



SHIPLAKE COLLEGE  
HENLEY-ON-THAMES

# GCSE Options Guide

2025 2027

# GCSE Subject Choices

Choosing your GCSE subjects is an important decision and should not be made in haste, or alone. Remember to talk to your parents, subject teachers and other senior staff who know you well. They will be more than happy to help you.

## 1. Which subjects do you enjoy?

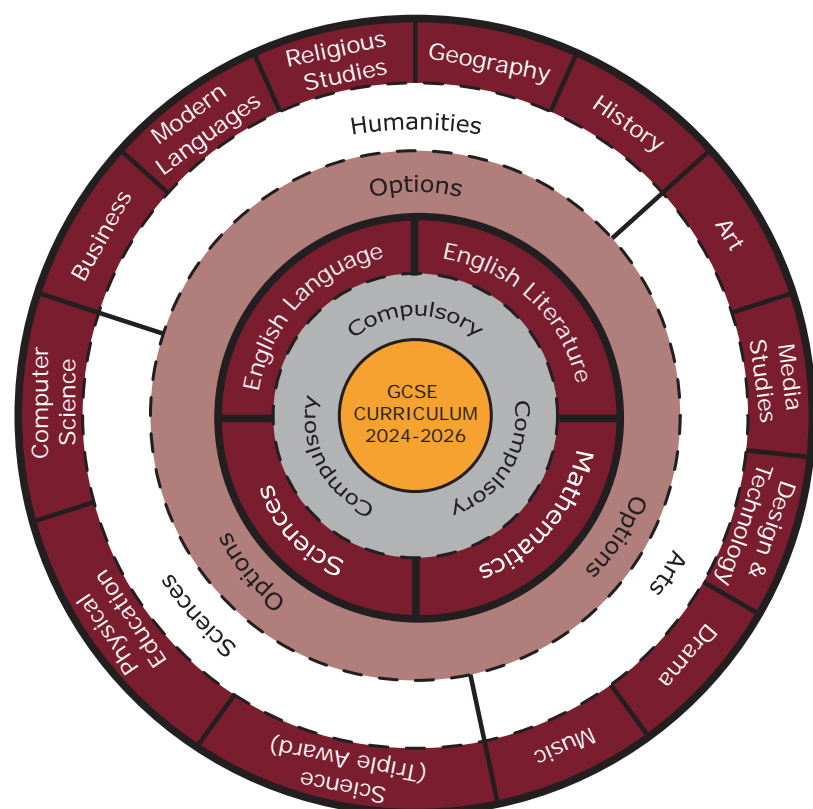
The importance of this should not be underestimated. You will be studying these subjects for two years, so make sure you are interested in them.

## 2. Which subjects are you good at?

Think about your strengths. Performing well and achieving good grades will undoubtedly help you in the future.

## 3. Which subjects might you need later on?

Having a rough idea about what you want to do in the future is important. Try to pick subjects which are relevant to your career plans. If you are not sure, opt for a varied combination.



GCSE Subject Choices	2
GCSE Welcome	3
GCSE Options Timeline	5
The Shiplake Seven	6
Art	7
Business	8
Computer Science	9
Design, Engineering and Technology	10
Drama	11
English Language	12
English Literature	13
Geography	14
History	15
Mathematics	16
Media Studies	17
Modern Languages	18
Music	19
Physical Education	20
Religious Studies	21
Science (Combined)	22
Science (Triple Award)	23
FAQs	24

# GCSE Welcome

**Mr Sam Shaw**

Assistant Head (Learning and Enrichment)

Welcome to the GCSE Options Guide for 2025-2027. Year 10 is an exciting time in your son's education and it presents the first opportunity for pupils to begin to study the subjects in which they are most interested. This can also be a confusing time as the whole landscape of GCSE examinations has recently changed. The introduction of new style GCSEs has increased the rigour of many subjects as the Government aims to enhance the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils across the country.

## Reformed GCSEs

A new style of 'reformed' GCSE is now available in all subjects. Reformed GCSE subjects are taught in a linear fashion with no controlled assessment or coursework and where pupils are assessed in a final examination. These new GCSEs are graded using the numbers 9-1 with grade 9 being the very top grade and with grade 4 roughly equivalent to a C grade (recognised by the Department for Education as a 'standard pass').



Shiplake College is fully aware of these reforms and our Heads of Departments have carefully reviewed all of the available specifications for each subject. This will ensure that we are offering a course which will give our pupils the greatest chance of success at GCSE and a clearer progression to A-level.

## Subject Choices

Beyond the core subjects of English, Maths and Science, pupils must select **four** subjects. At GCSE we feel that pupils should continue to study a broad and balanced curriculum and should try to choose a humanities subject (Geography, History or Religious Studies) plus a practical or creative subject (such as Art, Design and Technology, Music, Physical Education or Drama). Additionally, boys should seriously consider studying a language as many top universities value the study of languages, even at GCSE. Those pupils currently in the Core Learning Development group will continue to receive this support, which must be one of their subject choices.

Above all, it is important for pupils to be guided by the subjects they find most interesting and those subjects which present the greatest chance of success at the end of Year 11. Some pupils may know which subjects are most useful to their future aspirations but, for the majority of pupils a good set of GCSE grades is essential in order to make a successful transition into the Sixth Form.



# GCSE Welcome

**Mr Paul Jones**

Deputy Head (Academic)

Watch 'GCSE Options  
Parent Info Evening'



Choosing their GCSE subjects is a very important decision for our Year 9 pupils. In addition to pupils' Sixth Form results, many universities and employers are taking more of an interest in GCSE results when reviewing applications. Our strong advice to pupils is to choose the subjects in which they are most interested and those subjects which will offer them the greatest chance of GCSE success. If at this stage pupils are unsure about their future aspirations (university, employment, apprenticeships), it is vital that they leave their options open by choosing a breadth of GCSE subjects.



We realise that choosing their GCSE subjects can be a difficult decision for many pupils. To the pupils: it may help to use some of the Shiplake Seven to inform pupils' thinking: be curious and find out as much as you can about individual courses by reading this booklet and talking to teachers; be independent and make considered choices based on your interests, not those of your friends; be open-minded and consider all of your options; be reflective about the subjects you have enjoyed most since being at Shiplake.

