



VALLEY PARK
S C H O O L

YEAR 9 OPTIONS

COURSE
HANDBOOK

CORE SUBJECTS

GCSE SUBJECTS

VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parent/Carer

As you will be aware, students in Year 9 will shortly be given the opportunity to choose some of the subjects that they will be studying in Years 10 and 11. Choosing options is an important process and is the first step of the students taking greater responsibility for their own learning.

At Valley Park School, we believe in offering our students as wide a choice of subjects as possible. In this way, they are not only provided with a rounded education, but also opportunities, which will enable them to achieve success in school and beyond. In recent years, more students than ever from Valley Park School have opted to follow a university education and as competition for university places and jobs increases, it is vital that our students are equipped with qualifications that will enable them to compete with their peers.

With this in mind, this course handbook provides all of the information about each subject to enable your son / daughter to make an informed decision about the options they take. Over the next few days, we recommend you spend some time discussing these options with your child to ensure they select the most appropriate courses, which they will enjoy studying for the next two years.

During years 10 and 11, students will study 3 option subjects. Students are asked to select 5 choices in total, one from option A, one from option B and 3 from option C. The students need to select 3 primary choices (1 from option A, 1 from option B and 1 from option C) and 2 backup choices (from option C). Whilst we will endeavour to allocate subjects to students from their choices, this may not always be possible.

It is crucial that your child engages in lots of conversation about their options with you at home and their teachers at school over the next few weeks. Please also encourage them to ask lots of questions, to ensure they make the right decisions which will impact the next two years of their education.

Your child's selection must be completed using the Sims Options Online application, the login for which has been emailed to parents.

The deadline for making choices is 3pm on Friday 27th February 2026.

Yours faithfully,



Mr S Quenby
Deputy Headteacher

HOW TO SELECT YOUR OPTION CHOICES

The subjects that you choose will have a significant impact on your future career, your success in examinations and ultimately your enjoyment of school.

Make sure you choose your subjects for the right reasons. To make good choices we suggest you do the following:

1. Make sure you know the content of the courses and how they are assessed. Would a vocational course be better for you, or would a GCSE be best?
2. Think carefully about the career you may wish to pursue. How will your choices help you in your chosen career?
3. Discuss the choices with friends and family.
4. Choose subjects that you enjoy.
5. Choose your strong subjects.
6. Talk to your teachers.
7. Do not choose a subject just because your friends have done so.
8. Do not choose a subject because you like the teacher.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GCSE

General Certificate of Secondary Education. This is the examination-centred form of qualification studied at Key Stage 4. For some subjects there will be a combination of controlled assessments and final written examination, although this is not always the case.

BTEC LEVEL 2 FIRST AWARD, BTEC LEVEL 2 TECH AWARD, OCR NATIONAL AWARD AND NCFE TECHNICAL AWARD

These are vocationally based qualifications. Students must complete units of work to the required standard throughout the course. These are equivalent to one GCSE grade. At least 20% of the course is externally assessed by examination.

KEY STAGE 3

This term refers to the school years 7 and 8.

KEY STAGE 4

This term refers to the school years 9, 10 and 11. A range of compulsory subjects is studied and some choices are available.

KEY STAGE 5

This term refers to the school years 12 and 13.

CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT

This is similar to coursework but is produced within school hours, under controlled conditions, within a time limit.

LEVEL 2

Qualifications normally completed in Key Stage 4.

LEVEL 3

Qualifications normally completed in Key Stage 5.

OPTION CHOICES

Students are required to select 5 options. One choice from option A, one choice from option B and 3 choices from option C.

Students cannot choose a subject from option B and then choose the same subject from option C.

Students will be issued with 3 choices in total.

OPTION A (SELECT ONE)		
French	Geography	History

OPTION B (SELECT ONE)	
Art & Design	Drama
Art Ceramics	Food
Art Graphics	Music
Art Textiles	Performing Arts
Design Technology	Photography
Dance	

OPTION C (SELECT THREE)		
Art & Design	Design Technology	PE
Art Ceramics	Drama	Performing Arts
Art Graphics	Engineering	Photography
Art Textiles	Food	Psychology
Business	Health & Social Care	
Computer Science	Music	

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: AQA - ENGLISH LANGUAGE • ENGLISH LITERATURE

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The AQA GCSE course that you will study is comprised of two separately endorsed subjects and qualifications: English Literature and English Language.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught a selection of texts in English Language and Literature, including both fiction and non-fiction, as well as the following novels, poetry and drama: An Inspector Calls, A Christmas Carol, Macbeth and Conflict poetry.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

You will study:

English Language

- Communicating information and ideas
- Exploring effects and impact

English Literature

- Exploring modern and literacy heritage texts
- Exploring Shakespeare and poetry

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn how to: read, understand and analyse a wide range of different texts, speak confidently and listen sensitively to other points of view; construct essays; analyse and evaluate texts and communicate your ideas and opinions clearly.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You will be expected to cover the course diligently and with increasing levels of independence. We are passionate about English and expect our students to emulate our dedication and enthusiasm.

IS THERE COURSEWORK IN THIS SUBJECT?

No, there is no coursework element in English.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will sit two examinations in English Language and two in English Literature. Throughout the course you will be given tasks to prepare you for these examinations. There will also be a spoken language examination, and this will attract a separate endorsed grade.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

English will support all future courses of study.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS MERRETT - HEAD OF ENGLISH

MATHEMATICS

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Mathematics curriculum leads to a GCSE qualification. The Edexcel course follows topics on:

- Number
- Algebra
- Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change
- Geometry and Measures
- Probability
- Statistics

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

In Number and Algebra you will solve numerical problems and understand equations, formulae and formal methods of computation.

In Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change you will calculate changes in percentages, gradients of graphs and will explore the concept of growth and decay.

In Geometry and Measures you will be taught how to understand and apply properties of shape, position, movement and transformation.

In Statistics you will be required to collect, process, compare, represent and interpret data. In Probability you will estimate and calculate the probabilities of events.

