

GCSE Options

This booklet provides detailed descriptions of the subjects offered for GCSE, both the core subjects (English, French, Mathematics and Science) and those which are optional. Making an informed choice, based on experience and aptitude, is crucial. The information within this booklet will complement any ideas your son or daughter may already have and may clarify issues which seem difficult. We are proud of our success at GCSE and are aware of our responsibility to ensure that all our pupils embark on the 'right' courses. With your help, we can plan the most suitable way forward for your son or daughter.

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Middle Fifth Curriculum

Pupils in the Middle Fifth Form (Year 10) study the GCSE core subjects and select one subject from each of three option blocks. The arrangement of optional subjects is designed to allow pupils to study those subjects best suited to their individual aptitudes and abilities.

The selection of optional GCSE subjects is guided by full discussion and consultation between pupils and their parents, their teachers, tutors and Housemasters. A parents' meeting held during the Lent term is an important stage in this process.

Core Subjects

	Lessons per week
English (Language and Literature)	5
Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish)	5
Mathematics	5
Science	12

- The separate Science disciplines (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) are taught as such by specialist staff. Pupils may be entered for GCSE Science and GCSE Additional Science, or for GCSEs in each of the three separate sciences.
- All pupils also have two periods of Physical Education each week, as well as one afternoon of Games and one of Activities. PSHE is delivered in half-day blocks spread over the academic year.
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) is available as an alternative to a Modern Foreign Language for pupils for whom English is not their native tongue.

Optional GCSE Subjects

Block A	Block B	Block C
Art (Drawing and Painting)	Graphic Products	Ceramics
Drama	Music	Drama
Food Technology	Art (Drawing & Painting)	French (if Spanish is chosen as the MFL)
History	Geography	Geography
Latin	History	Religious Studies
Resistant Materials	PE	ICT
	Religious Studies	

- The optional subjects are studied for 5 periods each per week.
- If a particular option is oversubscribed it may be necessary to redirect pupils to a different course according to their ability and interest.

English

The GCSE years are exciting and stimulating times for English Language and Literature. The department follows the OCR specifications for both areas but is conscious of the need to widen the opportunities for reading and writing whilst answering the demands of the GCSE course. The department aims to help pupils to express themselves with clarity and feeling.

GCSE English is examined in two papers: the first paper is based on non-fiction and media, the second paper on literature and extended writing. These two papers comprise 60% of the GCSE marks. 20% is based on three speaking and listening tasks, and the final 20% is for written coursework that is shared with English Literature. The coursework includes the study of Shakespeare and classic literature as well as a fictional composition.

GCSE Literature is examined in one paper, worth 70% of the marks, where an unannotated edition of each of the three texts which have been studied is permitted for reference. A further three are studied as part of the 30% coursework. Overall, the six texts involve the reading of poetry, prose and drama before and after 1914. Comparative work is expected as well as an understanding of historical and social context. The department is also committed to extending the pupils' reading beyond the statutory minimum and takes pride in providing a varied and challenging range that provides a sound basis for AS and A-level.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar are important in the assessment of both GCSEs overall. Good handwriting and presentation are encouraged alongside ICT skills.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Where their first language is not English, pupils are provided with the opportunity to improve their skill through EAL classes.

Modern Foreign Languages (French, Spanish)

Languages are part of the cultural richness of the world in which we live; the ability to understand and communicate in another language is a lifelong skill for education, employment and leisure.

The MFL department offers GCSE courses in both **French** and **Spanish** designed to prepare pupils for the AQA examination. In both languages vocabulary and grammar are practised and learnt in four general contexts: Lifestyle, Leisure, Home and Environment, and Work and Education. The GCSE examination consists of 4 units each of which tests one of the four main skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. The two receptive skills (listening and reading) each carry a weighting of 20%; they are externally set and assessed and may be taken at either Foundation or Higher Tier level. The two productive skills (speaking and writing) each carry a weighting of 30% and are untiered. Speaking is internally assessed during the 2-year course and externally moderated whilst writing takes the form of controlled coursework and is externally assessed. Decisions about tiers of entry are based on each individual's strengths and weaknesses, and are delayed as long as possible to encourage and allow all pupils to achieve their full potential.

The principal aims of both courses are the same, namely to develop:

- understanding of the spoken and written forms of the language;
- the ability to communicate effectively in speech and writing;
- knowledge and understanding of the rules of grammar and the ability to apply them;
- knowledge of countries and communities where the target language is spoken;
- positive attitudes towards learning modern foreign languages;
- a sound foundation for the practical use of the language and for further study.