Good luck with the next stage of your learning at Shiplake College and I would urge you to speak with as many teachers as you can during this process to make informed decisions that are right for you.



# GCSE Options Timeline

## **GCSE Options Evening** Wednesday 8 January 2025

This information evening gives Year 9 parents advice on choosing subjects and where to find the options guide which includes videos explaining details of subjects and the types of pupils best suited to these subjects.

## **GCSE Options Form Sent To Parents** Monday 13 January 2025

This online form should be used to select four GCSE options and a reserve choice.

## **Year 9 Parents' Conference** Friday 24 January 2025

In addition to checking on your son's progress, this is an ideal opportunity to book appointments in subjects your son is considering taking at GCSE.

## **GCSE Options Form Deadline** Monday 27 January 2025

Please submit the options form by this date.

## **Head of Departments Review Subject Choices** Monday 3 February 2025

After this point the timetable will be built around pupils' choices. Parents will only be contacted in the event that a clash in the timetable means that a pupil's initial choices are not possible. This is highly unusual and we do all that we can to accommodate pupils' first choices, but it is always a possibility.

# The Shiplake Seven

The Shiplake Seven is our teaching and learning framework designed to foster and develop key interpersonal qualities in our pupils. The seven qualities not only provide a solid foundation for pupils to achieve success throughout their education, but also equip our leavers with the skills they need to enter the next stage of their lives as confident, personable and capable young adults.

The framework is integrated across the academic and co-curriculum, allowing the seven qualities to be nurtured inside and outside the classroom. Pupils are encouraged to use these skills in their lessons and activities, with Year 9 pupils working towards the Shiplake Seven Award.

The Shiplake Seven framework provides energy and direction to our already excellent teaching and learning. The qualities were selected by a panel of teaching staff from a larger pool of attributes put forward by pupils. We firmly believe that these qualities are essential for pupils to achieve success at school and subsequently in their chosen careers. Whilst, of course, these skills were already being developed by teaching across the curriculum, this framework will allow pupils' personal development to be more comprehensively encouraged, monitored and rewarded.

## SHIPLAKE

determined

reflective

curious

open-minded

meticulous

independent

creative



Explore more at: [www.shiplake.org.uk/seven](http://www.shiplake.org.uk/seven)

# Art

**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA Fine Art GCSE; 8202/C-8202/X  
**Head of Department:** Miss Keli Jiggins

Watch 'An Introduction  
to Art GCSE'



## Why Study Art?

Pupils will have the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in art and design. This will develop ideas and expand creative thinking, develop independent learning skills and allow pupils to apply their learning in a practical, fun and realistic way.

## Course Overview

The Art Department follows the AQA Fine Art course which includes drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting and ceramics/3D work. The variety of skills covered provides the best all-round basic training for a career in art and design and an insight into the rigours of A Level Art, as well as identifying pupils' strengths.

The course requires pupils to develop an ability to assess, question, criticise and make decisions, through the language of form, colour, shape, rhythm, line, pattern, texture and volume; all the elements of a visual vocabulary.



## Assessment Details

**Unit 1** is a coursework unit worth 60%. You will explore and respond to your chosen theme. You will generate, research and develop ideas, as well as develop the skills required to help you analyse your own and others' work. You will complete artwork in a minimum of three disciplines and develop a final piece from all your explorations.

**Unit 2** is an externally set assignment worth 40%. In addition to completing a 10 hour timed exam, you will produce preparatory work that shows and supports the development of your final piece.

## Additional Opportunities

Field-trips and local artist workshops may be included as part of the course and pupils are expected to visit art galleries and exhibitions for holiday prep. Artist research is very important. Visits to galleries, exhibitions and museums to see art 'in the flesh' are absolutely vital. To see the link between this activity and the pupils' own work is expected and assessed. The higher grades are not achieved without this requirement being more than adequately met.

Art GCSE is a stepping stone to careers in the following field such as animation, set design, architecture, graphic design, art therapy, car design, product design, tattooist, illustration, photography, fashion, cartoonist and sculpture.

# Business

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel 2017 1BSO  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Teuta Hill

Watch 'An Introduction to Business GCSE' 

## Why Study Business?

GCSE Business is an engaging and inspiring course that reflects the demands of a truly modern and evolving business environment. Most importantly, it is entirely relevant for whatever students go on to study in future and it enables students to develop as commercially minded and enterprising individuals which will help them to succeed in their chosen pathway.

## Course Overview

The business course is split into two themes:

**Theme 1: Investigating a small business** - covers topics such as enterprise and entrepreneurship, spotting a business opportunity, putting a business idea into practice, making the business effective, and understanding external influences on business.

**Theme 2: Building a business** - covers topics such as growing the business, making marketing decisions, making operational decisions, making financial decisions, and making human resource decisions.



## Assessment Details

The course is examined via two written exams both equally weighted.

## Who Would Business Suit?

GCSE business would suit any student who has a keen interest in business and wants to develop a deeper knowledge of how businesses operate and what makes a successful business.

## Additional Opportunities

Within the business department, there are plenty of opportunities to put theory into practice by getting involved in the enterprise extra-curricular activities. Using the resources in the department, students can put their entrepreneurial skills to work by designing and creating branded products. The Christmas Fair is a big annual event for the school and it presents a great opportunity to test out the feasibility and demand of their products by selling them at the event.

The business department also runs trips to support the delivery of course content. In recent years, we have visited Jaguar Land Rover and the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club (Wimbledon).

# Computer Science

**2025-2027 Specification:** OCR Computer Science GCSE - J277  
**Head of Department:** Mr Pete Redrup

Watch 'An Introduction to Computer Science'



## Why Study Computer Science?

Computer Science is an ideal subject for pupils who wish to understand how the digital technologies and services that support almost every aspect of modern life work. GCSE Computer Science explores the fundamentals of computer systems, including the architecture of computer systems and their hardware; how data is represented and transmitted across the world via interconnected networks as well as how to design and develop software programs.