All six topics contain problem-solving elements, where you will learn to confidently apply your mathematical skills and knowledge to real world situations, giving logical reasons for your answers. Problem-solving is most relevant to the Ratio, Proportion and Rates of Change topic, where there are clear links with Science through the use of formulae and graphs.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

Mathematics will equip you with powerful ways to describe, analyse and communicate. You will be familiar with a range of resources such as calculators, spreadsheets and ICT. You will be able to give logical reasons for your answers and will gain confidence in a range of mathematical techniques and processes that can be applied in a widening range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts. These include managing money, calculating percentages, assessing risk, problem-solving and decision-making.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You are expected to undertake activities in Mathematics that will help you to become a successful learner. You should recognise that Mathematics is used as a tool in a wide range of contexts. You should engage in Mathematics as an interesting and worthwhile activity. Homework tasks must be completed on time every week.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There is no coursework in Mathematics.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

The written examination consists of three papers. A scientific calculator is required for the second and third papers; students are recommended the Casio Scientific calculator as they contain all required functions and are user friendly. You must ensure that you bring a pair of compasses, a protractor and a ruler to each examination.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

Mathematical thinking is important for all members of a modern society as a habit of mind for use in the workplace, in business and finance and for personal decision making. Mathematics is fundamental in understanding science, engineering, technology and economics.

Most careers and higher education courses will require GCSE Mathematics at grade 5 or above. You can continue your mathematical studies in Sixth Form by opting for A Level Mathematics.

CONTACT PERSON: MRS WATSON - HEAD OF MATHEMATICS

COMBINED SCIENCE TRILOGY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

This AQA course combines units from Biology, Chemistry and Physics and results in students achieving two GCSEs altogether. You develop skills of enquiry and investigation in all three Science disciplines. In the Biology units you will learn about how Biology is used to help humans improve their own lives and to understand the world around them. The Chemistry topics involve studying the composition, structure and properties of materials and how they combine and react together. In the Physics topics, you will learn about the fundamental concepts of fields, forces, radiation and particle structures.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

Each unit studied focuses on scientific explanations and models to explain scientific phenomena. Practical skills are taught as an integral part of each unit. Mathematical skills will also be developed as part of this course.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

BIOLOGY RELATED UNITS

- Cell Biology
- Organisation
- Bioenergetics
- Homeostasis and Response
- Inheritance
- Variation and Evolution
- Ecology

CHEMISTRY RELATED UNITS

- Atomic Structure and the Periodic Table
- Bonding
- Structure and Properties of Matter
- Quantitative Chemistry
- Chemical Changes
- Energy Changes
- The Rate and Extent of Chemical Change
- Organic Chemistry
- Chemical Analysis
- Chemistry of the Atmosphere and using Resources

PHYSICS RELATED UNITS

- Energy
- Electricity
- Particle Model of Matter
- Atomic Structure
- Forces
- Waves
- Magnetism
- Electromagnetism

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The development of investigative skills is a core component of the course and you will have the opportunity to develop these skills throughout the three year programme. The application of practical skills will be assessed in the terminal examinations.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

Studying any Science related GCSE will develop your powers of analysis and evaluation as well as your ability to explain phenomena from the world around you. Mathematical skills play a crucial role in this course.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

GCSE Science courses are enjoyable but challenging. You will need to be resilient and determined to succeed, reinforcing classwork with work outside the classroom. Most students nationally study Combined Science.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There is no coursework but you must complete core practical tasks and provide evidence that you have completed these successfully.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

The course is assessed by examination at the end of the course in Year 11.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

The course will lead into any Science course at Level 3 as well as providing a solid foundation for careers such as engineering, computing, medicine and law.

CONTACT: MISS S DAY - HEAD OF SCIENCE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

Religious Studies is a full GCSE undertaken by all students, and it comprises a curriculum relating to understanding Christianity and Islam and exploring ethical issues of peace, conflict, crime, relationships and families, abortion and euthanasia.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

The course is made up of religious beliefs and practices from Christianity and Islam and Religion and Ethics with a focus on 4 main areas of ethical study.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

There are two compulsory units:

Beliefs and Practices:

- Christianity
- Islam

Religion and Ethics:

- Relationships and Families
- Religion and Life
- Peace and Conflict
- Crime and Punishment

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will acquire skills of empathy and respectful debate, as well as compassion and understanding. You will gain skills of critical thinking and evaluation.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You will be expected to fully engage in your Religious Studies lessons and participate fully and respectfully in debate, as well as completing all work to a high standard. You will be expected use your skills in critical thinking and evaluation to examine arguments from different perspectives.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There is no coursework in this subject.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

There are two 1hr and 45 mins examination papers, that you will sit at the end of Year 11. You will answer all questions. The papers include short open response questions, and longer extended writing tasks.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS KEAYS – HEAD OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

ART AND DESIGN

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: EDEXCEL

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Edexcel GCSE in Art and Design is designed to be a general course, encompassing the three elements of Art, Craft and Design. It enables students to explore a wide range of two and three dimensional approaches.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques across a wide range of media. You will develop your knowledge of contextual references using ideas to explore, develop and produce Art and Design pieces.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of 4 assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Art and Design course will allow you to produce practical work in a variety of different contexts. The course will suit imaginative students with good creative skills who enjoy producing high quality design work. You will be able to explore your own ideas by experimenting with a wide range of materials through a variety of 2D and 3D projects.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop and improve your existing artistic abilities as well as learning new skills and techniques. You will learn how to conduct research for each project and you will be taught to analyse the work that you have studied.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which evidence, including written work, will be presented to show that you can:

- Conduct an investigation
- Experiment and develop ideas
- Identify and evaluate Art, Craft and Design work
- Create finished pieces

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is coursework, requiring you to produce a personal portfolio. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School. The portfolio forms 60% of the qualification.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment in Art and Design. This forms 40% of the final qualification. The 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will be continually assessed throughout the course. At the end of each project, you will make a presentation which will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for A Level Art and Design courses in the Sixth Form. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MRS BEARD, MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MRS H BEARD • MISS M RILEY • MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS

BUSINESS STUDIES

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Business Studies GCSE is engaging and inspiring and reflects the demands of a truly modern and evolving business environment. A qualification that enables students to develop as commercially minded and enterprising individuals and helps them to succeed in their chosen pathway.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

As well as providing core subject knowledge on business entrepreneurship, creating and delivering presentations will be a regular way of learning. Students are also encouraged to learn by using examples of local and national businesses, the media, internet and through the experiences of entrepreneurship.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

- Theme 1: Investigating Small Business
- Theme 2: Building a Business

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

There is no practical element.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will develop skills such as numeracy, literacy, ICT, problem solving, information collecting, as well as analytical, evaluative and social skills.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS SUBJECT?

