance or design.

#### There are 3 stages to the component:

- 1 Devising from a stimulus and creating supporting evidence during the process
- 2 Realising the piece of theatre in front of an audience
- 3 Evaluating the final piece and students' individual contribution to it

GCSE Drama demands more than a simple enjoyment of acting; it also requires academic skills and an interest in the creation, analysis and evaluation of theatre as an art form. By studying GCSE Drama, students will learn how the subject contributes to social and cultural commentary; and will come to appreciate that drama, whether intended for audiences or not, provides significant opportunities for expressing cultural and personal identity. The course will relate well to GCSE English and History. Whilst A Level Theatre Studies is more academically demanding, many students have taken the subject on into the Sixth Form and have been extremely successful. Former Theatre Studies students have gone on to earn places at RADA and LAMDA, or chosen to study at university for a Bachelor of Arts degree.

#### COMPONENT 2: PERFORMING FROM A TEXT

20% of qualification. Externally assessed

The study of two extracts from the same performance text chosen by the centre, and will be assessed as either an actor or designer. Students will participate in one performance using sections of text from both extracts.

#### COMPONENT 3: INTERPRETING THEATRE

40% of qualification. Written paper; 1 hour 30 mins

##### Section A: Set Text

A series of questions on ONE set text from a choice of five. The examination gives the opportunity to show understanding of the processes involved in taking a play from page to stage.

##### Section B: Live Theatre Review

One question, from a choice of two, requiring analysis and evaluation of a given aspect of a live production seen during the course.



## GCSE Geography

EXAM BOARD: AQA

GCSE Geography provides an exciting opportunity for you to learn more about the world, its places and its people.

GCSE Geography provides a broad curriculum covering both physical and human Geography as well as developing a range of skills. The study of Geography leads to a sense of wonder about the world in which we live – the places, the people and the environment. It helps to make sense of the complex and ever changing world. It explains the processes and systems of physical and human geography including the physical landscapes, how people and environments interact, how economies, societies and cultures interact and how we can make the world a sustainable place.

Geography is a popular option at Heathfield and is highly valued by both universities and employers. Geography not only allows you to understand and explain key geographical concepts and processes, but also develops your ability to articulate how things work, how they are changing and to critically evaluate ideas. Furthermore, you will learn how to collect and use primary data, present your findings and critique the work you did. These research skills coupled with a strong ability to analyse a wide array of information and data sources, are skills which can be used in a multiple career paths.

Travel the world from the classroom, exploring case studies in the United Kingdom, Spain, Nigeria, New Zealand, Nepal, Malaysia and Brazil. A two night residential fieldtrip on the Dorset coast will allow you to see the coastal features you have been learning about, to collect data on Dorset's beaches and investigate the human Geography of the Isle of Portland.

AQA GCSE Geography is assessed over 6 core topics plus the fieldwork through 3 examination papers:

### PAPER 1: LIVING WITH THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Examination: 1 hour 30 minutes

35% of GCSE

**Section A:** The challenge of natural hazards

**Section B:** The living world

**Section C:** Physical landscapes in the UK

### PAPER 2: CHALLENGES IN THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Examination: 1 hour 30 minutes

35% of GCSE

**Section A:** Urban issues and challenges (a case study based unit covering Bristol, Rio de Janeiro and Freiburg)

**Section B:** The changing economic world (exploring the development gap and the Nigerian and UK economy)

**Section C:** The challenge of resource management (Girls are offered some choices on case studies to explore the world's food, water and energy resources)

### PAPER 3 : GEOGRAPHICAL APPLICATIONS

Examination: 1 hour 15 minutes

30% of GCSE

**Section A:** Issue evaluation – a booklet on a special topic is released 12 weeks before the exam to read

**Section B:** Fieldwork – assessed on fieldwork skills and the fieldwork you undertook



## IGCSE History

EXAM BOARD: EDEXCEL

It is a common misconception that History involves writing lots of essays. In fact, the vast majority of examination questions carry a tariff of around 3-10 marks and therefore require a relatively short answer. The content and skills required for the examinations are taught in active and engaging ways to ensure that the learning process is fun and effective.

