



Making the right choices:

A guide for Year 8 students and parents choosing subject options as part of our Information, Advice and Guidance process



This guide contains important information about what our students can opt to study from Year 9 onwards and is essential reading for all parents and students.

Welcome to the Information, Advice and Guidance process

This guide is very helpful reading for all students and parents - please review it before attending the IAG Evening.

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The Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) process is something that all Year 8 students moving into Year 9 undertake. It refers to supporting students to join the correct curriculum pathway for them, and helping them to select the right subject options to support their future study and career options.

This guide provides a summary of what the curriculum looks like for students when they start Year 9, and how we place students on one of two pathways. A key part of the IAG process is an Information Evening where students and parents can browse subject information stands and speak directly to subject teachers and ask any questions.

We encourage parents and students to read this guide together prior to this evening. There is basic information about each subject, to support students and parents to discuss possible options, and come prepared with any queries.

Important information about the pathway a student is placed on

All students join either the English Baccalaureate (EB) or Modern Baccalaureate (MB) pathway. The Baccalaureate is an additional qualification that is achieved by students studying a set of key subjects. The Baccalaureate certificate is recognised by many universities and employers, and it is automatically awarded based on achievement of studied subjects. Both the EB and MB pathways allow students to achieve the broad education that employers and universities are looking for.


Both are highly aspirational, recognised certificates, with the main difference being that students on the English Baccalaureate study a Modern Foreign Language. In terms of the IAG process this means:

- Students on the EB pathway will study a language plus their core subjects. They then choose either History or Geography plus one option to study in Years 9 and 10.
- Students on the MB pathway study the same core subjects, plus they choose an option to study in Years 9 and 10. However, because they are not studying a language they are then given a second option from a more limited pool of subjects. These subjects are determined by timetabling arrangements and student demand, and we communicate these in an assembly a few weeks after students have selected their initial option.

How is the pathway a student joins selected?

All students study a language during Years 7 – 8. We work with teachers and students so that those students who show an aptitude and enjoyment for studying a language are given the opportunity to gain a formal qualification by studying the EB pathway; students are then allocated to a pathway. Parents or students who feel that they need to be on a different pathway will need to discuss this with us.

Please note that due to timescales, parents and students are not advised which pathway they will join prior to the information evening. This does not affect the process or when we require submission of forms, as regardless of the pathway a student is on, they will be required to make one choice. This enables us to timetable options and confirm the pool of second options.



Students sit the majority of their final examinations at the end of Year 11. This is so that we can ensure that they are fully prepared, particularly for core subjects such as Maths and English. A small percentage of exams (including their option subject) are sat in Year 10. In Year 11 this lesson time is then used to concentrate on core subjects.

What does the curriculum look like for Year 9 and Year 10 students?

For students, moving into Year 9 will feel like a natural progression. The structure of lessons will remain the same, but they will of course be preparing for some formal examinations at the end of Year 10 and a higher number of exams at the end of Year 11.

Students study a core curriculum, plus their options. The charts below and on the next page illustrate the programmes of study for students during their time from Year 9 until the end of Year 11.

The curriculum during Year 9 and Year 10

The tables below illustrate the structure of the curriculum for students based on whether they are an English Baccalaureate (EB) or Modern Baccalaureate (MB) student. At the end of Year 10 students have exams in their option, in Religious Studies, plus the second option if they are on the Modern Baccalaureate pathway.

Year 9	Maths	English	Science	PE	Religious Studies	History/ Geography	Option 1	MFL	Option 2
English Baccalaureate (EB)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Modern Baccalaureate (MB)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•

Year 10	Maths	English	Science	PE	Religious Studies	History/ Geography	Option 1	MFL	Option 2
English Baccalaureate (EB)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Modern Baccalaureate (MB)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•

As detailed above, at the end of Year 10 students will sit some examinations in certain subjects. These are highlighted using in the table above. Students will sit exams in Religious Studies, their option, plus the second option (for MB students).



