



# Birchwood High School

your dreams, your future, our challenge

YEAR

9

OPTIONS

Information Booklet 2025



## *Welcome to the Options Process*

Birchwood High School warmly welcomes you to our Key Stage 4 Options Evening. This event is designed to provide you with all the information you need about the next steps in the option selection process and the support available over the next two years.

This booklet offers essential information, advice, and guidance for both students and parents. While all Year 10 students will study certain core subjects, there is a wide range of additional options, allowing students to choose subjects they enjoy and excel in.

We encourage you to take full advantage of tonight's presentations from senior staff, engage in discussions with subject leaders, and explore the wealth of guidance provided in this booklet.

In lessons, we will continue to support students by linking their option choices to future career pathways.

Year 9 students have already had a Parents' Evening this year, along with interim reports in February, which provided insights into individual subject progress. These resources will help inform decision-making. Additionally, you are always welcome to contact us via email, telephone, or in person to discuss any questions or concerns.

The deadline for option applications is Friday, 23 May. This deadline ensures we can effectively plan the curriculum and allocate staffing for September.

Mr. Sam Griffin  
*Principal*

Dear Year 9 Students,

As you may already know, the process of selecting your Year 10 subjects is fast approaching. This is an important decision that requires careful thought, as it will shape your studies for the next two years and influence your future opportunities. High-quality qualifications can open doors to further education, give employers a clear picture of your strengths, and equip you with essential skills for the modern workplace.

Alongside your subject choices, we strongly encourage all students to take advantage of Birchwood's extensive extracurricular programme. This allows you to continue developing skills in areas you may not study at GCSE.

While some subjects remain compulsory because they are essential for your future success, where you have a choice, choose wisely. Some subjects, such as French, German and Spanish, can only be selected for GCSE if you have studied them in Year 9.

Compulsory Core	Ebacc 1 Compulsory Choice	Open 3 Choices
English Language English Literature Maths Science* *Trilogy or Triple (This will be decided by the Head of Science) Core PE PSHCE	History Geography French Spanish German Computer Science	Art Business Studies Computer Science Construction (AQA Award) Dance Design Technology Drama Film Studies Food French Geography German History Hospitality (Technical Award) ICT BTEC Media Music PE Religious Studies Spanish Sport Science Statistics



## Important Notes:

- The **Science pathway (Trilogy or Triple)** will be determined by the Head of Science. Both cover Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, but Trilogy is combined, while Triple covers each subject separately.
- Statistics can only be studied if you are currently in set 1 or 2 for Maths.
- You **must** select at least one subject from the **EBacc suite** (History, Geography, French, Spanish, German, or Computer Science).
- You may choose **three subjects** from the Open Choices list.
- **All students will receive statutory PSHCE lessons** as part of their form group sessions.
- For students requiring an adapted curriculum, arrangements will be made accordingly.

## Guidance for Making Your Choices:

- Reflect on your aspirations and what you've discussed in form time about future plans.
- Consider your strengths and interests. Choosing subjects you enjoy and excel in will increase your chances of success.
- Seek advice. Speak with teachers, your form tutor, parents, older students, and current GCSE students—but remember, course content may change.
- Look ahead but don't panic. Not choosing a subject at GCSE level doesn't always prevent you from studying it later.
- Think strategically. Consider subject combinations that will give you the best opportunity for success in your exams.
- Make your own decisions. Avoid selecting subjects just because your friends are taking them—this is about your future.
- Choose based on course content, not the teacher. Your teacher may change, so focus on the subject itself.
- Think carefully about your reserve choice. While we will do our best to accommodate your first choices, this may not always be possible.

## Key Deadline:

Your completed options form must be submitted by **Friday, 23 May**. Use this time wisely, as changes may not be possible after the deadline.

Even after making your choices, continue putting your best effort into all subjects, including those you may not continue with—every piece of knowledge you gain will benefit you in the long run. Finally, attendance and punctuality are crucial. Without them, you may miss valuable information that will help you make informed choices and start Year 10 with confidence.