There is no coursework involved.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You are expected to put in maximum effort into all that you do. You are expected to embody the entrepreneurial spirit of innovation and have a willingness to take risks.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Assessment is via two 1 hour 45 minute exams in year 11.

- Exam 1: Investigating Small Business - 1 hour 45 minutes
- Exam 2: Building a Business - 1 hour 45 minutes

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This is a well-regarded and recognised qualification which is respected by schools and employers alike. This will allow you to enter the working world to gain an apprenticeship or to undertake further study at post 16 level.

CONTACT PERSON: MRS L HARRINGTON - HEAD OF BUSINESS STUDIES

COMPUTER SCIENCE

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **OCR**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

You will follow the OCR GCSE Computer Science 9-1 J277 course.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught the basics of Computer Science, including binary numbers and how computers work. The course will help you to develop an understanding of important concepts such as algorithms and networking and you will research key legal, ethical, moral, and social developments in the evolution of computing, while learning programming skills to solve a range of problems and scenarios.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

- Component 1: Principles of Computer Science (written examination)
- Component 2: Application of Computational Thinking (written examination)

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

Programming is the main practical element, and this is started in the first week of the course, continuing throughout the two years. The programming skills you develop are relevant to all components. The programming language of choice is Python.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

Through the study of computer programming, the course will help you to develop your critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills. For many, it will be an interesting way to develop these skills which can be transferred to other subjects. You will not only learn programming skills, but also gain a real insight into how computers work.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You will be expected to complete all tasks set both within lessons and for homework. You should be active in practising programming techniques at home, programming regularly in your own time.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

This subject includes a practical programming component which gives students the chance to undertake a programming task, either to a specification or to solve a problem (or problems), during their course of study. Students may draw on some of the content in both components when engaged in Practical Programming. This is internally marked.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will have two written examinations of one hour, thirty minutes, which are each worth 50% of your qualification.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

At the end of the course, you will be able to progress to the Cambridge Technical Level 3 course or to A Level Computer Science. You will develop skills, knowledge and understanding in contexts that are directly relevant to employment situations, such as Developer, Trainee Technician, Network Engineer or Helpdesk Support, enhancing your employability within the Information and Communication Technology sector.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS F READ – HEAD OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

DANCE

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

This GCSE course comprises of two components of study, as set by AQA. Component 1 is an exploration of Choreography and Performance and Component 2 is a written examination focused on Dance Appreciation.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will take part in both practical and theoretical lessons to develop your knowledge and understanding of dance through performance, choreography and critical appreciation.

WHAT UNITS WILL I STUDY?

Component 1: Performance and Choreography

Component 2: Dance Appreciation

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT TO THE COURSE?

There is a strong focus on practical work, with 30% of the total marks being awarded for performance and 30% of the total marks being awarded for choreography. You will need to actively and physically demonstrate your dance abilities in a practical assessment.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

As a performer, you will gain physical and expressive dance skills as well as self and body awareness. As a choreographer, you will develop your creativity and problem-solving skills as well as your interpersonal and communication skills. By viewing professional dances, you will broaden your cultural and artistic experience and be able to make knowledgeable decisions about dances.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

We expect all students to complete all work set on time and to come to lessons fully prepared with the correct dance kit. We expect students to behave professionally when performing and to have a strong work ethic in preparation for performances, including participating in additional rehearsals. We also expect students to participate in the enrichment activities offered by the Dance department.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Component 1: Performance (30% of final grade); 2 set phrase solo performances and a duet/trio performance.

Component 1: Choreography (30% of final grade); solo or group choreography.

Component 2: Dance appreciation (40% of final grade); a written examination focussed on knowledge and understanding of choreographic processes and performing skills and critical appreciation of one's own and professional works.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

For Component 1: Choreography, students need to produce a choreographic log and programme notes outlining the choreographic intent of the piece.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This course provides a solid foundation for a career in Dance or Performing Arts and/or further studies in Dance or Performing Arts, including BTEC Level 3 and A level Dance.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS R DOWNING - HEAD OF DANCE

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

GCSE Design and Technology will prepare students to participate confidently and successfully in an increasingly technological world. Students will gain awareness and learn from wider influences on Design and Technology including historical, social, cultural, environmental and economic factors. Students will get the opportunity to work creatively when designing and making and apply technical and practical expertise.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

- Section A – Core Technical Principles (20 marks) - a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions assessing a breadth of technical knowledge and understanding.
- Section B – Specialist Technical Principles (30 marks) - several short answer questions (2–5 marks) and one extended response to assess a more in depth knowledge of technical principles.
- Section C – Designing and Making Principles (50 marks) - a mixture of short answer and extended response questions.
- Substantial design and make task.

NEA (*non-examined assessment*) - identifying and investigating design possibilities, producing a design brief and specification, generating design ideas, developing design ideas, realising design ideas, analysing & evaluating.

WHAT UNITS WILL I STUDY?

There are 2 units. One written examination and the other a Coursework unit.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT TO THE COURSE?

There are practical elements throughout year 10 to help secure the theory knowledge in preparation for the exam, which then leads onto a specific design and make task which allows pupils to complete a practice NEA. The actual NEA involves pupils designing and making a functional prototype which solves a specific problem.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn a range of iterative design and making skills, the properties of materials, joining methods, modern technologies, smart materials and more. Overall, you will learn to develop a key problem-solving mindset and will develop skills that you can apply to solving these problems in creative ways, which are inspired by historic and modern design thinkers and creatives.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You would be expected to participate in design and making tasks, reflect on your own skills and abilities, develop creative skills, be passionate about your work, and be able to follow safety instructions at all times.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Your coursework will make up 50% of your actual grade. You will be set a problem to research and solve through designing and making and will present these in an industry level portfolio.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

This course will be assessed through a written examination consisting of 100 marks worth 50% of the GCSE. The NEA - which will be completed throughout Year 11 - will be marked out of 100 and will be worth 50% of the GCSE.