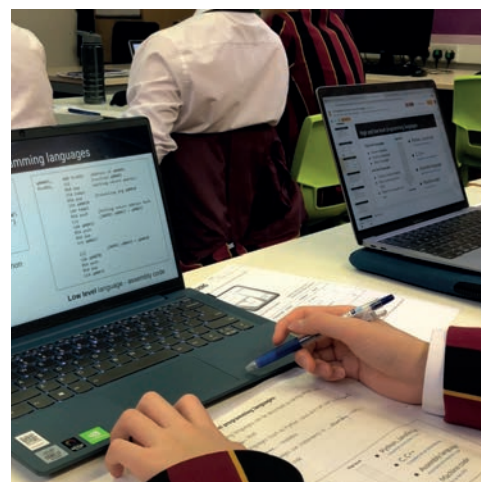
## Course Overview

The GCSE Computer Science course is split into two, equally-weighted, components: Computer Systems and Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming.

In Computer Systems, pupils will learn about topics such as the internal structure and hardware of computers, including the role of memory and the CPU; networking, the Internet and cyber security; ethical, legal, environmental and cultural issues related to Computer Science.

In Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming, pupils will learn about how to break complex problems down so that they can be solved through the application of logic to form algorithms, how to write software programs using the Python programming language and how information of different forms (text, images, sound, number) is represented within computer systems as binary data.

In addition to the theory topics studied, pupils will be given plenty of opportunity to engage in practical programming using a high-level programming language (Python).



## Assessment Details

Formal assessment takes place at the end of the course with two written exam papers. Each component is equally weighted, however pupils are expected to be able to transfer knowledge and skills (particularly those related to Computational Thinking) between the two papers. Paper two will include a section with questions which assess their ability to write or refine algorithms using either pseudocode or Python.

## Additional Opportunities

GCSE Computer Scientists will have the opportunity to take part in a number of external events, including competitive coding tournaments with other schools and taking part in the annual Bebras UK Computational Thinking Challenge. Pupils are also encouraged to join Computer Club as one of their co-curricular choices where they will have the opportunity to complete programming projects including learning how to develop games, apps or build physical computing projects such as a Raspberry Pi powered robotics.

# Design, Engineering and Technology

**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA GCSE 8552  
**Head of Department:** Mr Liam Fuller

Watch 'An Introduction  
to DET GCSE'



## Why Study Design, Engineering & Technology?

It immerses and inspires pupils in the field of solving problems and meeting needs through creative solutions. It is a place where ideas can flourish to simply make things better with creativity and originality. It also teaches the value of working through many iterations and in that process, pupils learn a great deal that supports them well beyond the subject. DET is taught within the ethos and context of the commercial world and within that work we aim to ensure pupils learn to solve problems with an entrepreneurial eye that meet user needs.

## Course Overview

The course specification requires pupils to develop their knowledge of a wide range of modern and traditional materials and the use of new technologies is strongly encouraged. Pupils must also demonstrate mathematical and scientific knowledge and understanding, in relation to DET. Pupils will be taught how to use a number of 2D and 3D software CAD/CAM packages and will have access to state-of-the-art equipment when completing their coursework. The curriculum is designed to foster awareness amongst candidates of the need to consider the sustainability and environmental impact of their designs. It provides candidates with the opportunity to design and make products. The GCSE specification provides an excellent route into studying DET - Product Design in the Sixth Form.



## Assessment Details

This course contains 50% controlled assessment in order to recognise the importance of project work within the subject. Pupils are expected to produce a design portfolio (maximum of 20 A3 pages) produced in PowerPoint, and a practical prototype/working product. The contextual 'challenge' is released by AQA on 1 June in Year 10 ready for pupils to complete during Year 11. In Years 10 and 11 two of the three lessons a week will be dedicated to this project work.

The other 50% of the assessment is a two-hour written examination on the core and specialist technical principles of DET which is sat at the end of Year 11 and the third lesson every week will be dedicated to preparing for this.

## Additional Opportunities

As part of the GCSE course, pupils enjoy exposure to inspiring and informative design work through visiting the Design Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, universities and attending design seminars. We also have extensive links and contacts within the fields of Product Design, Engineering and Architecture and our network of contacts and support allows us to provide additional opportunities for students via guest lectures, workshops and site visits. Pupils are also given access to the workshops in DET club.

# Drama

**2025-2027 Specification:** WJEC GCSE Drama  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Emma Farrell

Watch 'An Introduction  
to Drama GCSE'



## Why Study Drama?

Taking drama means learning to work within a team. It means learning to balance a mix of ideas, evaluate them and pick out the best one. It gives pupils a way to have their voices heard and see their ideas come to life. It lets creative people explore performing, lighting, costumes and set design.

As well as allowing pupils to express themselves through performance on stage, studying drama gives them an opportunity to gain a powerful insight into how a theatre operates. Pupils will also develop the ability to research, analyse and interpret scripts and creatively write about their interpretations in essay form.

## Course Overview and Assessment

The course is split into three components with assessments taking place in Year 11.

