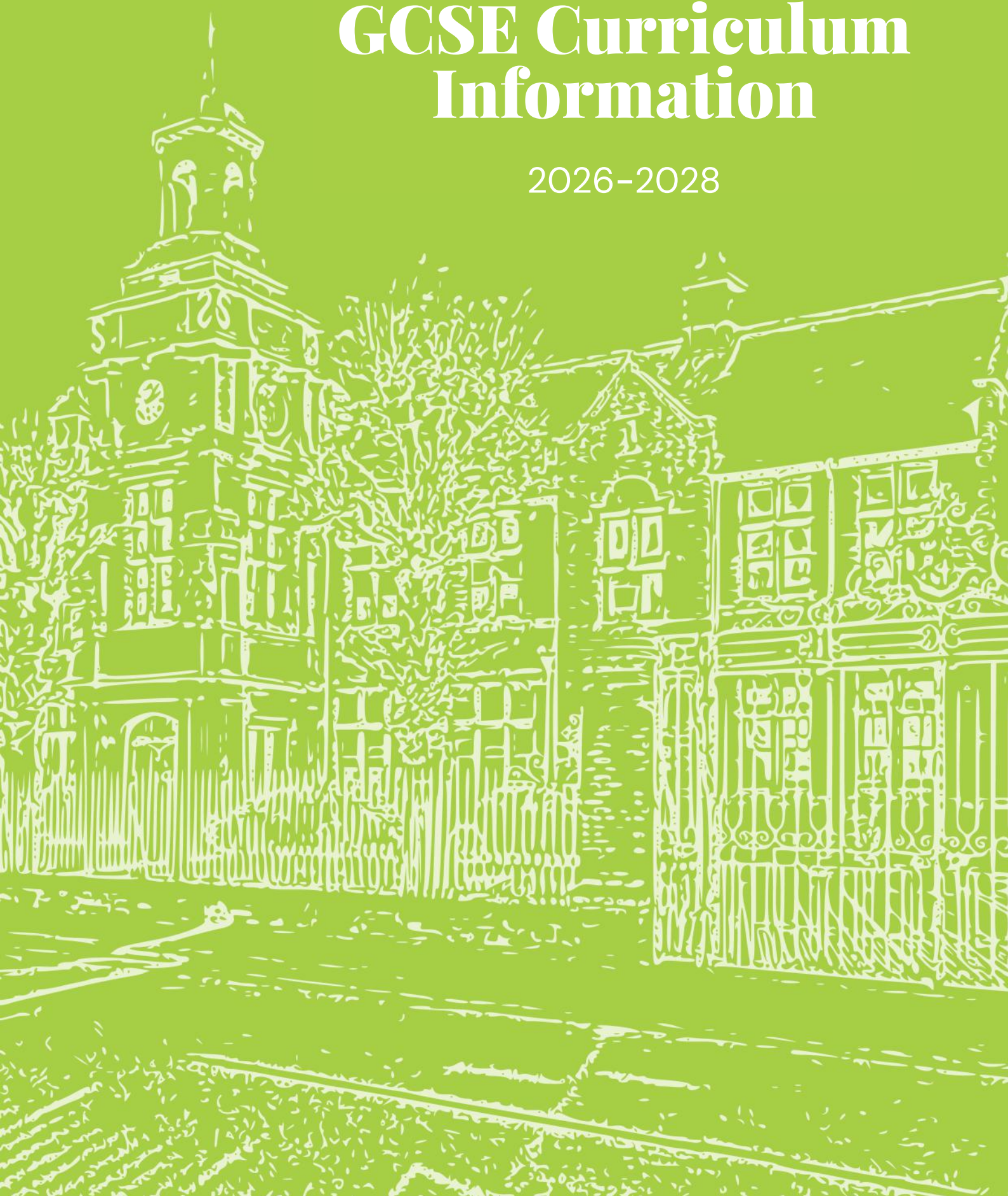




Brentwood School

# GCSE Curriculum Information

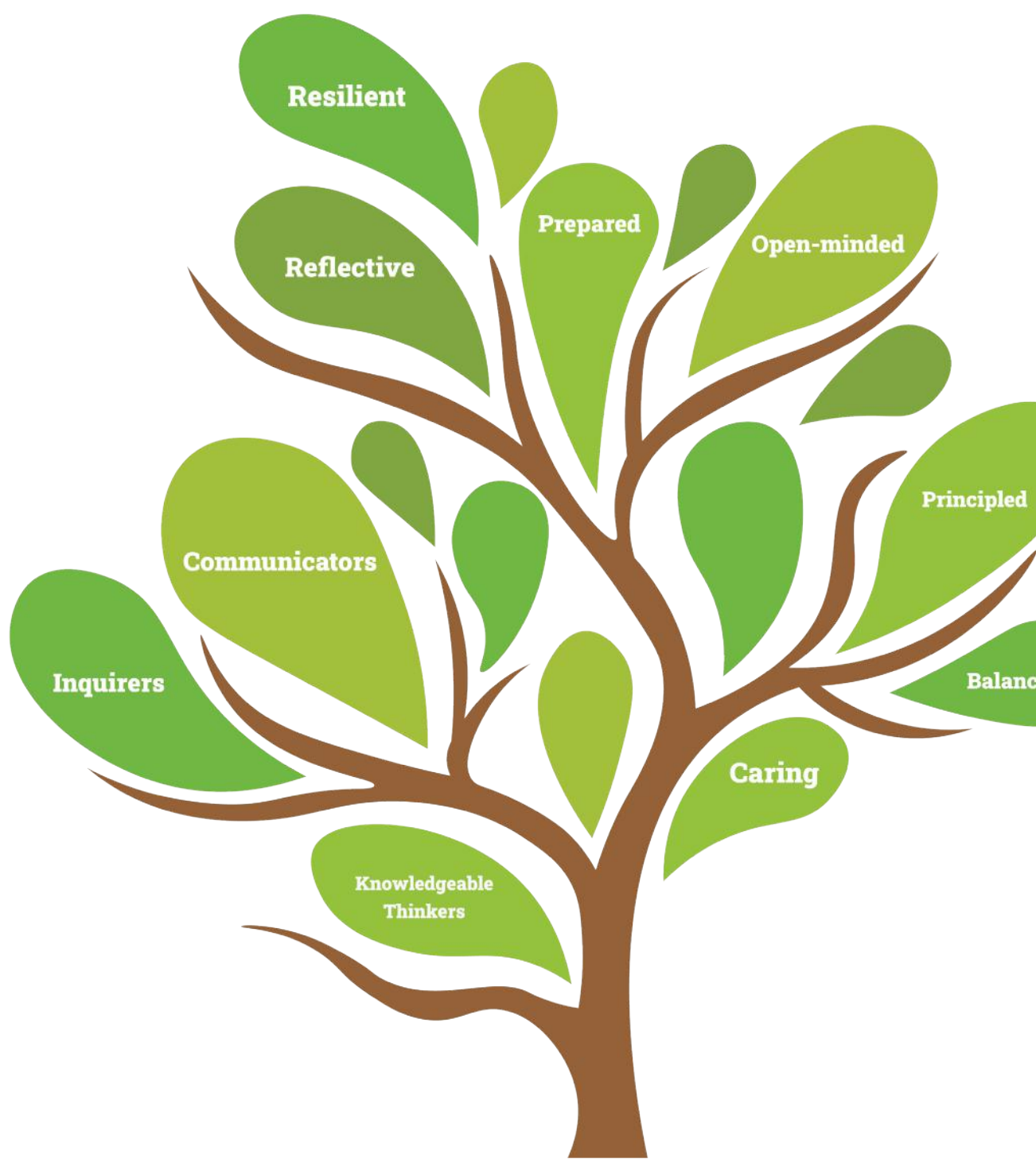
2026–2028



# Introduction

Years 10 & 11 are a really exciting time: a time in which our students are engaged, challenged and inspired. Through their GCSE courses, students face increasing academic demands and real opportunity to begin honing in on their interests. Over these two years, our students mature rapidly from the schoolboys and schoolgirls of the Lower School to our next School leaders in the Sixth Form.