I wish you all the best in making your decisions!

*Mr R Noblett*

Head of Year 9



## *Subject and Course Information*

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## COURSE TITLE

**Art and Design, GCSE - Fine Art**

## EXAM BOARD

**OCR**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our GCSE in Art and Design helps students develop knowledge, skills, and understanding to enable them to express their creativity and imagination through responses to visual and written stimuli. This GCSE requires students to develop and produce personal responses that reflect a broad exploration of Fine Art. Students will be encouraged to explore processes, materials and techniques through a range of practical activities to develop an individual and creative approach. All students will have to submit evidence of using drawing to support the development process in both Component 1 and Component 2. All students will have to use written annotation and appropriate specialist terminology to record their ideas, observations, insights and independent judgements and demonstrate critical analysis of artists' work.

The subject encourages learners to:

- *actively engage in the creative process of art, craft and design in order to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds*
- *develop creative, imaginative and intuitive capabilities when exploring and making images, artefacts and products*
- *become confident in taking risks and learn from experience when exploring and experimenting with ideas, processes, media, materials and techniques*
- *develop critical understanding through investigative, analytical, experimental, practical, technical and expressive skills*
- *develop and refine ideas and proposals, personal outcomes or solutions with increasing independence*
- *acquire and develop technical skills through working with a broad range of media, materials, techniques, processes and technologies with purpose and intent*
- *develop knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design in historical and contemporary contexts, societies and cultures*
- *develop an awareness of the different roles and individual work practices evident in the production of art, craft and design in the creative and cultural industries*
- *develop an awareness of the purposes, intentions and functions of art, craft and design in a variety of contexts and as appropriate to learners' own work*

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

**Component 01 Portfolio (60%):** Students will produce a series of work based around key skills and specific artist ideas and techniques. The work will aim to demonstrate exploration, research, acquisition of techniques and skills, leading to a finished piece in response to a given theme. The current theme that students develop their personal response to is Layers.

**Component 02 Externally set assignment (40%):** Students respond to one of five themes, each with a range of written and visual starting points and stimuli. Students research, plan and develop ideas for their response to the option they have chosen, which they must then realise within the **ten**-hour supervised time period.



- Throughout Key Stage 4 students will be required to present a Personal Portfolio in Art and Design (component 1) together with an Externally Set Assignment in Art and Design (component 2). This would provide evidence of **two** years' full-time study.
- Submissions for each unit must contain supporting studies and personal responses.

### SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students are encouraged to attend any school arranged art gallery visits or workshops and are advised to attend galleries and museums with parents/carers. It is also advisable that students have a deep interest and passion for art and wish to extend their knowledge and skills.

Students must be prepared to attend a weekly Art catch-up session held after school to support the development of their work and completion of quality home learning- set weekly.

### CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

By the end of the course all students will have a strong basis from which to progress onto A Level Art and Design or other related courses. Future opportunities could include careers in areas such as set and theatre design including props and costume, fashion, furniture design, jewellery, architecture, interior design, painting, sculpture, textiles, crafts, community arts and ceramics.

### LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/220463-specification-accredited-gcse-art-and-design-j170-j176.pdf>



## COURSE TITLE

**Business**

**BTEC Award Level 1/2 in Enterprise (Equivalent to 1 GCSE)**

## EXAM BOARD

**Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will help students to engage in learning which is relevant to them and will provide opportunities to develop a range of skills and techniques, personal skills and attributes essential for successful performance in working life.