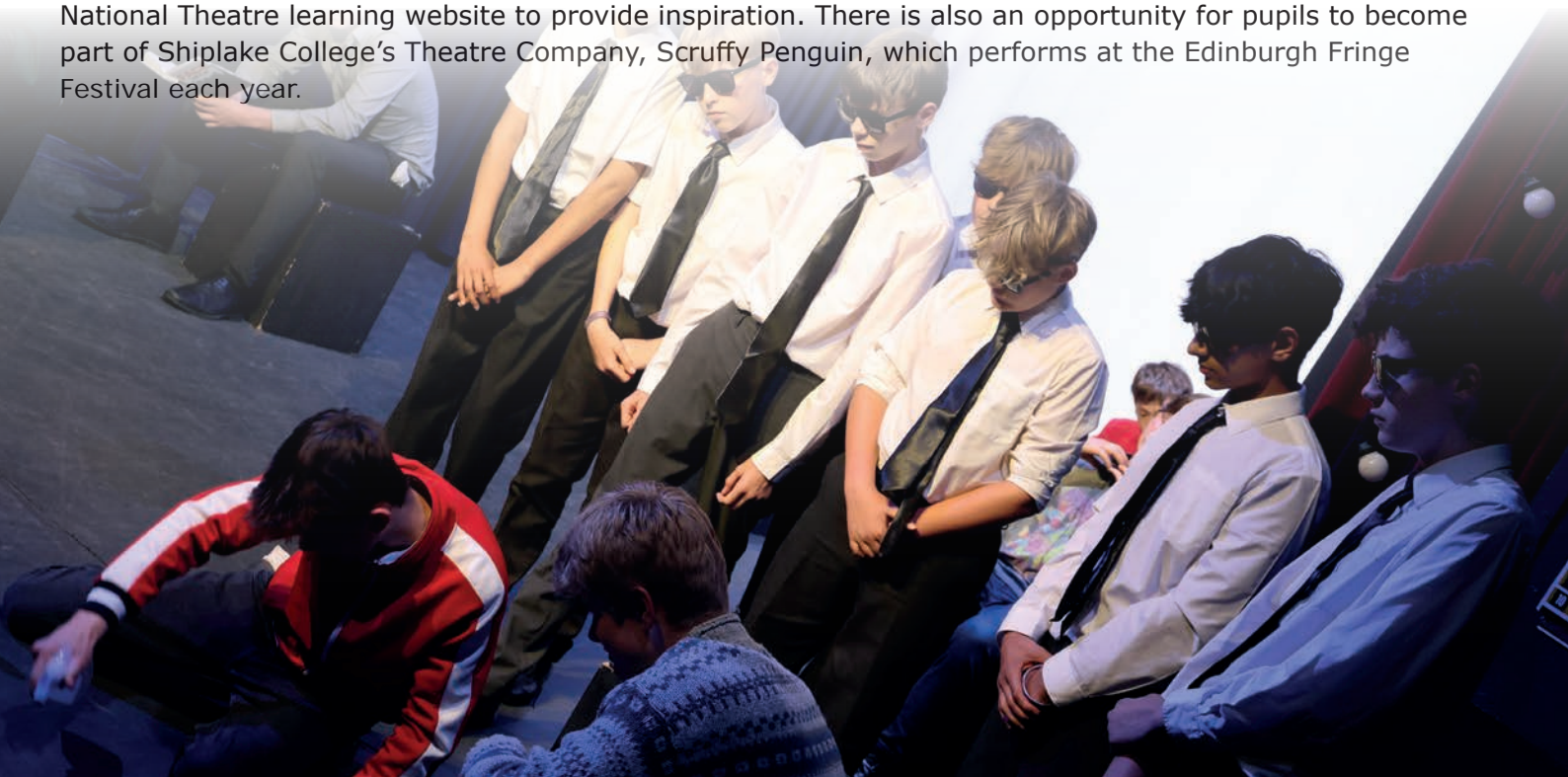
**Component 1: Devising Theatre (40%)** Pupils are required to devise a piece of original theatre in response to a stimulus, using the techniques of an influential theatre practitioner. They must also complete a written process log (2000 words) and written evaluation. This is completed in the Autumn term of Year 11 in supervised conditions and internally marked and externally moderated.

**Component 2: Performing from a text (20%)** Pupils will participate in a performance from a text. Pupils will gain an understanding of how to interpret a text for performance and realise artistic intentions. This is a practical examination marked by a visiting examiner in the Spring Term of Year 11.

**Component 3: Interpreting Theatre (40%)** Pupils will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed through the study of a performance text and through responding to live theatre. This is a written examination lasting 1.5 hours in the summer term of Year 11.

## Additional Opportunities

In order for pupils to gain the most experience of how to put together a successful performance, we work closely with inspiring theatre companies who come in to conduct workshops at the College. Pupils will also watch a number of cutting edge live productions during the course, alongside using tools such as the National Theatre learning website to provide inspiration. There is also an opportunity for pupils to become part of Shiplake College's Theatre Company, Scruffy Penguin, which performs at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival each year.



# English Language

Core Subject

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel English Language IGCSE (Spec. A)  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Jessica Brooks

Watch 'An Introduction to English GCSE'



## Why Study English Language?

The short answer is: you must! English Language is a 'core' subject, which means everyone must study it up to GCSE level.

The reason for this is that competency in written and spoken English is essential in today's world. No matter which future pathway you take, there will be an expectation that you are a confident and competent user of the language. Studying English at Shiplake will improve your speaking, reading and writing skills and will enable you to perform better in all subjects across the curriculum.

## Course Overview

Currently at Shiplake, we follow the Edexcel English Language (Spec. A) IGCSE curriculum. The course includes a variety of reading and writing tasks, designed to develop your ability to express yourself with fluency. In addition, you will develop your reading ability through a range of interactive reading lessons.



English Language is a discussion-based subject so ideas are often developed through whole-class interactions. The English Department takes advantage of modern technology and uses tools such as Google Classroom, videos and social networking to reinforce content covered in lessons. Collaborative work is actively encouraged, primarily through the use of whiteboard desks.

## Assessment Details

**Paper 1: Examination** (approximately 60%) - this exam tests your ability to read and understand both a familiar (studied) and an unfamiliar (chosen by the exam board) text. You will be expected to show understanding of implicit meanings and use of language and structure in both texts through answering short and long questions on each. There is also a writing section where students will be expected to reproduce a transactional piece of writing - i.e. a letter, speech or article.

**Paper 2: Coursework** (approximately 40%) - two pieces of writing: one on a studied poem or prose text; the other an imaginative piece of writing.

Coursework and preparation for terminal exams will take place throughout Year 10 and 11, with final examinations taking place in the summer of Year 11.

## Additional Opportunities

You will be expected to read for pleasure both during and after lessons. All pupils have access to the College's e-library of texts, and encouraged to make use of the excellent facilities available in the Thinking Space. The English Department runs trips to theatres, libraries and festivals, such as the Henley Literary Festival.

# English Literature

Core Subject

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel English Literature IGCSE  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Jessica Brooks

Watch 'An Introduction to English GCSE'



## Why Study English Literature?

English Literature is a wonderful subject - Literature is one of the great art forms and the study of Literature is culturally enriching.