Brentwood School endeavours to develop young people who display all of the attributes in our Learner Profile.



# Core Curriculum

(taken by all students)

- Mathematics IGCSE
- English Language and English Literature: two separate IGCSEs
- Mindset: a course on study skills, organisation, systems and motivation
- Higher Project Qualification, HPQ: a research project in Year 11, which helps develop students' research and self-management skills
- Wellbeing, Core Physical Education and Games: non-GCSE

## Science Pathways

All students continue studying Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Students either complete the Combined Science IGCSE Double Award, meaning students are awarded two IGCSE grades for their combined study of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, or students can opt for "three separate Science IGCSEs" in the "Free choice" option blocks, meaning they are then awarded three IGCSE grades, one for each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Each Science subject, whether part of the Combined Science IGCSE Double Award or "three separate Science IGCSEs", is taught by dedicated specialists.

We strongly recommend that students who are interested in Sciences or Engineering in Sixth Form or at university or as a career opt for "three separate Science IGCSEs".



# Option Subjects

All students have five free options choices.

Five free choices means students can build the *right* mix for them.

Students should choose subjects they enjoy and subjects they are good at, while being mindful of what they need for Sixth Form and beyond.

Free Choice (choose any five options)	
Three separate Science IGCSEs (rather than Combined Science Double Award)	Enterprise/ Business
Art	Food & Nutrition
Academic PE	French
Ancient History	Geography
Chinese	German
Classical Greek*	History
Computer Science	Italian
Dance*	Latin
Design Technology	Music
Drama	Religious Studies
EAL*	Spanish
Supervised private study (thereby taking one fewer GCSE overall)	

\* Students can choose a maximum of one asterisked subject; these subjects will be taught in co-educational classes.

Most students study 10 GCSEs, however there is an option to opt for 9 GCSEs and have supervised private study instead of a tenth GCSE.

For further details concerning the individual courses, please refer to the subject specific information set out in the subject information links in this booklet. As an independent school, we have greater flexibility in the qualifications we offer than schools in the state sector. Our academic Heads of Department each choose whether to offer a GCSE or an IGCSE or a BTEC Tech Award course, and a particular specification, based on their judgement about the content and the balance of valuable skills the syllabus helps foster.

# Making Informed Subject Choices

Since the majority of GCSE courses are designed and structured to be taken throughout the course of Years 10 and 11 of secondary education, it is necessary for students to make their subject choices during Year 9. For some students, the process of making subject choices will be refreshingly straightforward and will be guided and informed by academic aptitude, intrinsic interest and/or career aspirations. However, for other students, the process may be slightly more complicated or challenging. We want all students to make informed choices so that they benefit from a curriculum which is academically engaging and hugely enjoyable.

## Modern Languages and Humanities

We strongly recommend that all students should study at least one modern foreign language and at least one humanities subject at GCSE level. We are committed to our students developing an active engagement with the world, and language skills continue to be valued in international business, law, the civil service, and other sectors. Studying a humanities subject enables students to develop their skills of communication, analysis and evaluation.

Students who aspire to, or who don't want to rule out, applying to the most selective UK universities – Cambridge, Oxford, LSE, Imperial, St Andrew's – should include at least one modern foreign language and at least one humanities subject as part of their five free choices.

## Sciences

We strongly recommend that students who are interested in Sciences or Engineering in Sixth Form or at university or as a career opt for "three separate Science IGCSEs".