Students must complete the following 3 components:

Component No.	Component Name	Component type	Component Weighting
1	Exploring Enterprise	Internally assessed assignment completed under controlled conditions	30%
2	Planning and Presenting a Micro-Enterprise Idea	Internally assessed assignment completed under controlled conditions	30%
3	Marketing and Finance for Enterprise	External and Synoptic (case study and activities)	40%

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Students must pass all set components in order to achieve at least a Level 1 pass grade for the course. Students complete assignments for each component which demonstrates their knowledge and understanding. They may be either written or practical or a combination of both. All components are assessed and graded to produce an overall grade for the qualification to be awarded. Each component will be awarded a grade of Level 1 Pass, Level 1 Merit, Level 1 Distinction, Level 2 Pass, Merit or Distinction. The grade achieved in each component makes up the final grade.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

BTEC First Award gives useful preparation for employment opportunities. It supports progression to further study in general qualifications or vocational training.

## FURTHER VOCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

BTEC Level 3 in Business

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/btec-tec-awards/enterprise/2022/specification-and-sample-assessments/60370634-btec-tech-award-enterprise-2022-spec.pdf>







## COURSE TITLE

# Computer Science, GCSE

## EXAM BOARD

# OCR

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will help students to engage in learning which is relevant to them and will provide opportunities to develop a range of skills and techniques that will enhance their knowledge in an academically challenging programme of study. Students will study the hardware and software that makes up the computer, they will discover how the different types of networks allow us to stay connected. Students will study the system development lifecycle to solve difficult programming problems using Python.

Other topics that students will study are:

- Network security
- Computer Architecture
- Operating systems
- Programming sorts and searches
- Data representation.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

100% Exam, two written examinations that will contribute 50% to the overall grade.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

To be successful in this subject students will need to enjoy problem solving and will be very competent in Maths. You also need to be organised and have the ability to write detailed evaluations about different computer science related problems.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Students completing this course will be equipped with the logical and computational skills necessary to succeed at A Level, the workplace or beyond.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/558027-specification-gcse-computer-science-j277.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

**Construction,**  
**(not equivalent to a full GCSE)**

## EXAM BOARD

**AQA Unit Awards Scheme**  
Levels of Award: Entry, 1 & 2

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is a strong practical aspect to this course. However, students are required to produce a portfolio of evidence which will include some written/drawn assignments to demonstrate their understanding of the key learning areas.

It is designed to introduce students to a range of skills in the many sectors within the construction industry as well as thinking about sustainable development.

The practical-based learning we normally cover will introduce students to the sectors of Bricklaying, Joinery, Plumbing and Electrical Wiring, as we have great facilities for all these areas.

The practical work is physical in nature and students must be prepared to do manual work in a range of weather conditions. Working as part of a team is also a significant feature and thus students must be willing to help support each other, for example with setting up and clearing away for practical activities.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENTS

AQA describe the Unit Award Scheme (UAS) as:

*...a unique recording of achievement scheme, rather than a qualification. It offers learners the opportunity to have their achievements formally recognised with a certificate each time a short unit of learning is successfully completed.*

This course has been running for several years now at Birchwood and in this time, we have delivered a wide range of Units including:

111738	<u>DISMANTLING PALLETS</u>	Entry Level
110900	<u>CONSTRUCTING A CORNER HALVING JOINT</u>	Level One
110349	<u>DEVELOPING BRICKLAYING SKILLS (BBQ)</u>	Level One
108650	<u>EXPLORING PLUMBING PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES</u>	Level Two

We shall continue to select Units (at a number of challenge levels) that suit both the interests of the students in each year group cohort, along with our ability to deliver them safely and effectively.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

The Units studied throughout this course, will help students to accumulate a portfolio of construction-related skills. The evidence of these skills will be built up in a portfolio of images and notes that is added to each time a Unit is undertaken and signed off. The intention is that this portfolio can be taken to interviews at colleges and places of potential employment to demonstrate the student's capabilities.



It supports progression to further study in general qualifications or vocational training.

## FURTHER VOCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Following completion of this course of study, successful candidates would be able to apply for college courses to study other construction-related Level 1 and 2 vocational qualifications, for example those specialising in Carpentry or Bricklaying.