A key focus for the English Department is to make students more empathetic through their study of Literature. Moreover, studying Literature helps pupils to develop the skills of sharp analysis, not to mention an understanding of different socio-historical contexts. The analytical skills of good Literature students are much sought after in the modern workforce.

*'From the quarrel with others, we make rhetoric; from the quarrel with ourselves, we make poetry.'*  
WB Yeats

## Course Overview

During the course, students will study a variety of literary texts, including a major Shakespeare play, a modern novel, a range of different poetry and a modern drama. Literature is a discussion-based subject so lessons tend to include much whole-class interactions. As in Language, the English department take advantage of modern technology to reinforce Literature lessons.

## Assessment Details

Coursework and preparation for terminal exams will take place throughout Year 10 and 11, with final examinations taking place in the summer of Year 11.

There are two areas of assessment for English Literature:

**Paper 1: Examination (40%):** This exam will feature three sections: Unseen Poetry; Anthology Poetry and; Modern Prose. Students will prepare the chosen texts for the poems in the Anthology and the selected Modern Prose text through Year 10 and again closer to the exam. There will be ample opportunity to study 'Unseen Poetry' also.

**Paper 3: Coursework (40%):** Students will complete two essays: one on a Modern Drama and one on a Shakespearean play.

## Additional Opportunities

Typical English Literature trips include visits to theatres and libraries. The English Department will try to take pupils to see relevant Shakespeare plays if they are showing locally.

NB: While most students are encouraged to take both English Language and English Literature, if we feel that taking both would be too challenging, we can withdraw students from English Literature. Please note that English Language is a requirement for almost all Sixth Form centres and further qualifications.

# Geography

**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA GCSE Geography 8035  
**Head of Department:** Mr Jack Cooper

Watch 'An Introduction to Geography GCSE'



## Why Study Geography?

"Geography is the subject which holds the key to our future" - **Michael Palin**.

"Geography prepares for the world of work. Geographers, with their skills of analysis, are highly employable!" - **Lord Alan Sugar**.

## Course Overview

The study of GCSE Geography will help you to develop a knowledge and understanding of local and global events. Pupils cover a range of topics including population and settlement, the natural environment and economic development.

Those who choose GCSE Geography will develop a range of useful skills such as map reading, data collection, ICT and problem solving. Students will be divided into three mixed-ability sets and taught by the same teacher over the two year course.

## Assessment Details

In May/June of Year 11, pupils will sit three exams. Paper 1: Living with the physical environment is based physical Geography and hazards and consists of 88 marks and lasts 1 hour 30 minutes. This paper is worth 35% of the overall GCSE. Paper 2: Challenges in the human environment, has a focus on the Human side to Geography and consists of 88 marks and lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes. This is worth 35% of the overall GCSE.

The final exam is a skills, fieldwork and application paper, this is replacing the need for a controlled assessment. Students are given a resource booklet 12 weeks in advance to help prepare. The exam is called Paper 3: Geographical applications and consists of 76 marks and lasts 1 hour and 15 minutes. This paper is worth 30% of the overall GCSE.

During Year 10 you will also complete a field-trip to the Dorset coast. This is a requirement of the course that students have the option to attend a field trip. Students will be asked about this field trip within Paper 1, 2 and 3.

## Additional Opportunities

There is a compulsory two day coursework trip to Dorset in the Spring Term. Back in school, additional fieldwork will also be carried out during lesson time. These experiences will help GCSE Geographers to gain a number of important practical skills.



# History

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel IGCSE History (4HI0) Modern World History  
**Head of Department:** Mr Joe Player



Watch 'An Introduction to History GCSE'

## Why Study History?

History is a fantastic subject full of extraordinary events, incredible people, epic stories, and important lessons about how we got to this point. It is an excellent opportunity for students to explore their curiosity about the past, to tangle with essential issues, and to learn vital skills such as research, analysis, evaluation and argument that can be useful to them in the future.

## Course Overview

In the History Department we have four teachers who are all extremely passionate about the subject and we have specifically selected topics that we think students will find exciting, engaging, challenging, and will allow them to develop a greater understanding of the modern world. Students will study a diverse mix of topics ranging from the fall of imperial China and the madness of Mao's dictatorship, to the riotous events of the Russian Revolution, the monstrosities of Nazi Germany, and the chilling episodes of the Cold War. Students are taught in mixed ability sets and will be tested on the four topics in two exams which require a mixture of short and longer answers.

## Assessment Details

IGCSE Edexcel History exams are split into two examinations of ninety minutes each. Each exam tests students on two of the topics below:

**Paper 1:** Germany: Development of Dictatorship, 1918-1945 and A World Divided: Superpower Relations, 1943-72.

**Paper 2:** China: Conflict, Crisis and Change, 1900-1989 & The Russian Revolution, 1905-1924

## Additional Opportunities

The History Department is always looking for opportunities to explore History outside the classroom. We organise a trip to Normandy to see the D-Day beaches, and we are also planning trips to Berlin. History students are often involved in promoting the subject on specific days, for example the Remembrance Service and Black History Month. History students are often involved with wider-school initiatives such as the Exemplum Docet Society and the Interhouse Debate contests.



# Learning Development

Head of Department: Mrs Judit Coulehan

Watch 'An Introduction to GCSE LDev'



## Learning Development in Key Stage 4, Years 10-11

During Years 10 and 11, Core/Learning Development pupils build further on their skills to achieve maximum value from their educational experience. Under the guidance of the Learning Development teachers, pupils can review aspects of their GCSE work; this facilitates the teaching of study skills, such as note-taking, revision and examination strategies, including how to use exam access arrangements effectively. Pupils are given positive feedback as they tackle a range of learning tasks aimed at developing their skills and self-confidence. They also learn to assess their own performance and review their action-steps.