## BTEC Tech Awards

Our Dance and Enterprise courses are BTEC Tech Awards, rather than GCSE/IGCSE. All universities recognise and accept BTEC Tech Awards. However, students who aspire to, or who don't want to rule out, applying to the most selective UK universities – Cambridge, Oxford, LSE, Imperial, St Andrew's – can opt for one (or neither) of these Tech Award courses, but should not take both.

## Supervised Private Study

Students who opt for supervised private study, thereby taking one fewer GCSE, need to use this time productively to undertake additional study tasks to boost their grades in their other subjects, rather than simply using the time to complete their homework so they have less to do at home.

## Timetable blocks

In order to enable us to structure the timetable option blocks, we will require you to indicate on an online form which option subjects your child would ideally like to study for GCSE, in addition to the core subjects. We build timetable blocks from students' options choices, not the other way round: constructing the timetable blocks so that as many students as possible are able to study the combination of subjects that they have indicated.

## Reserve subject choices

Please note that, **if the number of students wishing to study a particular course is extremely small (i.e. below 6), we may need to take the decision that the course will not run.** We will always try to run a course as a co-educational class in order to make it viable before deciding to withdraw it entirely. We ask that students give a "reserve subject choice" which we may need to use in such a situation.

If a student's requested subject combination is particularly unusual, such that we are unable to timetable the combination alongside all other students' combinations, we may also need to use the "reserve subject choice". Parents will be contacted in any of these cases.

### **What if I change my mind?**

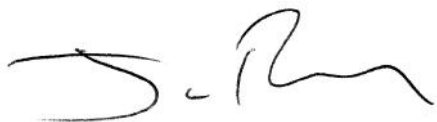
After subject choices have been submitted, students are able to change their minds about which courses to study, by parental request to Mr Levien – [SDL@brentwood.essex.sch.uk](mailto:SDL@brentwood.essex.sch.uk), providing (i) their new combination of subjects fits the timetable blocks that will have been drawn up; and (ii) class sizes permit. We are more likely to be able to accommodate changes if we are told sooner.

It is important for students to consult with parents and teaching staff when making subject choices. They may also choose to discuss subject choices with their Form Tutor or Head of Year. Additionally, Mrs Monk (Head of Careers) is available to provide career guidance to students and their parents. Mr Sellers (Director of Sixth Form) can discuss choice of subjects and how it may impact upon specific university courses. It is also worth noting that elite universities will expect students to achieve 7–9 grades in the majority of their subjects.

Even at this stage, students should consider which subjects they may wish to study in Sixth Form. As much as possible, students should aim to keep their options open and choose courses which provide them with the freedom and flexibility to pursue Sixth Form subjects that support their future aspirations.

**Sixth Form Pathways Booklet →**

Please do contact me if you have any general queries about combinations of GCSE subjects. Making these choices can seem a little daunting and we will do everything we can to guide and support you through this process. We hope that it is an exciting step, and one which will enable our students to flourish in the next stage of their education.



**Jonathan Barfield Moore**  
*Deputy Head (Academic)*







# Subject Information

*Click on each  
subject to view  
individual  
subject pages*

[Art](#)

[Academic PE](#)

[Ancient History](#)

[Biology](#)

[Chemistry](#)

[Chinese](#)

[Classical Greek](#)

[Combined Science](#)

[Computer Science](#)

[Dance](#)

[Design & Technology](#)

[Drama](#)

[EAL](#)

[English Language](#)

[English Literature](#)

[Enterprise / Business](#)

[Food Preparation & Nutrition](#)

[French](#)

[Geography](#)

[German](#)

[History](#)

[HPQ](#)

[Italian](#)

[Latin](#)

[Mathematics](#)

[Music](#)

[Physics](#)

[Theology & Philosophy  
\(Religious Studies\)](#)

[Spanish](#)

A white outline of a shield is centered on the right side of the page. Inside the shield, the letters 'VLM' are written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Below the letters, the words 'Virtue Learning Manners' are written in a smaller, white, cursive script font. A vertical white line runs down the right side of the page, passing through the center of the shield.

**VLM**

*Virtue Learning Manners*