Choosing History at GCSE will provide students with plenty of opportunities for further progression. At colleges and universities, History is considered to be an academically rigorous subject and is therefore very highly regarded no matter what career path students wish to pursue in the future. Through the study of History students will gain vital key skills such as: problem solving, analysis of evidence, empathy and teamwork. These skills are essential not only for History and other subjects in schools, but for any career they may wish to pursue in the future. Therefore, History can gain students entry into a wide range of careers, including television, radio, journalism, the police force, social work and the civil service.

In 2013 we introduced the History International GCSE (IGCSE), a highly respected alternative to the mainstream GCSE qualification which has been adopted by a number of prestigious independent schools. The History IGCSE is comprised of four units, all of which are assessed in two 1 hour 30 minute examinations. There is no controlled assessment.

### PAPER 1

Covers units 1 and 2. It is the depth study paper and contains four different questions testing chronological understanding and the ability to explain cause and effect.

### PAPER 2

Covers units 3 and 4. It includes a source based historical investigation and a breadth study focusing on 'change over time'.

#### **Unit 1: A World Divided: Superpower Relations after the Second World War, 1943-72**

This unit focuses on the changing relations between the superpowers after the Second World War up to the beginning of Détente.

#### **Unit 2: A Divided Union: Civil Rights in the USA, 1945-74**

This unit focuses on the period of hysteria and protest in the USA brought about by the Cold War, Vietnam War and black civil rights.

#### **Unit 3: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1905-24**

Students will study the upheaval in Russia during this period which started with an attempted revolution in 1905 and culminated in a full revolution in 1917 and the formation of the world's first communist state.

#### **Unit 4: Conflict, Crisis and Change: China, 1900-1989**

Students will learn about a period of great change in Chinese history dominated by revolution, civil war and dictatorship. The focus will largely be on the impact of Chairman Mao and his successors' reforms on the Chinese people.

## GCSE Latin

EXAM BOARD: OCR

Did you know that 60% of words in the English Language and 80% of words in the Romantic Languages derive from Latin? At Heathfield students have the opportunity to acquire this language and study a subject that is generally considered an indicator of academic ability, which will help the student when applying and competing for a place at university.

The OCR GCSE Latin specification provides students with the opportunity of acquiring knowledge of the language, literature, culture, politics, economy, legal system and religion of the Roman world. They will develop skills in writing, translating, critical thinking, analysis, reflection, logic and organisation. In addition, students will have the opportunity to read and study some of the greatest and most influential writers of all time.

The full OCR GCSE Latin qualification is comprised of the following papers:

**Paper 1 Language** (1 Hour 30 minutes)

**Paper 2 Verse Literature** (1 Hour)

**Paper 3 Prose Literature** (1 Hour)

The Latin authors typically studied at GCSE include Virgil, Cicero, and Livy.

Students will have the opportunity to visit classical sites and exhibitions to support classroom learning and even excursions abroad; the Classics department has previously run trips recently to Athens, Delphi and Rome and we aim to run a trip every two years.



## GCSE Music

EXAM BOARD: EDEXCEL

Music GCSE is looked upon favourably by universities. It offers opportunities to play, compose and appraise music so that, even if students do not take A Level, they will have developed a high level of skill and knowledge which will be extremely useful later – either directly in a career or indirectly as part of their leisure activities. GCSE students will be expected to study Grade V Theory during the course, as this provides an excellent background to musical theory and harmony.

### Key subject aims

The Edexcel GCSE in Music specification:

- Encourages students to be inspired, moved and challenged by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study.
- Develops broader life skills, including critical and creative thinking, aesthetic sensitivity, emotional awareness, cultural understanding, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-motivation.
- Enables students to engage actively in the study of music.
- Develops musical skills and interests, including the ability to make music individually and in groups.
- Enables students to understand and appreciate a range of different kinds of music.

The Edexcel GCSE in Music comprises three units:

#### **Unit 1: Performing Music**

This is internally assessed and requires one solo and one ensemble performance, worth 30% of the total marks.

#### **Unit 2: Composing Music**

This is internally assessed and requires two compositions, one to a set brief and one free composition, together lasting a minimum of three minutes, worth 30% of the total marks.

#### **Unit 3: Music – Listening and Appraising**

This is externally assessed by means of a 1 3/4 hour written paper and requires the candidate to have knowledge of eight set works, worth 40% of the total marks.