They may also be able to move on directly to a higher-level qualification such as a Level 3 BTEC National Certificate in Construction. For those students considering Architecture or any of the other construction-related professions at university (e.g. Civil Engineering, Surveying, Procurement etc.), this course gives a good grounding in technical knowledge and practical skills, which would build greater confidence for when they apply to Higher Education institutions in due course.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/programmes/unit-award-scheme/unit-details?unit=120861>





## COURSE TITLE

**Dance, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

**AQA**

## COURSE DETAILS

Component 1: Performance and choreography – practical examination  
Component 2: Dance appreciation – written examination

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Component One is internally marked and externally moderated. This is broken down into two parts; 30% performance and 30% choreography.

Component Two is assessed as a written exam at the end of the course. The paper is 90 minutes in duration and worth 40% of the final grade.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students should only really consider taking Dance as a GCSE if they are actively involved in Dance inside and/or outside of school.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

A Level Dance

The specification provides an excellent foundation for candidates intending to pursue careers in teaching, coaching, or the health, leisure and fitness industry.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://cdn.sanity.io/files/p28bar15/green/0ecfd65746732e8ea3bde2518402f8556af408ca.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

**Design and Technology, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

**AQA**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

GCSE Design and Technology is a course which focuses on the design and manufacture of modern products as well as understanding principles that go into their creation. Students will use creativity and imagination to design and make prototypes that solve relevant, real-life problems, considering their own and others' needs, wants and values.

In Year 10, students will be developing skills to prepare them for their GCSE coursework (Non-Examined Assessment). Students will work with Timbers, Metals, Polymers and Papers & Board. They will explore a range of designing techniques from freehand sketching through to CAD as well as developing research and analysis skills to support their portfolio.

In Year 11, students will be completing their NEA (Non-Examined Assessment) coursework which is worth 50% of their grade. Pupils will get the chance to explore and apply their knowledge of materials to solve a real-world problem given by the exam board. The NEA consists of a full design folder with research, design, and evaluation as well as a fully working practical product which can incorporate any materials they have studied. At the end of Year 11 students will sit an exam worth 50% of the overall grade where they will design a product and demonstrate their theoretical knowledge of Design & Technology.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

50% Non-Examined Assessment  
50% Exam (Single Tier)

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

This qualification supports progression into further study or training in Product Design which can lead on to careers in the fields of Product Design, Graphic Design, Furniture Design, Engineering, Surveying, Architecture, Teaching as well as training and apprenticeships in craft related fields.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/design-and-technology/gcse/design-and-technology-8552/specification>





## COURSE TITLE

### **Drama, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

### **Eduqas**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The GCSE Drama specification is designed to give you a broad and balanced experience of Drama. You will be given the opportunity to develop not only your performance skills but also your design skills in areas such as: Lighting design Sound design Set design Costume, Hair and Make-Up Design

You will have the opportunity learn and develop a range of transferable skills and practise applying these to new situations. These include analytical, problem-solving, organisation and time management skills. You will also be able work collaboratively to generate, develop and communicate ideas, all of which will develop your emotional intelligence. Your practical skills will be refined and will demonstrate creativity, reflection and resilience, as well as developing confidence and strong presentation skills. Your written skills, both analytical and creative, as well as your ability to self-reflect, will be developed through a range of tasks. Studying drama will give you opportunities for higher order thinking, by considering ideas which go beyond language. You will collaborate in devising your own piece of theatre and perform in a performance from a text. You can choose to concentrate on acting or design. You will explore a range of texts and view a variety of live theatre productions. The Eduqas GCSE Drama specification has three components: Devising Theatre, Performing from a Text, and Interpreting Theatre.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Component 1: Devising, 40% - Internally assessed practical and written work

Component 2: Performance from a text, 20% - Externally assessed practical

Component 3: Interpreting theatre, 40% - Written exam 1hr 30mins

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students must see at least one live theatre performance during the course. Students must be prepared to attend after school rehearsals for their final performance examination and then to perform in front of an invited audience and visiting examiner.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Students will be able to study courses at Key Stage 5, to study acting, or to pursue work in the theatre (including backstage, technician, direction, and administration), television, film and other performing arts.