WHAT COURSE OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

GCSE Design and Technology can lead onto a variety of courses such as BTEC Level 3 Engineering and A Level Product Design. It could also lead eventually onto any practical trade, for example in Architecture, Engineering and Design.

CONTACT PERSON: MS CHAPMAN-HAILEY - HEAD OF DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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DRAMA

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDUQAS**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

This GCSE is a predominantly practical Drama course, comprising three components of study including text-based performance, devised performance and a written examination from Eduqas. You will explore a variety of different styles and genres of Drama as well as the techniques and processes behind creating a performance. You will be expected to take part in a variety of performances, as a performer or designer.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will develop the ability to recognise and understand the roles and responsibilities of performer, designer and director. You will explore and grow to understand the social, historical and cultural contexts of texts and gain the ability to analyse and evaluate your own work and the work of others. The ability to understand how performance texts can be interpreted and performed is central to the course.

WHAT UNITS WILL I STUDY?

- Component 1: Devising Theatre. You will devise a piece of theatre for which you will perform/design key elements.
- Component 2: Performing from a Text. You will perform or design for two contrasting extracts from a play.
- Component 3: Interpreting Theatre. This is a written examination based on a play which you have explored practically, plus an evaluation of a piece of live theatre.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT TO THE COURSE?

This is a practical course with a strong emphasis on Drama exploration and performance or design skills.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn performance or design skills as well as gain an understanding of team work, communication and independent research skills.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

We expect all students following the Performing Arts courses to complete assignments on time, to rehearse, and to come to lessons fully prepared. You will need to behave professionally during performances and to have a strong work ethic in preparation for performances. You should expect to participate in the co-curricular activities offered by the department.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Coursework is an essential part of the course, in the form of a portfolio and evaluation for Component 1 and an explanation of artistic intention for Component 2.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Component 1 Devising (40% of final grade) is internally assessed and externally moderated. You will create a devised piece for performance and produce an accompanying portfolio. You will then evaluate the final performance, in a timed assessment.

Component 2 Performing from a Text (20% of final grade) is externally assessed. You will take part in two performances of two contrasting extracts from a play.

Component 3 Interpreting Theatre is externally assessed (40% of final grade) via a 1 hour 30 minute examination about a play you have studied and also an evaluation of a play you have watched.

Practical activities and controlled assessment performances will be recorded. Each assignment will be clearly explained in lessons and the assessment objectives issued to you at the start of the unit. One to one tutorials will be used to discuss progress and discuss how a piece of work can be improved.

WHAT COURSE OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

Once you have successfully completed your GCSE in Drama, you will be able to study Level 3 Drama/Performing Arts qualifications. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving communication and creative skills.

CONTACT PERSON: MRS K HITCH - HEAD OF PERFORMING ARTS

ENGINEERING DESIGN

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **OCR**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Cambridge National in Engineering Design will inspire and equip you with the confidence to use skills that are relevant to the sector and the wider industry. It's a vocational qualification, equivalent in value to a GCSE and contains both practical and theoretical elements.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

As part of the Cambridge National, you'll cover:

- how designs are developed – including what information is needed and how manufacturing influences design
- communicating designs using sketches, drawings and computer aided design (CAD), producing accurate and detailed drawings and models
- how designers create and test models to make a working prototype
- making your own high-quality models to represent design ideas.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is split into 3 components::

- R038: Principles of engineering design - Exam Theory unit
- R039: Communicating designs - Coursework unit
- R040: Design, evaluation and modelling - Coursework unit

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

There are practical elements built into each of the three components listed above with as much of the theory as possible being taught through practical application. Unit R039 will help students develop their design skills and apply this through a CAD practical where as Unit R040 helps students develop understanding of how to interpret engineering drawings and apply them to CAD models and a physical functioning prototype.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You'll develop a range of skills to help you succeed not only in the workplace but in other subjects too. These skills include: creative thinking, analytical skills, problem solving, research and planning.

No matter what you progress on to – the skills you'll learn from a Cambridge National will prepare you for the future.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

To take this course, you must be willing to participate in lessons and to work to the best of your ability on both practical and theoretical work. There is an element of writing which is required as part of the course and you should expect to complete some written and mathematical work.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Of the Units above there are 2 coursework units. R039: Communicating designs which is out of 60 Marks and R040: Design, evaluation and modelling which is also out of 60.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

In year 10 you will be assessed on your understanding of the theory topics from R038: Principles of engineering design through midway and end of term knowledge tests. You will start your first coursework unit in February which is a brief that is set by the OCR exam board. This will then contribute to 60 marks out of the 190 for the overall course and will contribute to the pupils overall grade at the end of year 11.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

By developing applied knowledge and practical skills, this course will help give you the opportunity to progress on to A Levels, a Cambridge Technical in Engineering, an apprenticeship or university. The sky's the limit with Engineering Design – what about becoming an Aerospace Engineer?

CONTACT PERSON: MS CHAPMAN-HAILEY - HEAD OF DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

FINE ART

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: EDEXCEL

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Edexcel Art and Design Fine Art GCSE specialises in painting, sculpting, drawing and printmaking.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques. You will learn and develop your knowledge in contextual references using ideas to explore, develop and produce Fine Art outcomes.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course consists of 4 assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Fine Art course will allow you to produce practical work in a variety of different contexts. The course will suit imaginative students with good creative skills who enjoy producing high quality design work. You will be able to explore your own ideas by experimenting with a wide range of materials on a variety of different projects.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop and improve your existing artistic abilities alongside the learning of new skills and techniques. You will learn how to conduct research for each project and you will be taught to analyse the pieces that you have studied.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which evidence, including written work, will be presented to show that you can:

- Conduct an investigation
- Experiment and develop ideas
- Identify and evaluate Fine Art work
- Create finished pieces

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is coursework requiring you to produce a personal portfolio in Fine Art. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School. The portfolio forms 60% of the qualification.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment in Fine Art. This forms 40% of the final qualification. The 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

You will be assessed throughout the projects that you study for coursework and given interim grades. At the end of each project you will make a presentation which will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for A Level Art and Design courses in the Sixth Form. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MRS BEARD, MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MRS H BEARD • MISS M RILEY • MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS

FOOD PREPARATION AND NUTRITION

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

Food Preparation and Nutrition gives students the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to make informed choices about food. Students learn essential cookery techniques while also exploring food science, nutrition, global food culture and food safety. The course aims to develop confident, creative and independent young cooks who understand how food works and how to prepare it safely and effectively.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

The GCSE covers key principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating, alongside the development of practical cooking skills. You will learn how ingredients behave, how to plan balanced meals, and how to apply theoretical knowledge when preparing dishes. Practical work supports the theory content, helping you make clear links between what you learn and how it is used in real cooking situations.