### Teaching Approaches

A wide range of resources is available, including students' own laptops running Sibelius 8 for composition. Students will be encouraged to actively participate in groups such as Orchestra, Choir, Band and student formed groups, performing in school concerts and culminating in a biennial Overseas Tour. An annual trip is also arranged to an Orchestral Concert.

### After GCSE

Music GCSE is excellent preparation for the A Level Course in Performing, Composing, Historical and Analytical Studies. Music graduates may become Teachers, Arts Administrators, Music Publishers, Performers, Music Therapists, Instrument Repairers, Music Journalists, Radio or Television Producers, Army Musicians or Sound Engineers, amongst other career options.



## GCSE Photography

EXAM BOARD: AQA

Students are introduced to a variety of learning experiences which encourage the development of skills through the use of photography and photographic processes. Students will be guided how to develop their own strengths and interests in photography and follow their own lines of enquiry to produce a final portfolio submission and supporting workbooks.

During the course, students will be introduced to various techniques and will be able to demonstrate some ability in lighting, viewpoint, aperture, shutter speed and movement, depth of field, use of enlarger plus chemical and digital processes.

Students could choose to work in one or more of the following areas: portraiture, location photography, studio photography, experimental imagery, documentary, landscape and nature photography or perhaps photo-journalism or fashion photography.

### COMPONENT 1: PORTFOLIO

**60%**

Alongside initial introduction to photographic processes and techniques students will be given a theme from which they will develop an independent response evidencing their journey from the initial stages of the course to final outcome. During this time, students will have an opportunity to demonstrate different areas of knowledge, skills and understanding from across their course of study.

### COMPONENT 2: EXTERNALLY SET ASSIGNMENT

**40%**

AQA will provide a selection of starting points from which each student will choose one to pursue as a chosen title. The creative response will evidence students ability to draw together different areas of knowledge, skills and understanding from their initial starting point to realisation of intentions. At the end of this preparatory period, students will undertake 10 hours of supervised unaided work.

There are no prior learning requirements. However, the GCSE course does provide a strong foundation for further study at A level.

## GCSE Physical Education

EXAM BOARD: OCR

Studying GCSE Physical Education will introduce students to the amazing world of sports performance. Not only will students have the chance to perform in three different sports through the non-examination assessment component, but they will also develop wide ranging knowledge into the how and why of physical activity and sport.

Students will learn the reasons why we do things and why some people mentally and physically outperform others. They will also consider the ethical considerations on the use of drugs and gain an understanding of the consequences of inactivity and poor diet. We strongly advise that students who choose to take GCSE PE must be training and competing to a high standard weekly, preferably in three sports, or at least two. Students must be committed and enthused sportswomen and have a keen interest in both the physical and theoretical side of sport. At a time when female sport is breaking all records and glass ceilings this is a fantastic time for students to be widening their knowledge and understanding of sport.

### Specification Overview:

Physical factors affecting performance

This component will assess:

- 1.1 Applied anatomy and physiology
- 1.2 Physical training

Socio-cultural issues and sports psychology

This component will assess:

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

### Practical Performances

This component will assess:

Core and advanced skills in three activities taken from the approved OCR PE lists:

- One from the 'individual' list
- One from the 'team' list
- One other from either list

### Analysis and Evaluation of Performance

This component draws upon the knowledge, understanding and skills a student has learnt and enables them to analyse and evaluate their own or a peer's performance in one activity.

### Assessment

Written paper:

1 hour 30% of total GCSE (9–1) 60 marks

Written paper:

1 hour 30% of total GCSE (9–1) 60 marks

Practical Performance:

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 30% of total GCSE (9–1) 60 marks (20 per sport)

AEP

Non-exam assessment (NEA) 10% of total GCSE (9–1) 20 marks



## GCSE Religious Studies

EXAM BOARD: OCR

The RS full course is both academically rigorous and intellectually challenging. Studying RS will help students develop their thinking skills and understand the world around them. The topics and religions chosen will equip students to lead constructive lives in the modern world as well as to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religious beliefs and practices. The knowledge, understanding and skills gained as a result of studying GCSE Religious Studies are useful for a wide range of A level subjects and further academic studies.