The skills developed within Drama are transferable to almost any job and Universities are always keen to accept students with a willingness to collaborate, contribute, present, empathise, reflect and understand the world in which we live. Drama enables students to do all these things and more.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

[https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/drama-gcse/#tab\\_keydocuments](https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/drama-gcse/#tab_keydocuments)





## COURSE TITLE

### Film Studies, GCSE

## EXAM BOARD

### EDUQAS

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Film is widely acknowledged as the major art form of the 20th century and today film continues to be an important part of most people's cultural experience. This specification is designed to build upon students' own experience of film – as consumers and creators – and to encourage recognition of the complexity of this experience within an increasingly globalised, interconnected environment. Starting with the familiar, the specification allows students to study films and the ways in which they are experienced, the importance of visual representation in today's global society and the place film has in communicating ideas, attitudes and cultural beliefs, both now and in the past.

The specification approaches this through three inter-related study areas, which act as a framework for studying and creating film:

- the 'language' of film
- the organisations which produce, distribute and exhibit them
- the audiences for film

The specification is designed to integrate internally assessed work with externally assessed work so that active learning can be encouraged and learning is constantly being reinforced through a variety of assessment. The specification therefore allows an introduction to filmmaking, the film industry and the impact film representations have on audience's cultural identities.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

**External Assessment: Written Examinations: 70%**

### **Component 1: US Film and Key Development in Film (1 hour 30 minutes, 35%)**

**Four** compulsory questions focusing on **one** pair of US mainstream films and one US independent film. These questions will assess knowledge and understanding of film language and key industry and audience issues. The film genre will be set by the examination board.

### **Component 2: Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style (1 hour 30 minutes, 35%)**

**Three** compulsory questions on three global films produced outside the US.

**Controlled Assessment: 30%**

### **Component 3: Production**

This component assesses the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of film to a production and its accompanying evaluative analysis. Learners produce:

- **one** genre-based film extract (**either** from a film **or** from a screenplay).
- **one** evaluative analysis of the production, where learners analyse and evaluate their production in relation to comparable, professionally produced films or screenplays.



## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

A Level Media Studies and A Level Film Studies. The specification provides an excellent foundation for candidates intending to pursue careers in journalism, TV, film, photography, film and TV editing.

### LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies/>







## COURSE TITLE

**Food Preparation and Nutrition, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

**WJEC**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will learn about safety and hygiene related to food preparation, specific nutritional needs for target groups together with functions of ingredients, the science behind the making of the individual food products and food safety. They will also learn about the food provenance (where food comes from) and environmental issues associated with the foods that we eat, e.g. sustainable foods, food miles and fair trade. It is expected that students will select their coursework topic from a range of assignment briefs set by the exam board; the length and type of coursework is still to be decided.

At the beginning of Year 11 the students will have to complete Assessment 1, which is The Food Investigation Assessment and is worth 15% of the total marks. This will include research, planning, investigation into the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

This is followed by Assessment 2 which is The Food Preparation Assessment and is worth 35% of the total qualification.

The exam in May/June is worth 50% of the total qualification.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

50% Coursework; 50% Exam (Single Tier)

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students need to be extremely organised, remembering to bring ingredients and aprons each week, for the practical lessons and understand that this course is 50% theory lessons and 50% practical lessons.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

This qualification supports progression into further study (including Food Technology A Level) or training. Food Technology is the basis of all food product development. It is especially useful if you are considering a career in areas associated with hospitality, leisure, health and fitness, food manufacturers or retailers, marketing or journalism, public health, dietetics, or teaching.