WHAT UNITS WILL I STUDY?

In Food Preparation and Nutrition, you'll explore a wide range of food-related topics that help you understand how and why we cook. These include:

- Food, nutrition and health – learning what makes a balanced diet and how food affects the body.
- Food science - discovering how ingredients work and what happens to them when we cook.
- Food safety - understanding how to store, prepare and cook food safely.
- Food choice - exploring why people eat the way they do, including cultural, ethical and lifestyle influences.
- Food provenance - finding out where our food comes from and how it is produced.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You'll build a wide range of skills linked to the five topic areas, from understanding nutrition to exploring how ingredients behave. You'll also develop both traditional and modern cooking techniques that you can use in a variety of practical tasks. Along the way, you'll learn how food science influences cooking, how to design healthier dishes, and how to solve real-life food problems using your knowledge and creativity.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You would be expected to attend all lessons with the correct equipment, to complete all tasks with enthusiasm and to be able to work independently and as part of a team. You must conduct yourself safely and hygienically in the kitchen.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There are two pieces of coursework. NEA 1 is a food investigation where you explore the science behind how ingredients work. NEA 2 is a practical food preparation assessment: you're given a theme, then you research, plan, practise, cook and present a final set of dishes.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

COMPONENT	MARKS	WEIGHTING	EXAM
Food preparation and nutrition	100	50%	1 hour 45 minutes
Food investigation task	30	15%	NEA 1
Food preparation assessment	70	35%	NEA 2

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO?

Upon completion of this course, students will be qualified to go on to further study, such as the Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification in Food Science and Nutrition. This can open doors to careers including clinical dietetics, food and nutrition management, public health nutrition, and jobs in education or research.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS NEVE - HEAD OF FOOD STUDIES

FRENCH

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

French GCSE (AQA examination board).

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

Nowadays, many universities and institutions of further education require that you have studied a language to GCSE level. Studying French will help you to understand both the spoken and the written word as well as enabling you to speak and write in the language. You will learn about the way of life in countries where French is the main language (Francophone countries). It will be useful to you when you come into contact with French speakers at home and abroad, whether through your future work place or through being on holiday in a foreign country..

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

You will study the language in the context of these three units:

- Theme 1: People and lifestyle
- Theme 2: Popular culture
- Theme 3: Communication and the world around us.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You will be expected to participate orally in lessons - this is very important - to improve your spoken language skills and to undertake learning homework in order to widen your vocabulary. You should be enthusiastic about learning a language and take an interest in events happening in France and other French speaking Countries.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will practise the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There is no coursework for this subject; students sit four separate examination papers at the end of Year 11.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

All papers are equally weighted and are worth 25%. The Speaking element will be conducted and recorded by your classroom teacher then assessed externally with the other papers.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

Studying a language is a life skill. Being able to speak a foreign language is considered an advantage by many employers. It is also invaluable if you regularly travel abroad or are considering working abroad in the future. You may continue your studies in Sixth Form by choosing an A Level in French.

CONTACT PERSON: MS K WALTON OR MS C LOPRESTI

GEOGRAPHY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

This AQA GCSE course is for those of you who are interested in the world around you, investigating issues concerning people, places and environments.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will travel the world from the classroom, exploring case studies in the UK, higher income countries (HICs), newly emerging economies (NEEs) and lower income countries (LICs). You will be encouraged to understand your role in society, by considering different viewpoints, values and attitudes. You will be taught a variety of Geographical skills including data presentation, cartographic skills and the evaluation of resources.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

Paper 1 - Living with the physical environment.

- Challenge of natural environments
- The living world
- Physical landscapes in the UK

Paper 2 - Challenges in the human environment

- Urban issues and challenges
- The changing economic world
- The challenge of resource management

Paper 3 - Geographical applications

- Issue evaluation
- Fieldwork

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

All students undertake fieldwork. You will visit a coastal location to investigate coastal processes and management. You will also visit a town to investigate the impact of regeneration. This is an opportunity to apply everything you have been learning in the classroom to the field.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn to use a variety of transferable skills throughout the course. These include collecting, presenting, interpreting and evaluating your findings in a variety of ways and identifying and developing the links between different geographical concepts. These skills are in great demand and are recognised by employers and universities as being of significant value.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

It would be expected that you have a high level of commitment to the course and accept that individual study will need to take place. High standards will be expected at all times and all deadlines must be met.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

There is no written coursework in the Geography GCSE however, in Paper 3, you will be expected to use your fieldwork experience to respond to questions, in an examination environment, concerning methods, presentation, analysis and evaluation.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

There are three written examination papers:

Paper 1 - 1 hour 30 mins (35% of GCSE) | Paper 2 - 1 hour 30 mins (35% of GCSE) | Paper 3 - 1 hour 30 mins (30% of GCSE)

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

Geography provides an excellent basis to pursue either employment or study. The wide range of skills acquired can be applied to a diverse range of careers. These include the leisure and tourism industry, the armed forces, marketing, transport and nature conservation or any management role. Geography can be studied in further depth at A Level and this can lead to studies at university.