Learning Development consists of 4 timetabled, small group lessons per week in place of one GCSE option subject and PSHE taught by SpLD/dyslexia specialist teachers. As part of our proactive approach, working very closely with the English and Science departments, we shadow the GCSE English and science curricula to provide opportunities for structured and teacher-led overlearning of the key concepts and related vocabulary in English, biology, physics and chemistry. We can also provide temporary support in other subjects as well to suit emerging needs; we can be flexible and alter our plans for a particular lessons/week to provide structured support/revision in subjects/topics that the pupils find challenging. To help students discover the study methods best suited to their needs, we model the best use of interactive and multisensory platforms such as GCSE Pod, Seneca, Quizlet, Kahoot and certain subject specific YouTube channels, as well as further train pupils in the use of assistive technology.

## Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA)

All students are assessed for access arrangements, in line with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2023-24 (AARA 23-24) policy, [link here](#). Testing takes place in school and evidence must be gathered from class teachers for any arrangement to be given. The evidence must reflect a student's normal way of working in class.

**In line with the JCQ regulations, below average scores or recommendations from external Educational Psychology Reports and Specialist Teacher Reports can no longer be accepted as evidence of the need for Access Arrangements. Testing must be undertaken in school and any arrangement given must reflect a candidate's normal way of working within the centre, that is in lessons as well as in all internal examinations.**

All students (Core, Monitor and Main) are screened for Access Arrangements and where screening shows a need, further individual testing may be required, and evidence is gathered from teachers. The screening takes place at the end of Year 9 and, if needed, individualised testing is conducted afterwards, typically in Y10-11. It is now a JCQ requirement that subject teachers must be able to produce evidence to support access arrangements and any arrangement given must reflect a student's normal way of working.

For more information on Access Arrangements, please refer to the following, related policies and documents available on the College's website:

- Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Word Processing Policy
- Guidance for Students on using Access Arrangements

Access Arrangements must be reviewed when a student transitions from GCSE level to A-level studies to ensure there is ongoing need for the adjustment/s.

# Mathematics

Core Subject

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel IGCSE Mathematics 4MA1  
**Head of Department:** Mr Adie Davis

Watch 'An Introduction to Mathematics GCSE'



## Why Study Mathematics?

Mathematics is compulsory as it holds a key position in pupils' academic development. A basic understanding of the subject is essential for everyday life and a creditable grade in the subject will be required for many future pathways. However, there are other reasons to study of Mathematics:

- Mathematics is beautiful. G.H. Hardy once wrote "There is no permanent place in the world for ugly Mathematics". The beauty lies, not in the shape of the symbols, but in the ideas behind them.
- Mathematics facilitates logical thought and therefore enhances the ability to construct, and indeed recognise, coherent arguments.
- Mathematics is a key facilitator subject for undergraduate courses and employment opportunities.

## Course Overview

The IGCSE courses begin in Year 9 with a review of all Foundation Course topics. With a thorough diagnostic testing programme and ongoing assessments designed to identify areas for future development, we are able to group pupils into streams according to Academic reference. We look to accelerate the top end of each cohort by adding a Level 2 Certificate in Further Mathematics to students' Higher Tier IGCSE papers during Year 11. At the lower end of the ability range, we look to consolidate key principles and support students through a Foundation Level IGCSE qualification.

## Assessment Details

The syllabus includes tiers of entry which allows all pupils to be entered for a level appropriate to them. Exam questions are therefore accessible to pupils of all abilities, with papers balanced in terms of topics and difficulty. The two tiers available are **Foundation Tier** (grades 5-1) and **Higher Tier** (grades 9-4). Each is assessed via terminal examination papers.

## Additional Opportunities

In addition to the normal curriculum time allocation, support sessions are available at 4:45pm on weekday evenings. These sessions are open to anyone wishing to improve or wanting additional assistance with a specific topic. An online support network, 'Dr Frost Maths', enables all pupils to access revision materials to support their classwork. For those wishing to further extend their understanding of Mathematics, there are additional opportunities in the form of the UKMT Mathematics Challenges and other national competitions.



# Media Studies

**2025-2027 Specification:** OCR GCSE Media Studies  
**Head of Department:** Mr Marcus Milburn



Watch 'An Introduction to Media Studies GCSE'

## Why Study Media Studies?

This contemporary, accessible and creative course has been designed with teachers and learners in mind following extensive consultation. This specification will allow learners to study the media in an academic context and apply the knowledge and understanding gained in the process of creating their own media production.

## Course Overview

The course consists of three units, two of which are assessed as a written exam each worth 35% of the final mark, whilst the other component is assessed internally through the completion of a non-exam assessment worth 30%.

The three units of study are:

### Television and promoting media:

In television, students engage with an in-depth study of one contemporary and one historic television products, responding to questions covering the whole of the theoretical framework and a range of media contexts.

In promoting media, students study media products from the same global conglomerate producer illustrating the media forms of film, advertising and marketing, and video games.

### Music and news:

In music, students engage with one in-depth study covering magazines, a comparative study of music videos and a study of contemporary radio.

In news, students engage with one in-depth study of online news, including its social and participatory media. Students also study contemporary and historical newspaper front pages and how they illustrate changing social, cultural, historical and political contexts.

### Creating media

In this component, Students apply their knowledge and understanding of media language and representations to create media products of their own, using the theoretical framework to express and communicate meaning to an intended audience

Pupils will learn in a "hands-on" fashion throughout all units of study, with a focus on developing their digital skills is software applications such as digital graphics packages.

## Assessment Details

Media Studies is a linear qualification with 70% external assessment by examination and 30% by non-exam assessment (NEA).



# Modern Languages

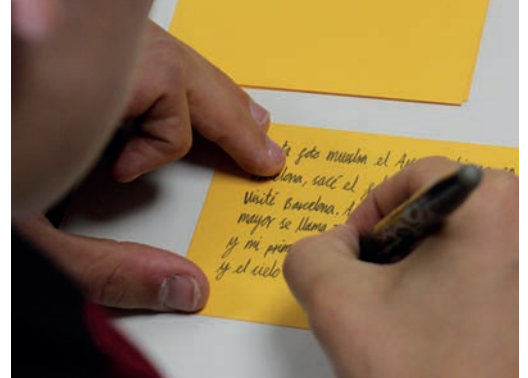
**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA GCSE Spanish / AQA GCSE French  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Justine Parrott

Watch 'An Introduction to Modern Languages'



## Why Study Languages?

As global contact and exchange increases, people with language skills are better able to deal with situations across the world. UK businesses must adapt to an increasingly international trading environment facilitated by the internet. Using languages in your job means much more than being a translator or teacher; most opportunities are in other sectors where languages complement other professional skills and experience. With one in five companies losing business because of language and cultural barriers, it is vital for international businesses to address these obstacles to success. Learning a language will broaden your horizons. You do not have to be completely fluent in a language for it to make a real difference, meaning the knowledge gained at GCSE will serve you well long into the future.