French

Pupils who have been studying **French** as their only modern foreign language in year 9 are normally expected to continue through to the GCSE examination in the Upper Fifth together with those who opt to continue with French rather than Spanish. Sets are reviewed following the examination at the end of the Lower Fifth Form but settings do not automatically restrict the grades available to any individual pupil. At present most pupils take Higher Tier in both listening and reading. Links with our partner school in Saint-Omer offer the opportunity to develop friendships with French pupils through correspondence by letter or e-mail.

Spanish

Spanish is a language of increasing worldwide importance; as well as being the native tongue of most South American peoples in addition to the people of Spain, it is also much spoken in the U.S.A.

Spanish is available as a GCSE option to those pupils who have previously studied the language in Lower Fifth or elsewhere. During the Upper Fifth year they have the opportunity to work in small groups with a language assistant who is a native speaker and it is hoped that the recent language tour to Spain will become a regular fixture. This is an exciting, vibrant course at the end of which most pupils sit the Higher Tier examinations.

Mathematics

Following the national revision of GCSE syllabuses, St Edmund's decided to use the International GCSE (IGCSE) as its examination of choice for all pupils at age 16. The examination provides a qualification accepted as equivalent to GCSE by employers and by universities alike. We prefer it because its Higher Tier has a syllabus designed to dovetail easily into progression to further study in the subject, and its Foundation Tier has proved accessible to pupils with less mathematical confidence and skills, whose study is likely to end with GCSE.

Pupils are taught in sets to ensure that work is covered at a speed with which they are comfortable. Higher sets will move quickly, allowing time for extension work to stimulate interest in the subject, or to provide them with the best possible foundation for study of the subject beyond GCSE. Lower sets move more cautiously, allowing more time for ideas to be fully grasped. Setting is kept under review so that each pupil has the best opportunity to realise his or her full potential.

The assessment is entirely through written examination, with two papers being taken at the end of the Upper Fifth year.

The course covers topics under five broad headings:

- Using and Applying Mathematics - choosing appropriate mathematical techniques to use in solving problems.
- Number - developing knowledge of decimals, fractions, percentages, ratios, negative numbers, standard form, accuracy and rounding, both with and without the use of calculators.
- Algebra - using algebraic ideas in the investigation of number patterns, graphs of many kinds, functions, as well as the solution of equations (linear, quadratic and simultaneous) and inequalities.
- Shape, Space and Measure - looking at important shapes and solids such as triangles, quadrilaterals, cones and spheres. We consider their symmetries and angle properties, and the units appropriate for measurement. This section also includes Pythagoras' theorem, together with co-ordinate geometry and trigonometry.
- Data Handling - collecting, analysing and interpreting numerical information, together with work on probability.

Able pupils in Set 1 may be offered an enrichment programme outside normal lesson time that bridges some of the gap between GCSE and A-level.

Science

September 2006 saw the countrywide introductions of new pupil-based curricula at GCSE level by all examination boards. The rationale behind this change is to bring science alive by making the topics studied more relevant to our everyday lives and with the emphasis on “how we know” rather than “what we know”. The AQA specification which has been adopted encourages learning through practical activities and gives pupils the opportunity to discuss current science issues, including the science-based articles presented by the media.

Biology, Chemistry and Physics is studied by all pupils and the curriculum is delivered by experienced subject specialists. Pupils study interesting and diverse topics such as genetics, use and misuse of drugs, earth science, atomic structure, industrial chemistry and radioactivity.

GCSE Science is studied in the Middle Fifth Form: assessment is through external module tests, comprising multiple choice questions, which may be taken in November, March, and June. The coursework component consists of internal assessment of practical skills.

In the Upper Fifth year pupils will study the material which will lead to the award of a second GCSE, namely Additional Science. The most able pupils will study a more extensive curriculum which will lead to the award of a separate GCSE in each of the three science subjects.

Assessment will take the form of written papers in January (for those studying the separate sciences) and in June of the Upper Fifth year and internal assessment of practical skills. Terminal examinations are offered at two levels: Higher Tier leading to A*-D grades, and Foundation Tier leading to grades C-G. We anticipate that all pupils, regardless of their set, will sit the Higher Tier papers.

Art and Design (Drawing and Painting, Ceramics)

Art and Design is both a form of communication and a means of expressing ideas and feelings. It is a language which complements those of the literary, mathematical, scientific and factually based subjects. It is especially concerned with the development of those complex mental processes involved in visual perception and aesthetic experience.