### There are three parts of the course:

- Christian beliefs and teachings and Christian practices (25%)
- Muslim beliefs and teachings and Muslim practices (25%)
- Philosophical and Ethical themes (50%)

### Some of the topics studied in the Philosophy and Ethics module are:

- Relationships and families in the 21st century, sex, marriage, contraception, same-sex relationships and divorce
- Roles of men and women; equality; gender prejudice and discrimination
- The nature of God and the problem of evil
- Violence, peace and war
- Secularism, freedom of belief and dialogue between religious and non-religious groups in society

The course is assessed through three external exams at the end of Form V. Examination questions consist of shorter knowledge based questions and longer evaluation essays.

Religious Studies is a thriving subject both nationally and at Heathfield. Many students choose to continue on to A Level Religious Studies in the Sixth Form; some go on to select philosophical and theological courses at top universities including Oxford, Durham, Edinburgh and King's College, London.

## Compulsory lessons

28

### Physical Education

Students in Forms IV and V have three lessons a week. Two of these lessons will be PE lessons in which our key sports - Lacrosse and Netball - will take place, alongside a range of other options for students to explore and try out. We aim for all students to find sports which they enjoy and where they can increase their competency and confidence.

During their third weekly lesson, the students participate in a "Movement for the Mind" module which focuses on students' mental wellbeing, health and exercise. In these sessions students will have tailored options such as yoga, walk and talk, gym and fitness sessions. The aim of all our PE lessons is to provide students with a framework where they can compete and train in a team sport, and to provide options which highlight the importance of general physical activity and exercise. We encourage all students to discover a sport or exercise that they feel passionate about and want to positively and proactively engage with at Heathfield and beyond.

### Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

PSHEE is taught in Forms I-UVI in one lesson every two weeks. Lessons are supplemented by presentations from outside speakers and agencies.

The aim of the course is to help students to:

- Lead confident, healthy and responsible lives as individuals and as members of society.
- Gain practical knowledge and skills to help them live healthily and deal with the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and financial issues they face as they approach adulthood.
- Reflect on their experiences and try to understand and manage responsibly a range of relationships, showing respect for others.
- Believe in their ability to succeed and take responsibility for their learning and future choices.
- Demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others.
- Obtain and use different kinds of information, including the media, to form and express an opinion.

### Flourishing at School

Flourishing lessons are taught alongside students' GCSEs once every two weeks. These lessons are based on psychological research and are designed to allow students to develop skills to manage their own mental health and wellbeing. In these lessons students will learn about:

- What evidence tells us about what we can do to be happier and more mentally healthy.
- Mindfulness and activities that help them to be more mindful.
- Meditation and the positive effects that it can have.
- What their character strengths are and how they can use them to achieve success and wellbeing.
- The importance of different qualities such as kindness, motivation and mindset.

The goal of these lessons is to help students to develop a lifelong ability to look after their own and others' mental health and enable them to flourish and thrive.

### Frequently asked Questions

#### Q. What are the most important factors to consider when choosing GCSE options?

A. The most important factor is your interest in and passion for a subject – if you choose a subject you don't really enjoy, you are likely to struggle through the course. Another important factor is your ability in the subject, and it is always advisable to ask your teacher if they think you would be able to take their subject at GCSE. There are also factors you should not take into consideration, for example the subjects someone else likes and is choosing. At the end of the day, it is your GCSE and it is down to your commitment to and work in a subject that will determine your grade.

#### Q. Do I have to do a subject at GCSE if I want to do it at A Level?

A. While studying a subject at GCSE will certainly provide a helpful foundation for taking it at A Level, it is in fact possible to take most A Level subjects without having studied them at GCSE. This is linked to the importance of cumulative knowledge; in short, outside of the core subjects, it is only in languages where a strong baseline knowledge is absolutely required to take the A Level.

#### Q. Do I have to do Triple Science if I want to do a Science subject at A Level?

A. No, but it may help you to make the transition to A Level work more easily. Many people have managed to do A Level Sciences by taking Combined Science, and many schools do not offer the Triple Science option. However, you Mathematics needs to be strong for A Level Sciences.