## Course Overview

Pupils can choose to study French or Spanish. The curriculum for each subject follows the AQA GCSE specification. Lessons are taught in small, mixed-ability sets. The study of GCSE languages will help pupils to be more employable and can raise salaries by 8-20%.

By the end of the course, you will be able to use languages confidently for real purposes in business or on holiday. Studying languages also helps pupils to develop cultural awareness and form friendships in other countries.

## Assessment Details

The GCSE tests the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each element has a separate exam which carries an equal weighting of 25%.

There are two tiers of entry which allow all pupils to be entered for a level appropriate to them. Exam questions are therefore accessible to pupils of all abilities, with papers balanced in terms of topics and difficulty. The two tiers available are Foundation Tier (grades 5-1) and Higher Tier (grades 9-4).

The speaking test, which is conducted and recorded by your teacher, takes place in April of Year 11 and lasts 10 minutes. Pupils describe an unseen picture, do a role-play and prepare answers to a wide range of general conversation questions in advance.

The listening, reading and writing examinations take place in June of Year 11. Each component is assessed externally.

## Additional Opportunities

Depending on the language studied, there are opportunities to travel to Valencia in Spain or Normandy in France in order to gain practical experience of using a foreign language.

# Music

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel GCSE 1MU0  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Amy Haynes

Watch 'An Introduction  
to Music GCSE'



## Why Study Music?

GCSE Music develops an exciting mixture of practical, creative and academic skills. It is all about creating, performing and analysing a wide variety of music from different times and cultures (from jazz to classical and world to electronic music). The course is excellent preparation for the further study of Music but it also develops key skills relevant to any future career choice, such as creating, communicating and analysing.

## Course Overview

GCSE Music continues to develop the three main skills developed during Key Stage 3: 'performing', 'composing' and 'listening and appraising'. The ability to perform on at least one instrument (or voice), coupled with the ability to read music notation, is essential. Although entry for music grade exams (ABRSM or Trinity) is not a requirement, taking instrumental or vocal lessons is a prerequisite to ensure good progress is made through the performing element of the course. Each of the topics covered is taught in an inspirational and engaging way with many opportunities for practical performances to bring the music to life.

## Assessment Details

**Performing (coursework, 30%):** You will perform two pieces on any instrument/voice; one solo and one ensemble performance with a combined duration of at least four minutes.

**Composing (coursework, 30%):** You will compose two of your own pieces (in any genre or style) one to a set brief and one as a free composition, with a combined duration of at least 3 minutes. You will also develop your ability to compose using music technology (with Logic and Sibelius software).

**Listening and Appraising (examination, 40%):** There is one examination at the end of Year 11. You will study eight very different set works throughout the course by investigating their musical context and musical language. The set works range from Bach's Brandenburg Concerto to the theme from Star Wars. Using these skills you will also be required to evaluate some unfamiliar music.

## Additional Opportunities

Co-curricular music is an important part of life at Shiplake College and GCSE Music students are expected to play a leading role in the programme, actively participating in the core ensembles such as the Choir and Big Band and modelling good practice. Pupils should relish the opportunity to make the most of the outstanding facilities in the brand new Music Department, including the Eve Lecture Theatre, Mac Suites and Recording Studio.



# Physical Education

**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA GCSE PE  
**Head of Department:** Mrs Katie Neill

Watch 'An Introduction  
to PE GCSE'



## Why Study Physical Education?

Physical Education is a dynamic and challenging course which continues to grow in popularity at Shiplake College. Pupils will be expected to perform in 3 different sports for assessment, as well as studying the theory linked to successful sporting performance. This diverse course allows pupils to use their full range of intellectual and sporting talents to achieve their potential.

## Course Overview

GCSE Physical Education achieves a balance between theoretical learning and practical application. The course involves many evolving areas of sport, including sport psychology and technology, commercialisation and the use of biomechanical analysis in boosting performance. The course is underpinned by science (namely biology) and so a keen interest and confidence in science is essential.

Practically, the course will encourage creativity and decision-making skills to enable the pupils to plan effectively for performances and to respond to challenging situations. It will also help pupils to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices. Ideally, pupils will be performing at a high level in their chosen sports for school or outside teams. Although a high level of performance is not essential, it will be very beneficial to the students' overall marks.

## Assessment Details

- 1) Theoretical component of the course (60%)** This is assessed through 2 written examinations. The first paper (36%) covers anatomy, biomechanics, fitness and body systems. The second paper (24%) covers health, psychology, society and performance. All modules and topic areas taught in lessons.
- 2) Practical Performance (30%).** The pupils must select one individual sport, one team sport and one free choice from a list prescribed by the DfE. The students are assessed in these sports throughout the course, and in each sport they are awarded individual marks for their skills and competitive application.
- 3) Analysis of Performance coursework (10%).** Pupils must analyse performance in one of their chosen activities. They will be expected to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, using the knowledge they have acquired throughout the course, before explaining how they could make improvements.

## Additional Opportunities

As the students are expected to be representing the school or their own clubs, the theoretical knowledge gained in lessons can also be applied to pupils' personal training and performance. The students will also become familiar with using specialised equipment in the gym. There may also be additional opportunities to make use of the facilities in the new Davies Centre.



# Religious Studies

**2025-2027 Specification:** AQA GCSE A  
**Head of Department:** Miss Nicola Jones

Watch 'Theology and  
Philosophy GCSE'



## Why Study Religious Studies?

The largest reason cited by our students: because it's fun and interesting! The modern world is diverse and filled with people who hold differing beliefs and viewpoints about life. Religious Studies helps to understand those opinions and discover why people act or think in a certain way. This subject enables you to question and develop your own perspective on major topical issues and offers a platform to academically critique and evaluate a range of opinions. Regardless of whether you have religious belief or none, we teach you to question, analyse and evaluate the world. Be prepared to be challenged by others and by yourself. Ultimately, if you enjoy debating and challenging 'big' questions like 'does everyone have free speech?' or 'what happens when we die?' - this is the subject for you.