Empathy. Honesty. Respect. Responsibility.



The curriculum during Year 11

The table below illustrates the structure for students moving into Year 11. At the end of Year 11 students then sit exams in Maths, Maths Statistics, English Literature, English Language, Science (Additional or Triple award), Modern Foreign Languages (EB only), and History or Geography.

What happens to the timetabled slot completed in Year 10 for the option?

When students complete their option(s) at the end of Year 10 and sit their examination, this time in their timetables is filled by core subjects, so that we can support them to excel in their final Year 11 examinations.

Year 11	Maths	English	Science	PE	MFL	History/ Geography
English Baccalaureate (EB)	•	•	•	•	•	•
Modern Baccalaureate (MB)	•	•	•	•		•

Why are exams only taken in Year 10 and Year 11?

The Government has changed the rules around examinations so that the grade a student achieves the first time they sit an exam is the final grade that they leave school with. Whilst there are no rules about when a student can sit an exam, we have arranged entries around when students will be academically ready.

Throughout Years 9 – 11 we are constantly monitoring students to ensure that they are on track to achieve their potential. We challenge students every step of the way. All students are enrolled on to our 'Achieve' programme which provides a range of additional support and advice – see page 11 for further information about this.

...We offer students a comprehensive revision support package to help them succeed - this includes more intensive support during academy holidays.

What subjects students can choose from...

The following pages provide a brief summary of the options available to students. We recommend that parents and students read these in preparation for the IAG Evening so that a shortlist of questions can be discussed with subject teachers. The subject information stands are run by the staff teaching the subject, and they are able to answer detailed questions about programmes of study and how the qualification can support future career and education plans.



I would advise students not to make their final choices before attending the evening. I always thought I would choose Music, but when I spoke to teachers I realised that Photography would actually support me more in my ambition to work in the music industry in a promotional role.

- Current Year 10 student

Humanities subjects

All students will choose either History or Geography as part of achieving their Baccalaureate certificate.

Geography (GCSE)

This course will help students understand more about the world in which they live. Geography is about so much more than the location of countries – students will look at Physical Geography such as earthquakes as well as Human areas such as tourism. This subject supports a wide range of careers such as town and country planning as well as environmental work. A number of field trips will be arranged to support what is studied in class.

History (GCSE)

History is a fascinating subject that helps students to make sense of the present as well as develop their reasoning and debating skills. It relates to many careers such as Law, and this subject is brought to life through lesson activities and opportunities to take part in residential trips. A range of units are studied, including the First World War, where students have the opportunity to visit the Battlefields in Belgium. Studies also focus on the USA and the history of medicine and health over time.

Next steps...

Students then choose a subject based option. We offer a huge range of courses, with something to suit all. The top tips on page 11 may be of assistance when reviewing these subject summaries detailed over the following pages.



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Health Science subjects

Health and Social Care

(BTEC)

This qualification provides students with a taste of what the health and social care sector is like, enabling them to make informed choices about their future career. The course includes one exam and three additional coursework elements. Students study topics including human lifespan and development, health and social care values, social influences on health and wellbeing and the impact of nutrition on health and wellbeing. All of these topics will provide students with the opportunity to gain a broad understanding of the health and social care sector needed for future study or employment.

Physical Education/Sport

(either GCSE or BTEC, students are assigned to a qualification based on individual strengths.)

There are some practical elements to these courses, so either course will be enjoyed by students who have a keen interest in sport and lead an active lifestyle. This course features a combination of practical and classroom based activity to develop skills and knowledge in areas such as health and wellbeing, planning sports activities and understanding how the human anatomy impacts upon performance. Studying this subject may lead to further study in the sports field, and jobs in areas such as sports development, teaching and leisure.

A combination of practical and classroom based study helps students to develop skills...



What subjects students can choose from...