CONTACT PERSON: MISS H WADSWORTH – HEAD OF GEOGRAPHY

GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

This Edexcel GCSE course is designed to be a specialist introduction to Graphic Design, providing the groundwork for pathways into illustration, promotion, typography and the combination of text and image.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques in a wide range of media, culminating in the use of typography, composition and the creation of purposeful visuals. You will develop your knowledge of contextual references in Graphic Design using ideas to explore and develop a range of visuals utilising both traditional media and Photoshop.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of 4 assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Graphic Communication course will allow you to produce practical work in a variety of different contexts and using a range of different media. The course will suit you if you are imaginative and want to create high quality, professional work.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop your existing artistic skills as well as learning new skills, utilising both traditional graphic media and ICT including Photoshop. You will learn how to effectively research and analyse your own work in order to develop a high quality, professional outcome.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which all work will be presented and annotated showing that you can:

- Conduct an investigation;
- Experiment and develop ideas;
- Create finished pieces.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is the coursework element where you will produce a personal portfolio comprising a number of skill-based projects that develop an aspect of Graphic Design and Communication. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School. The portfolio forms 60% of the qualification.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment. This forms 40% of the final qualification. The 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will be continually assessed throughout the course. At the end of each project you will produce a substantial final outcome that will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for the A Level in Graphic Communication. It will also create a pathway to illustration, architecture, graphic design, promotion, branding, advertising and other careers involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: PEARSON

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Pearson BTEC Tech Award in Health and Social Care is a practical, work-related course. You will learn by completing projects and assignments that are based on a range of realistic workplace settings which enable you to apply key concepts to real life scenarios. The course introduces you to the wide range of employment opportunities that are linked to the Health, Social Care and Early Years sectors.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

The course is made up of three components which will be studied over two years. You will be awarded a qualification based upon the grade awarded for each individual component.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

- Component 1 Human Lifespan Development;
- Component 2 Health and Social Care Services and Values;
- Component 3 Health and Wellbeing.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

You will need to apply vocational skills studied in class using role play scenarios, for example the practical demonstration of Care values. You will learn how to carry out a range of observations and measurements in order to monitor Health and Wellbeing.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

The course will help you to develop your ability to work effectively in a range of Health, Social Care and Early Years settings. You will be encouraged to take a holistic view of care in that you will look at improving the physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being of your chosen client or service user group. Team work is an essential element of the course as is the ability to produce clear, concise reports.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

Full attendance is expected. You will be expected to attend all lessons with the correct equipment, demonstrating professionalism, punctuality and a high level of commitment. All tasks, including homework, must be completed to set deadlines.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Components 1 and 2 are internally assessed through the building of portfolios; portfolios are split into assignments. Each assignment is split into tasks and tasks are linked to grading criteria. You can make changes based on feedback received and portfolio work is moderated by the examination board once a year.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Component 3, Health and Wellbeing, is externally assessed through a written synoptic task. The task is completed under supervised conditions in a two hour session within the period stipulated by the examination board.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

An overall grade for the qualification is awarded by the examination board based on the teacher assessment of components 1 and 2 and the external assessment of component 3.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

The BTEC Tech Award in Health and Social Care prepares you for employment and provides a good grounding for Level 3 courses offered in the Sixth Form or at college. Alternatively you can go directly into apprenticeships in care and nursing homes, hospitals or nurseries. With further training or study, you can pursue a career such as nursing, primary school teaching, paramedics, social work and other government offices, e.g. Army, Navy and Royal Air Force.

CONTACT PERSON: DR S HOWARD - HEAD OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

HISTORY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: EDEXCEL

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

Imagine a subject that's basically real-life stories, full of drama, mystery, heroes, villains, disasters, revolutions, and plot twists, except everything actually happened. That's History. With Edexcel GCSE History, you don't just learn what happened, you learn why it happened, how people reacted, and what it means for our world today.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

Medicine Through Time: From medieval cures involving poo and prayers to modern surgery, vaccines and the NHS; you'll discover how people tried to treat disease, how science changed everything, and what life was like in a world before painkillers, antibiotics, or hygiene. Warning: some treatments were... questionable.

Anglo-Saxons and Normans: Travel back to a world of warriors, kings, invasions, castles and battles. You'll learn how William the Conqueror defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings and totally transformed England, including how people lived, worked, fought and were punished.

Weimar and Nazi Germany: Ever wondered how a failing country full of chaos and crisis turned into Hitler's dictatorship? You'll study the rise of the Nazis, propaganda, life for young people, persecution of Jews and others, and how freedom slowly disappeared. It's like watching democracy break in real time.

Cold War and Superpower Relations: Spies, nuclear weapons, secret plans, rival superpowers; this is the ultimate global tension story. The USA versus the USSR, capitalism versus communism... but no actual war (between the main two, anyway), just constant fear, threats, and near-disasters (including a time the world almost blew itself up).

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course consists of four units, of which all are formally examined. The units are studied over two years.

- Paper 1: Medicine in Britain, c1250–present and The British Sector of the Western Front, 1914–18: injuries, treatment and the trenches;
- Paper 2: Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, c1060–88, with Superpower Relations and the Cold War 1941–91.
- Paper 3: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39;

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn to use a variety of transferable skills throughout the course which will enable you to: use information effectively, consider evidence carefully before reaching a decision, be analytical and critical when information is presented to you, understand how and why individuals behaved as they did, and clearly express a personal point of view that is supported by fact, not bias. History isn't just learning about the past; it's understanding the world you live in. Once you've studied it, you'll start noticing patterns, questioning things, and seeing how people in power make decisions. You basically become the kind of person who says, "Wait... this has happened before." And that's powerful. All the Big Ideas you have studied at Key Stage 3 will make an appearance across the three papers.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

Don't worry, you don't have to be a history genius or know every date ever. You'll be discussing ideas, asking questions, and sometimes debating. There will be notes, short tasks, and practice questions. Doing them properly makes the exams much easier later. History isn't just "remember the facts"; it's about judging evidence, spotting bias, and explaining your own opinion clearly. There's a lot to learn, but it's all manageable if you don't leave it until the night before the exam. Be ready to explain your ideas: in writing and in class. Even if you're quiet now, you'll get more confident; history is all about your voice.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

No, there is no coursework.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

There are three examinations that assess all four units. All examinations are essay based.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

Employers greatly value the skills taught in GCSE History. Employers want people who are independent thinkers, who are open-minded, disciplined, good at problem solving and able to pick out the essential from the trivial; all of these are taught in GCSE History.

CONTACT PERSON: MR J CORBY – HEAD OF HISTORY

MUSIC

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: OCR

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The OCR GCSE Music course develops three key areas of musicianship – performance, composition and listening. All instruments are welcome and, if you sing, you can also develop your vocal skills. There is also the opportunity to learn how to play an instrument for the first time. The course is offered as an alternative to Music Technology BTEC.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

Area of Study 1 - My Music.