The GCSE course is designed to stimulate visual awareness. This is achieved by laying a sound foundation of practical skills during the early part of the course and promoting a learning environment where:

- pupils feel they are achieving;
- there is clear evidence of their progress;
- pupils are seen to be rewarded for their efforts by having their work exhibited frequently;
- pupils learn to become critically aware of the work of other artists and how to evaluate their own work.

GCSE enables pupils of varying artistic abilities to experience, and enjoy using, a variety of media, to observe, analyse and develop ideas and to express themselves in visual terms. Attention is given to developing individual skills, and the topics are all underpinned by historical and contextual information. Aims and objectives are identified at the start of a project and pupils are encouraged to self-evaluate and make comparisons at the end of sessions.

There are two different GCSE courses in Art-related subjects, Drawing and Painting being one and Ceramics (3-D studies) the other. Pupils may choose to study either or both.

60% of the GCSE marks are for coursework and 40% for an externally-set, controlled test.

Due to the expensive nature of Art and Design, students will be charged £10 per subject per term to make a small contribution to the cost of consumable materials. They will also be offered the opportunity to purchase other materials and equipment for their own personal use. These are charged at cost price.

Drama

The AQA Drama and Theatre Arts specification is used. It develops and tests the candidates' ability to:

- know about and understand practical skills and rehearsal techniques through role play and improvisation;
- work with sensitivity to the needs of group relationships and interaction which might include small group productions;
- analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of their own ideas and those of others which will include visits to theatrical productions.

The AQA examination involves a written paper (40%), and a practical component, which is selected from a range of options including scripted performance, improvisation, dance, set design and construction, lighting, sound, costume and make-up.

Practical moderation attracts large audiences and results are excellent, drawing praise from external moderators. "Like a good night out at the theatre" and "performances off the scale" were just two comments from the examination board in 2005.

Geography

Geography is the study of our changing environment over time and space. The subject has never been more relevant with exciting issues challenging our world, including climate change, the development gap, increasing natural disasters, and environmental destruction.

The study of Geography develops a wide range of skills and perspectives which can enhance the understanding of issues in many other subjects, Including:

- a better understanding of current events;
- an awareness of our effect on the natural environment;
- a knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity;
- a realisation of the interdependence of countries across the world;
- an ability to interpret maps, graphs, diagrams, data tables and images.

We will be following a new and exciting AQA specification course, which involves three broad areas of study: Physical Geography, Human Geography and local investigative fieldwork.

Physical Geography (one exam representing 37.5% of the GCSE) involves the study of stimulating current issues such as; living with natural hazards and the impacts of global warming. In addition the traditional topics that make geography so interesting are not neglected e.g. rivers, coastlines, glaciation, and volcanic activity.

Human Geography (one exam representing 37.5% of the GCSE) deals with issues such as globalisation, population change, the impact of migration, industrial location, and rural/urban differences. As with the Physical Geography topics these are highly relevant issues in our changing world.

The local investigative fieldwork (25% of the GCSE) allows students to demonstrate their capacity for individual study and initiative. The investigation and the write up of findings have to be conducted under teacher supervision.

Geography is a well respected GCSE with scientific, artistic and mathematical aspects to its study. It is very valuable in the changing careers market with the growing emphasis on environmental issues, sustainable development, and globalisation.

History

Pupils study for the OCR "The Modern World" History B GCSE. Paper One (Unit A971) worth 45% of the available marks concentrates on a study of international relations 1919 to 1939:

- the search for international order between 1919 and 1929: this section discusses whether the peace treaties and the League of Nations were strong enough to secure peace in the future;
- the collapse of international order in the 1930s: this section considers the rise of fascist dictators such as Hitler and Mussolini, and asks whether their aggressive nature made war inevitable.

Paper One also enables pupils to study a USA 1919 to 1941 Depth study:

- the USA 1919-1941, investigating life in US society during the Roaring Twenties, the causes and consequences of the Wall Street Crash which developed into the Great Depression and the attempt by F.D. Roosevelt to fight the problems through the New Deal.

Paper Two (Unit A972) worth 30% of the available marks is a British Depth Study looking at how British society changed between 1890 and 1918:

- Three major issues are the Liberal Welfare State reforms, the quest for Female Emancipation, and the Home Front during World War I.

Each pupil will undertake a piece of 'Controlled Assessment' or as it was known coursework (Unit A977) which is worth 25% of the available marks.

- The role of the individual in History
- A thematic study in twentieth century History
- A study in depth

There is a biennial trip to Berlin, primarily to visit the relics of Nazism, but also to enjoy the experience of this historic city in the centre of Europe.