Business and Enterprise subjects

Business

(BTEC)

Studying Business helps young people to gain a real insight into the world of business. Students who study this subject will cover some of the theory of how it works, but also be encouraged to understand how organisations are affected by decisions and developments, such as changes in Government policy. However, this subject has a practical focus too with students able to put knowledge into action, for example, by planning how to set up their own business. There is an exam based on Finance for Business and three units of coursework within this qualification.

ICT

(BTEC)

ICT is an important area for both future study and employment as students will learn how to use ICT equipment as well as understand the changing face of technology and how it works. Studying this subject will equip students with a wide range of skills based around current technologies including the web and design. There are two units of coursework, and an exam based on computer hardware and processing.

Computer Science

(GCSE)

This is a new subject that gets students working with real world, practical programming techniques that give them a good understanding of what makes technology work. It encourages students to create their own games, applications and other systems, rather than simply use those designed by others.

Creative Digital Media Production

(BTEC)

Students undertaking this course will use state-of-the-art technology available at the academy to build their skills and knowledge of how ICT can be used to communicate through a range of mediums. As part of these qualifications, students will discover more about all forms of media production. Units covered in this BTEC include audio, video production and interactive media production. The course includes an exam and several coursework modules set by the exam board to allow you to put your theoretical knowledge into practice. This qualification combines creativity with skills that will support future career ambitions.

Design and Performance subjects

Art

(GCSE)

Studying Art not only allows students to express their creative side, but also allows them to discover more about art techniques. Students will combine theory and practice when creating their own projects. Art is a fantastic option for those who want to develop their creativity and understand how the theory of Art can support this.



Food Preparation and Nutrition

(GCSE)

This looks at using food to create various dishes, but includes learning about essential elements to consider, such as nutritional values, and the processes used to create various foods. It offers students a way to apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating. Students will be creating new food based projects based on theory learnt. This is a natural choice for any student interested in a career in food or nutrition.



Graphics

(NCFE Level 2 Certificate)

This qualification is designed for students wishing to gain an understanding of the graphic design industry and develop a range of specialist skills. These include the ability to show ideas and concepts through a visual identity. Students will cover various disciplines including advertising, illustrations, packaging, typography, and interactive media. Through this subject, students will be offered opportunities to build skills and knowledge through practical activities, exploring the theory of this creative industry and creating their own pieces of work.

Music

(either GCSE or BTEC, students are assigned to a qualification based on individual strengths)

As part of this subject, students will undertake a comprehensive study of Music to both develop skills and explore the technical aspects. Units include using technology to create music, rehearsal techniques and developing as a performer. Students should have a passion for music, which will be reflected in their support of academy performances.

Performing Arts: Acting

(BTEC)

This includes three units of study: Individual Showcase (externally assessed); Preparation, Performance and Production; and Acting Skills. As well as giving students the opportunity to explore and nurture drama, dance, music and many more skills, students who opt for Performing Arts will develop invaluable life skills. These range from decision making to empathy. Students will also build self-confidence, creativity and understanding of the opportunities in the theatre, backstage roles and production within the industry. Students choosing Performing Arts require commitment and focus.

Performing Arts: Dance

(BTEC)

This includes a study: Individual Showcase (externally assessed); Preparation, Performance and Production; and Dance Skills. As a subject, Dance provides students with the opportunity to combine a strong practical element with theory. Those who study Dance will not only take part in performances and explore how emotion and a story can be expressed through this medium, but also understand the theory behind this including producing a commission, the skills involved, and how performances are actually created. Students explore a wide range of dance styles, and the inspiration for these to help them as part of their own personal projects.

Photography

(GCSE)

Students looking to study Photography at GCSE will be given a firm grounding into the techniques involved and how these can be used to evoke mood and setting with photographs. Students will undertake a wide range of learning and cover a variety of areas including still life in order to work to a professional design brief. They will also explore a range of image manipulation techniques using Photoshop.