Area of Study 2 - These areas of study are:

- The concerto through time;
- Rhythms of the world;
- Film music;
- Conventions of pop.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

- Integrated portfolio performance on the your chosen instrument and composition to a brief set by the learner;
- Practical component;
- Ensemble performance and composition to an OCR set brief;
- Listening and appraising a written paper with CD;
- Aural recognition and context from unheard/unfamiliar music.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

Practical musicianship forms the basis of this course. Theoretical topics are linked to the performance and composition tasks and all areas of study have a practical requirement.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will learn the skills necessary to embark upon life as a professional musician or to work in the world of Performing Arts. You will learn the skills required to perform as both a soloist and a member of an ensemble; you will learn technical skills for your instrument and develop knowledge and understanding of the importance of a professional attitude/work ethic. In exploring composition you will have the opportunity to create your own pieces of music. The GCSE Music course develops an understanding of Music theory, which is essential for professional instrumentalists and anyone wishing to work within Music education.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF ME?

We expect you to complete assignments on time, to rehearse and to come to lessons fully prepared for either whole class tuition or independent learning, depending on the units being studied. We expect you to behave professionally when performing and to have a strong work ethic in preparation for public performances. We also expect you to participate in the enrichment activities offered by the department.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Units 1 and 2 are all internally assessed. Unit 3 is externally assessed and is in the form of a written listening examination. The listening examination constitutes 40% of the final grade, with the other 60% made up from performance and composition work.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Units 1 and 2 provide coursework in the form of recorded performances (solo and ensemble) and two full original compositions. Coursework forms 60% of the course.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

The GCSE Music course provides a good foundation for completion of the A Level Music or Music Technology courses, as well as any of the BTEC Level 3 qualifications in Music.

CONTACT PERSON : MR M MOWLE – HEAD OF MUSIC

PERFORMING ARTS (TECHNICAL AWARD)

EXAM BOARD: **EDUQAS**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Eduqas Vocational Award Level 2 course in Performing Arts enables you to develop performance skills across the fields of Acting, Dance and Musical Theatre; It is a vocational course exploring the Performing Arts industry and its requirements, such as rehearsal technique and discipline, performance skills and evaluation.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught performance skills relating to Acting, Dance and Musical Theatre technique, such as character development, movement and singing. You will develop the skills of reflection in respect of your own progress and evaluate both your own work and that of others.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of the following assessment objectives:

- Unit 1: Performing: gain knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques needed to reproduce an existing piece of professional/published work.
- Unit 2: Creating: Gain, develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques needed to create and refine original work in the performing arts.
- Unit 3: Performing Arts in Practice: Introduces you to areas of the performing arts that need to be considered when responding to an industry commission, such as pitching and marketing your ideas.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

Yes, the course is very practical by design with a focus on developing performance skills through workshops, rehearsals and performance.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will acquire performance and rehearsal techniques relating to acting, dance/movement and musical theatre. In addition to this you will develop evaluative skills relating to self-reflection and the ability to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in a performance. You will also be required to analyse the production process, roles and production elements that work together to successfully communicate the artistic intentions. Organisation will be vital in ensuring that you maintain a log book and attend lessons with the correct kit.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

You would be expected to keep a log book to reflect on your progression, to participate in performance work and to fully participate in workshops and rehearsals with focus and self-discipline.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Yes, there is a log book that you must maintain throughout the course. There are set timed written tasks for each examined unit.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will have three examinations, one for each unit assessed via a combination of timed written tasks and performance work.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

The course offers clear progression to the Level 3 BTEC Performing Arts course or to A Levels in Performing Arts subjects. Performing Arts can help in any career which requires good communication skills.

CONTACT PERSON: MRS K HITCH - HEAD OF PERFORMING ARTS

PHOTOGRAPHY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Edexcel Art and Design Photography Lens and Light-based Media GCSE specialises in film based photography and digital photography.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques. You will learn new skills and develop your existing knowledge in contextual references, using ideas to explore, develop and produce photographic pieces.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of 4 assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual & other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual, written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Photography course will allow you to produce practical work in a variety of different contexts. You will be able to explore your own ideas by experimenting with a wide range of materials through a variety of different projects.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop and improve your existing artistic abilities alongside the learning of new skills and techniques. You will learn how to conduct research for each project and you will be taught how to analyse the work that you have studied.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which evidence, including written work, will be presented to show that you can:

- Conduct an investigation
- Experiment and develop ideas
- Identify and evaluate photography work
- Create finished pieces

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is coursework-based, where you will produce a personal portfolio in Photography. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School and forms 60% of the qualification.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment in Photography. This forms 40% of the final qualification and the 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will be assessed throughout the projects that you study for coursework and given interim grades. At the end of each project you will make a presentation which will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for A Level Art and Design courses in the Sixth Form. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MRS BEARD, MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MRS H BEARD • MISS M RILEY • MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

GCSE PE (AQA) is a combination of theory and practical learning. It focuses on understanding the human body, the science of movement, and the socio-cultural aspects of sport, along with developing your physical performance. It is ideal for students passionate about sport and fitness or those looking to pursue careers in sports-related fields.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught the science behind physical activity and the practical skills required to excel in different sports. The course covers anatomy, psychology, fitness training, and cultural aspects of sport, alongside refining your abilities in various physical activities.

WHICH TOPICS WILL I STUDY?

Key topics include:

- Anatomy and Physiology
- Movement Analysis
- Physical Training
- Sports Psychology
- Health, Fitness, and Well-being
- Socio-cultural Influences in Sport.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

Yes, 40% of the course focuses on practical performance. You will be assessed in three physical activities (one team, one individual, and one of your choice) and complete an analysis of performance coursework.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

You will develop skills such as:

- Physical performance and technique
- Analytical skills for evaluating and improving performance
- Understanding the science of sport and fitness
- Teamwork, discipline, and self-motivation.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

Students are expected to participate regularly in physical activities, both in and outside of school. They will commit to improving their performance in their chosen practical sports and engage actively in both theoretical and practical lessons.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Yes, there is a coursework component. You will complete an **Evaluation and Analysis of Performance**, where you analyse your own or another's performance and suggest ways to improve it.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

Assessment is divided into:

60% Written Exams:

- Paper 1: The human body and movement in physical activity and sport.
- Paper 2: Socio-cultural influences and well-being in physical activity and sport.