ICT

(Information and Communication Technology)

Virtually every job in a modern economy requires the use of ICT in some form. ICT skills are frequently high on the list of skills required by employers. For those who wish to pursue IT as a career, the course provides a solid basis for GCE AS and Advanced Computing courses.

The course follows Edexcel's International GCSE ICT and is examined in one written paper representing 50% of the marks with the remaining 50% for a practical computer-based examination.

Pupils will have the opportunity to use a range of packages to include database, spreadsheets, word processors, desk top publishing, website writer and presentation packages within the duration of the course.

They will learn the theoretical side of ICT, including software lifecycles, various devices, licensing, security, integration and banking to name just a few. They will be exposed to a vast glossary of computer acronyms and will need to understand their meaning and application.

Pupils are encouraged to develop their interests in, enjoyment of, and critical reflections about ICT as an integral part of modern society.

Latin

The study of Latin provides an excellent foundation for many disciplines, and especially for pupils who might study English or Modern Languages beyond GCSE.

There is no coursework in this OCR GCSE course. Translation from English into Latin is optional. 50% of the marks are for language work (unseen translation and comprehension), 25% for the study of a verse set text, and 25% for the prose set text, comprising comment, translation and explanation based on each text.

Pupils will be enabled to develop competence in understanding Latin texts, the civilisation of Rome and its empire, and its influence on the modern world, and a sensitive and analytical approach to language generally. The course is a satisfying experience in itself, but it is also a sound basis for further linguistic study, and develops powers of analysis and logic which are important in so many fields in the world today.

Music

The course is open to all pupils who have a keen and active interest in Music. Pupils must be prepared to study an instrument, sing, and learn to develop their reading of different forms of musical notation. It is essential that pupils have a proven level of musical proficiency at the start of the course. Normally, it is expected that candidates should already play an instrument to Grade 4 (or equivalent) standard at the start of the course. Should formal examinations not have been taken, a candidate's level of performance will be assessed by departmental staff before being accepted onto the course. They should also have access to a piano or electronic keyboard instrument. All musicians are expected to be fully involved, not only in classroom music, but also in the wide variety of extra-curricular music organised by the department.

GCSE Music demonstrates a pupil's breadth of knowledge and experience as well as practical, manipulative and academic skills. Employers, universities and colleges all recognise this fully. In the final analysis, however, the real reason for the study of music is that it will give pupils a unique opportunity for self-expression both individually and in ensembles.

Music is demanding both academically and practically, yet equally personally fulfilling and rewarding. To perform well at GCSE pupils need to develop their abilities in all three areas of the course, namely:

- **Listening:** pupils focus on four areas of study which cover music from the Baroque period up to and including current pop music, including non-western music. A 1½ hour written examination at the end of the course tests a pupil's ability to respond to questions based on extracts of recorded music from each of the four areas of study.
- **Composing:** relevant techniques are taught and most work consists of composition assignments. The department is equipped with the latest Music software packages, such as "Sibelius 5" and "Cubase SE". Pupils present a folio of compositions and recordings, and an evaluation of each piece written during their GCSE course. The best two of these are ultimately submitted for moderation.
- **Performing:** solo and ensemble performances in class and at public concerts. Pupils are recorded in both disciplines and these are submitted for moderation.

Physical Education

Physical Education is a GCSE option only available to pupils whose sporting prowess meets a qualifying standard. Pupils are offered this option on the basis of their proven physical skills and their commitment to sport. The physical preparation for the practical element of the examination takes place within normal games lessons, in specialised teaching periods and in coaching sessions for school team sports. It is essential that pupils opting to take GCSE PE be regular team players in a minimum of two sports.

In the theoretical component of the course, pupils learn about factors affecting participation and performance, safety aspects and risk assessment, and applied anatomy and physiology. This is assessed in a written examination which comprises 40% of the total marks. A reasonable degree of literacy and scientific capability is therefore needed if pupils are to access high grades.

The remaining marks are awarded for the practical part of the course. This involves planning, performing and evaluating selected sports. Pupils must select **four** activities for assessment, at least **three** of which must be sports which are coached and assessed within the school. They must complete an analysis of performance in one of these.

For pupils possessed of the requisite range of practical and academic skills, this is a rewarding and interesting GCSE discipline. It provides an excellent foundation for the study of Physical Education at AS and A-level.