## Course Overview

Within GCSE Religious Studies you will study the beliefs, teachings and practices of two contrasting world religions: Islam and Christianity, and apply those religious perspectives to various ethical issues such as war, abortion, homosexuality, capital punishment etc. Within the study of ethics, Humanist and atheist viewpoints are also considered.

There is no objective 'right' or 'wrong' answer to many of the arguments and beliefs we examine and lessons have a strong emphasis on discussion, open-mindedness and critical scrutiny. Pupils are taught in small groups and structured lessons enable them to solve problems with original ideas.

## Assessment Details

Beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity	Beliefs, teachings and practices of Islam	4x Ethical Themes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Religion and Life</li><li>• Religion, Peace and Conflict</li><li>• Religion, Crime and Punishment</li><li>• Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice</li></ul>
25% of total GCSE	25% of total GCSE	50% of total GCSE
1 hour 45 minutes written examination		1 hour 45 minutes written examination

## Additional Opportunities

GCSE conferences which aid revision and extend learning opportunities will be arranged. In addition a local Imam will visit the school for a Q&A session alongside trips to a mosque and topical exhibitions when appropriate. These diverse experiences help pupils to further their understanding of the subject.

# Science (Combined)

Core Subject

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel GCSE 1SC0 (Combined Science)  
**Head of Department:** Mr Peter Jasper

## Why Study Science?

Science is a field of study which demands a wide range of skills. These include understanding or displaying data in tabular and graphical form, logical thought, manual dexterity in practical work, mathematical manipulation, the use of data-loggers and the ability to communicate lucidly and succinctly both on paper and orally. Such a valuable diversity of acquired skills dictates that Science remains a compulsory subject in the curriculum.

## Course Overview

Science at GCSE level is now available as a linear two year involving a balanced study of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Teaching involves a blend of theory and practical lessons.

The overall aim is to develop in the pupils a greater awareness and a more critical interest in the world around them. It is hoped that this will enable them to make better-informed judgements concerning topical issues in the future.

## Assessment Details

All written exam papers are taken at the end of Year 11. There are two papers for each of the sciences, each lasting 1 hour and 10 minutes. The papers will be available at **Foundation Tier** (grades 5-1) and at **Higher Tier** (grades 9-4). There is no formal practical assessment, although a set number of core practicals are expected to be carried out throughout the two year course. The qualification will result in a Dual Award GCSE in Combined Science.

## Additional Opportunities

As part of the course, pupils gain a great deal of hands-on laboratory experience. This involves observing and conducting a wide range of practical activities.



# Science (Triple Award)

**2025-2027 Specification:** Edexcel GCSE 1B10 (Biology), 1CH0 (Chemistry), 1PH0 (Physics)  
**Head of Department:** Mr Peter Jasper

Watch 'An Introduction to Triple Science' 

## Why Study Science Triple Award?

Those pupils particular aptitude for Science and have shown that they are able to work well independently are encouraged to pursue the Science Triple Award. This requires the study of extension material, in addition to the specification for GCSE Combined Science. Pupils are thereby able to gain three GCSEs grades. This is particularly useful for those students wishing to take the sciences at A-level.

## Course Overview

The opportunity to study Science Triple Award is for highly able pupils who have a real interest in all three sciences. The Triple Award involves studying all three separate sciences and thereby gaining three science GCSEs.

The decision to take this option would be made at the end of Year 9, under the guidance and recommendation of the relevant teaching staff. It would mean choosing a science in one of the GCSE option columns.

## Assessment Details

All exam papers are taken in the June of Year 11. Each science has two, 1 hour 45 minute papers composed of some multiple choice questions but mainly structured answer questions. Each paper counts as 50% of the overall mark in each GCSE. There is no formal practical assessment but it is expected that a set number of core practicals will be carried out during the two year course.

The papers will be available at **Foundation Tier** (grades 5-1) and at **Higher Tier** (grades 9-4).

## Additional Opportunities

There is a trip for the Triple Award set, to the 'Oxford Science Live' event in Oxford. This is a series of lectures given by leading scientists in their field, many of whom are household names such as Robert Winston or Richard Dawkins.



# FAQs

## **How many subjects do pupils study?**

In addition to the core subjects (English, Maths and Science), pupils will choose **four** options subjects.

Most pupils will therefore receive eight or nine GCSEs, representing a broad and balanced curriculum and allowing pupils to secure the necessary grades to enter the Sixth Form. Pupils receive 2-3 GCSEs in Science and some pupils will also receive 2 GCSEs for English (Language and Literature - please see English pages for full details).

Our advice would be to focus on the quality of the grades they receive rather than the quantity of qualifications they achieve. Looking forward to A-levels, as a guide, we require **five** strong passes to be accepted in to our Sixth Form.

## **Can pupils change their options after starting Year 10?**

While this is sometimes possible, it is not advisable and we cannot guarantee any late changes. It may be difficult to catch up and there may not be space in the class. Therefore, it is very important to consider your choices carefully at this stage.

## **Do all subjects have coursework?**

No. Some practical subjects may retain elements of coursework but reformed GCSEs rely heavily on assessment in an examination at the end of Year 11.

## **Do pupils have to study a language?**

No. However, we strongly encourage pupils to consider this as the study of a language at GCSE is highly regarded by universities and employers.

## **What about pupils in the Learning Development department?**

Those pupils currently in the Core Learning Development group will continue to receive this support, which must be one of their subject choices (these pupils must then choose three other subjects).

## **Who can my son turn to for advice?**

Choosing appropriate subjects is an important decision for every individual pupil and should not be made in haste or alone. We would encourage all pupils to speak with their Academic Tutor and Housemaster for general advice or to discover more about individual subjects by speaking with subject teachers and Heads of Department.



SHIPLAKE COLLEGE  
HENLEY-ON-THAMES