Resistant Materials

(NCFE Level 2 Certificate)

Resistant Materials is about the design and creation of new items and covers all aspects of appearance and function. Students will also learn about project management, which is a skill essential for many careers. Resistant Materials looks at the design of products and sees students creating products from a range of materials including wood, metal and plastic. Within this course students will develop an overview of enterprise skills through project based work.

Textiles Technology

(NCFE Level 2 Certificate)

Textiles Technology gives students the opportunity to explore different fabrics and fibres, and learn about the processes that are used to create products. Students also develop a range of practical skills, including sewing and clothes making. Fabrics and textiles will be used for personal projects and this subject has a natural link for anyone interested in a career in the fashion industry. With this course, students will also develop an overview of enterprise skills through project based work.

The IAG process

1
1. Booklet posted home. Parents and students read this, and start to discuss possible options at home.

2
2. Parents and students attend the Information, Advice and Guidance Evening on **4 February**. Here we share more about the process, and teachers will showcase subjects.

3
3. In 2016 students will complete their options electronically. On **Monday 8 February** until **Friday 12 February** students will log on to the VLE to select their options.

6
6. Parents and students will receive a letter confirming if the student is on the English or Modern Baccalaureate pathway.

5
5. The allocated choices are confirmed in writing.

4
4. Students select a first and a reserve choice. We will accommodate first choices wherever possible.

7
7. Modern Baccalaureate students have an additional assembly. Here the smaller pool of second options are confirmed, and staff support students to make their choice.

8
8. Students commence their new timetables as Year 9 students on **Monday 20 June**.

Important notice for parents.
Please note students will log on to our VLE to select their options. We strongly advise that you ensure that you have both discussed the options that they plan to select prior to them submitting their final choices.

Top tips...

We have a wide range of courses that you can choose from. Students and parents will naturally be keen to ensure that they choose the right ones to support future careers. Here we include our top tips for students and parents to make sure that selected options support future career and university ambitions.

The academy will fully support students to be successful, whatever their chosen career path. Advice will be available to ensure that final choices support both the student personally and their long-term ambitions.

Top tips...for students

- Have a think about what your future career might be. Some subjects have strong links. For example, if you want to become a Lawyer then A-Level History is often a requirement, and you would naturally need to consider studying History at GCSE too.
- Check out all your options. You may really like a subject now, or be keen to study a particular one, but don't discount other choices! Do have a shortlist, but be open to hearing about how opting for another subject may help you in the future!
- Remember you will submit your first and reserve choice online and it is vital that you have discussed your choices with your parent(s) before you submit. If required, you can log in from home and complete the form together.
- Allow enough time to make your decision. You will be asked to choose a reserve option, in the event we cannot timetable your first choice. This should be something you therefore spend just as long thinking about.

Top tips...for parents

- Please ensure that both you and your child are available for the IAG Evening on **Thursday 4 February**. This is a great opportunity to ask any questions of subject teachers.
- Whilst we encourage students to carefully consider all options, it is helpful if you can make a short-list of subjects in preparation for the night. This often enables you to come prepared with a list of questions.
- Encourage your child to read this booklet, and discuss with you their short-list of choices. Whilst enjoying a subject is crucial, it is important that their choice supports their future plans. We ask that parents reinforce that the reserve option is as crucial as the first choice, so students need to dedicate enough time to making this decision.
- If you have any questions about the IAG process, or the Baccalaureate, there will be a presentation at our evening which will assist with this – please make a note of any queries and we'll be more than happy to assist.

Securing top grades through the Achieve programme

All students are automatically enrolled onto the Achieve programme. This is a bespoke support programme based on helping all students to achieve their full potential.

We offer a wide range of support to help students excel in all their subjects, such as:

- Workshops and support sessions at the end of the academy day.
- Small group sessions on specific areas requiring support.
- Revision residential sessions.
- Opportunity to be inspired by visiting speakers.

Sessions are based upon the needs of students, and how we can best help them to succeed. Parents are asked to ensure that students attend all sessions as requested, and that the benefits of attending are discussed at home.