Religious Studies

The GCSE course we follow guides pupils through three distinct areas of study. Firstly, we look at the principles of two religions, Christianity and Buddhism. Secondly, we consider the notion of spirituality and engage with some philosophical ideas covering some of life's big questions: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" "Can you prove that God exists?" "What are sin and evil?" "What does it mean to talk about faith, proof or truth?"

Thirdly, we consider 21st century issues such as abortion, euthanasia, crime and punishment, the media, animal rights, the environment, prejudice and discrimination. We study practical, legal and religious approaches to these issues.

The course builds on material covered in the Lower Fifth Form, where Christianity has been studied, and a module of "ethics" has been followed. The course is examined via two written papers; there is no coursework.

The Religious Studies course requires pupils to explore all sides of an argument and to develop their own opinions. During the two years of the course pupils learn a great deal about religion and the world in which they live but they also learn a lot about themselves, their beliefs and values. The course helps pupils to develop the ability to marshal and to express an argument persuasively without necessarily believing in that point of view. It is ideally suited to those who enjoy discussion and debate; it is accessible to pupils of any faith, as well as those who have none.

Technology (Food Technology, Graphic Products, Resistant Materials)

The Technology Department offers a choice of three courses: Food Technology, Graphic Products and Resistant Materials, leading to a GCSE in Design and Technology. The courses share the common themes of Designing and Making, and require skills in both the practical aspects of the subjects and a knowledge and understanding of the wider implications of technology. The assessment objectives for the courses include Designing, Evaluating, Planning, Use of Equipment and Materials, Industrial Practices, and Systems and Control.

The final GCSE grade is made up from a 60% Coursework mark, and 40% from a terminal examination for which there are two tiers of entry: Higher Tier (grades A*-D) and Foundation Tier (grades C-G).

Food Technology

This course enables pupils to design and make their own food products. Pupils will learn about the chemical, nutritional and sensory properties of foods, and also research food products on the market as well as the needs and wants of the consumer.

The coursework project provides the opportunity to research and design a new food product. In this part of the course pupils need to apply skills and knowledge from other areas, such as Science, Information Technology, Art and Mathematics. Pupils will be encouraged to evaluate their own practical design-and-make activities, along with gaining an understanding of large scale food production techniques.

Graphic Products

This course enables pupils to specialise in “designing and making” using graphics tools and techniques. The course will provide a broad experience of technological and design procedures and draws upon knowledge and understanding from a range of related subjects, such as Art, Science and Resistant Materials Technology.

The course is divided into two components: a written examination (40%) and a design-and-make task (60%).

The coursework consists of a design-and-make project on an industrial or commercial theme. This work is supported by various focused tasks and theory lessons in preparation for the terminal examination.

The direct application of this subject is in the fields of graphic and product design, but the techniques learnt can also be applied to any situation where visual presentation skills are important. Whilst a natural graphic ability would obviously be useful, it is not as important as interest and enthusiasm for the subject and a willingness to work hard.

Resistant Materials

This course develops pupils' ability to identify, analyse and solve identified practical problems and then to proceed to demonstrate this solution with tangible evidence.

Pupils are taught to develop practical abilities and the confidence to produce sound design solutions selecting and using resources effectively. They are encouraged to develop a critical viewpoint in order to analyse and evaluate products in the context of their needs and the social and economic environment in which they are used.

The course is divided into two components: a written examination (40%) and a design-and-make task (60%).

The design-and-make task takes up the bulk of the pupils' time and involves the application of all elements taught during the course along with a sound understanding of other subjects, such as Mathematics, Science, English and ICT.

INSIDE BACK COVER

Examination Boards

SUBJECT	EXAMINATION BOARD	SYLLABUS CODE
Art and Design: 3-D Studies	AQA	3205
Art and Design: Fine Art	AQA	3202
Drama	AQA	3241
English Language	OCR	1900
English Literature	OCR	1901
English as a Second Language: IGCSE	Edexcel	4357
French	OCR	1925
Geography	AQA	3031
History: Modern World	OCR	1937C
ICT: IGCSE	Edexcel	4385
Latin	OCR	1942
Mathematics: IGCSE	Edexcel	4400
Music	Edexcel	1426
Physical Education	Edexcel	1827
Religious Studies	(tbc)	
Science	AQA	4461
Additional Science	AQA	4463
Biology	AQA	4411
Chemistry	AQA	4421
Physics	AQA	4451
Spanish	AQA	3691
Technology: Food Technology	AQA	3542
Technology: Graphic Products	Edexcel/AQA	1972/3543
Technology: Resistant Materials	Edexcel	1973