40% Practical Performance:

- Assessed in three physical activities and coursework.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

GCSE PE provides a solid foundation for A-level PE, BTEC Sport, or other post-16 qualifications. Career opportunities include roles in sports science, coaching, physiotherapy, fitness training, and teaching.

CONTACT PERSON: MR M POWELL – HEAD OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

PSYCHOLOGY

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **AQA**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

Psychology is the scientific study of the human brain and behaviour. The AQA GCSE course is designed to provide you with an overview of the varied approaches and applications of Psychology, alongside a strong foundation in research methods. The course will appeal to those of who wish to analyse and interpret human behaviour using psychological theories and scientific research methods.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught how to describe, evaluate and compare psychological theories, influential psychological research and research methods in order to make judgements and draw conclusions.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

You will study seven topic areas within Psychology, alongside an integral research methods unit, which are all formally examined at the end of Year 11. You will also be required to make synoptic links between the topics. These topics include: development; memory; the brain and neuropsychology; psychological problems; social influence; language, thought and communication & perception.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

There is no practical element to the course, as GCSE Psychology is assessed through examinations only. However, you will design some experiments whilst studying the research methods unit.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

Due to the diverse nature of Psychology, the GCSE course will equip you with numerous transferable skills, enabling you to: describe, evaluate and compare contrasting explanations of human behaviour; use and understand subject specific terminology; apply your theoretical knowledge to novel scenarios; write structured extended essays and analyse data using statistical calculations.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

GCSE Psychology is a very demanding subject, requiring high levels of commitment outside of the classroom. All students are expected to learn and use specialist psychological terminology throughout the two year course and to retain a vast amount of theoretical content. High standards will be expected at all times and all deadlines must be met.

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

GCSE Psychology is assessed by examination only and has no coursework component.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

There are two externally assessed examination papers which are both sat at the end of Year 11. Both papers contain a combination of short-answer and extended-response (essay) questions and 10% of the examination will assess your Mathematical skills.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

GCSE Psychology will provide you with a strong foundation in order to pursue subjects including A Level Psychology, A Level Biology and BTEC Health and Social Care in Sixth Form.

CONTACT PERSON: DR S HOWARD - HEAD OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

TEXTILE DESIGN

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Edexcel Art and Design Textile Design GCSE specialises in working with art, constructed and fashion Textiles.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques and develop your knowledge in contextual references, using ideas to explore, develop and produce textile pieces.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of four assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Textile Design course will allow you to produce practical pieces in a variety of different contexts. The course will suit imaginative students with good creative skills who enjoy producing high quality Art and Design work. You will be able to explore your own ideas by experimenting with a wide range of materials through a variety of different projects.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop and improve your existing artistic abilities as well as learning new skills and techniques. You will learn how to conduct research for each project and you will be taught to analyse the work that you have studied.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which evidence, including written work will be presented to show that you can:

- Conduct an investigation
- Experiment and develop ideas
- Identify and evaluate textile work
- Create finished pieces

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is coursework, where you will produce a personal portfolio in Textile Design. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School; it forms 60% of the qualification.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment in Textile Design. This forms 40% of the final qualification and the 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will be assessed throughout your projects and given interim grades. At the end of each project you will make a presentation which will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for A Level Art and Design courses in the Sixth Form. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MRS BEARD, MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MRS H BEARD • MISS M RILEY • MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS

THREE DIMENSIONAL DESIGN (CERAMICS)

EXAM BOARD & SYLLABUS: **EDEXCEL**

WHAT IS THE COURSE?

The Edexcel Art and Design Three Dimensional Design GCSE specialises in working with ceramics and sculpture.

WHAT WILL I BE TAUGHT?

You will be taught specialist skills and techniques. You will learn and develop your knowledge in contextual references using ideas to explore, develop and produce ceramic pieces.

WHICH UNITS WILL I STUDY?

The course is made up of four assessment objectives:

- Develop ideas through investigations informed by contextual and other sources;
- Refine your ideas through experimenting and selecting appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes;
- Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to your intentions in visual and/or other forms;
- Present a personal and meaningful response, demonstrating analytical and critical understanding, realising intentions and, where appropriate, making connections between visual written, oral or other elements.

IS THERE A PRACTICAL ELEMENT?

The Three Dimensional Design course will allow you to produce practical work in a variety of different contexts. The course will suit imaginative students with good creative skills who enjoy producing high quality design work. You will be able to explore your own ideas by experimenting with a wide range of materials through a variety of different projects.

WHAT SKILLS WILL I LEARN?

During your lessons you will develop and improve your existing artistic abilities as well as learning new skills and techniques. You will learn how to conduct research for each project and you will be taught to analyse the work that you have studied.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED OF ME?

A minimum of one hour each week must be spent on homework tasks. You will have to meet deadlines for each project. You will require a sketchbook for each project in which evidence, including written work, will be presented to show that you can:

- Conduct an investigation
- Experiment and develop ideas
- Identify and evaluate ceramic work
- Create finished pieces

IS THERE COURSEWORK INVOLVED IN THIS COURSE?

Unit 1 is coursework, where you produce a personal portfolio in Three Dimensional Design. The theme for the personal portfolio is selected and developed at Valley Park School and the portfolio forms 60% of the qualification.

IS THERE AN EXAMINATION?

Unit 2 is an externally set assignment in Three Dimensional Design which forms 40% of the final qualification. The 10 hour examination is taken over two school days.

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

You will be assessed throughout your projects and given interim grades. At the end of each project you will make a presentation which will be graded.

WHAT COURSES OR EMPLOYMENT CAN I PROGRESS TO AT THE END OF THE COURSE?

This qualification will prepare you for A Level Art and Design courses in the Sixth Form. It will also prove useful to those who plan a career involving practical and creative skills.

PLEASE NOTE: YOU SHOULD SEEK ADVICE FROM MRS BEARD, MR SPURR OR MISS COLLINS IF YOU WISH TO STUDY TWO ART AND DESIGN SUBJECTS AT GCSE.

CONTACT PERSONS: MRS H BEARD • MISS M RILEY • MR C SPURR • MISS A COLLINS