#### Q. Do GCSE choices affect my options at university – and maybe even my career?

A. Because of the potential to take almost any A Level, GCSE choices have very little effect on your university and career options. With the core subjects you should be able to make most A Level choices and should have the GCSE qualifications requested by most universities and employers. You should note that some very competitive universities want to see more traditional academic subjects if you are applying for an academic course; if you have ambitions to study English at Oxford or Medicine at Cambridge then be careful about choosing subjects at GCSE. If this is the case a meeting with Mr Willis, Head of Sixth Form, is recommended to talk through your options.

#### Q. I want to give myself the best chance of getting into a competitive, academic course at university. What should I bear in mind when making my choices?

A. You may have heard about some of the concerns some universities have about the exams system. Because schools have more of an incentive to help students do well, more students are achieving the highest grades and it is therefore difficult for universities to tell which are the very best. One method that some universities are using is to compare the subjects in which their applicants earned their top GCSE grades. Rightly or wrongly, some universities believe that GCSEs in more traditional academic subjects are worth more.

#### Q. Can I change my mind later?

A. We would say that it is better to think things through carefully now and stick with your decision – unless something major happens. Remember that you may not be taught by the same teacher at GCSE, so your relationship with your existing teacher should not influence your choice of subjects. Also, GCSE work may be different, so if you find a topic you study in April less interesting you shouldn't suddenly decide that a subject you have enjoyed for three years is not for you. There may be more than one group at GCSE level, so don't choose based on your friends' choices. Even if you do the same subjects as your friends, you may not be in the same class. You need to be independent and sensible, taking the long view about what is best for you, irrespective of short term and less important considerations. Take advice from teachers and parents. If there is a major reason then we can consider late requests – but if a subject is full at that stage, or if an option has already been discontinued because so few people chose it, then we cannot accommodate your choice. We cannot consider requests to do two subjects in the same block – it would be physically impossible for you to be in two classrooms at once!

#### Q. Once I have made my choices I don't need to try in the subjects which I am dropping – right?

A. Wrong! You always need to complete to the best of your ability things which you have started. It does not reflect well on you if you leave things half-finished and neglected.

#### Q. Can I drop subjects partway through the GCSE if I am not enjoying them?

A. In general, the short answer is no. There are specific windows in which we will consider requests, but for the most part after the first three weeks we will consider you to be committed to that subject to the end of the course. There are a number of reasons for this, but the most important one is this: your education is meant to prepare you for life in many ways, and in the world of work and life more generally you need to learn to see things through. You cannot just drop anything you find hard or stop enjoying as much, as most people will have to encounter certain elements of their jobs which fall into those categories – and so it is important to build up resilience to help prepare you for life beyond the classroom.

#### Q. If I went to another school, would I be able to do any combination of subjects I liked?

A. This is highly unlikely. All schools now run option-blocking systems of some sort and will ask you to make some choices; you would be very lucky if your preferences exactly matched what is available. Planning early helps schools to provide the best teaching and resources – by allowing you a free rein to make choices late and continually change your mind they would risk offering you a poorer education and, in fact, a misleading introduction to the adult world, which is all about making and having to live with choices.

#### Q. I find studying foreign languages hard. Do I have to take one for GCSE?

A. Unless there is a very good reason why you should not study a foreign language, we would like you to take one at GCSE. Learning another language says a great deal about you as a person. It shows that you are interested in, and value, the culture of others. It demonstrates that you have the competency needed in speaking, listening and writing to communicate effectively beyond an English speaking audience. It confirms that you have a good understanding of grammar and syntax because many languages are not structured in the same way as English. It reveals that you are prepared to embrace a wider world. The skills that you develop in learning a language bring many benefits. Business and industry look for people with linguistic competence. Those with access to another language are likely to have a considerable advantage over others in landing the role of their dreams in a company with contacts overseas. Being able to speak the language of a country you visit either for business or pleasure will enhance your enjoyment of all aspects of your stay there. In addition, in the case of some universities a GCSE in a modern foreign language is an entrance requirement for any degree you will study there. For all these reasons and more, we strongly recommend that you study at least one foreign language at GCSE.

29

# Small School Big Opportunities



Heathfield School  
Ascot

**Heathfield School**  
London Road, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 8BQ, United Kingdom  
Incorporating St Mary's School Wantage

T: +44 (0) 1344 898342 E: [admissions@heathfieldschool.net](mailto:admissions@heathfieldschool.net) W: [heathfieldschool.net](http://heathfieldschool.net)