Visit [www.foodmanjobs.co.uk](http://www.foodmanjobs.co.uk) to see some of the range of careers available. This shows just a few of the opportunities available for Food Technology students. In addition, this can lead on to further courses or employment in the Catering industry.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/4zjdq104/eduqas-gcse-food-preparation-nutrition-spec-from-2016.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

### **French, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

### **Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The new French GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course, which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The course covers the following 6 thematic contexts: “My Personal World”, “Lifestyle and Wellbeing”, “My neighbourhood”, “Media and Technology”, “Studying and My Future”, “Travel and Tourism”.

Each topic provides contexts where students learn about France and other French speaking communities, developing awareness and understanding. The course is designed to challenge, enthuse, and motivate students but at the same time provide them with a suitable basis for further study and practical use of the language, in all four key skills.

Coupled with their topic-based studies, students will continue to build upon key grammatical concepts, using French in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Students enjoy working independently, in pairs or small groups.

In Year 10 students will have the opportunity to take part in a study visit to the French Christmas markets in December. There may be other opportunities to attend evening events such as the International French Film Festival in Year 11. These trips add to the enrichment of our programme.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed in all four skills. There are final examinations (from May in Year 11) in all skills. Each skill makes up 25% of the qualification:

- Listening – 25%
- Reading – 25%
- Speaking – 25%
- Writing – 25%

There are two tiers of entry: Foundation (Grades 1 - 5) **or** Higher (Grades 4 – 9).

The target language is required throughout. There will be mock exams in Years 10 and 11, which include opportunities to experience a full Speaking exam. Students will have regular opportunities to practise all skills throughout.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students who are taking this qualification should have studied French in Year 9 and are willing to commit to regular vocabulary learning.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Without doubt a GCSE in French will prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices. Many universities require that candidates have at least a GCSE in a language to be able to access their courses. Many job opportunities are enhanced with a GCSE in French, combining very well with other subjects and is part of the EBacc qualification.



## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/French/2024/specification-and-sample-assessments/gq000023-gcse-french-specification-2024-issue-1-1.pdf>

We use the “Pearson Edexcel GCSE French Higher” textbook (with support using additional materials) and subscribe to Active Hub which complements this course.





## COURSE TITLE

# Geography, GCSE

## EXAM BOARD

# OCR B

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Geography is an exciting and dynamic course. The topics studied are contemporary and engaging providing students with an interest in different places, people and environments, whilst ensuring an appreciation of the geography of the UK in the 21st century. A wide range of topics are covered which include both the human and physical elements of the subject. Through the study of “Our Natural World” (Unit 1) learners will gain an appreciation of the natural world around them including tectonic and weather hazards, climate change, the UK’s distinctive landscapes and the global ecosystems which support life on the planet.

Unit 2 explores the complexities of “People and Society” through studying why more than half of the world’s population live in urban areas, the dynamic nature of development, the UK in the 21st century and human reliance on key resources for survival and economic gain. Unit 3 is a skills-based exam involving a decision-making exercise which is based on the content and skills learnt from Units 1 and 2.

There are many opportunities for fieldwork across the course. Fieldwork is a compulsory part of the course, and this is covered through a two-day residential UK field trip for all Geography students. The field trip is often the highlight of the course and enables students to put their knowledge into practice and learn new skills. Students are examined on their fieldwork.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

The course is 100% exam examined through 3 separate exams.

- Our Natural World (Unit 1) 1 hour 15 minutes written paper
- People and Society (Unit 2) 1 hour 15 minutes written paper
- Geographical Exploration (Unit 3) 1 hour 30 minutes written paper

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Compulsory residential two-day UK field trip.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Geography is highly regarded by both further education establishments and employers. Geography is a facilitating A Level subject which means it opens up more university options and choices if students study it at A Level, so taking it at GCSE enables the opportunity for further study. A Level Geography has a good uptake at Birchwood and many students continue to develop their knowledge this way. Geography is also a very employable subject due to the wide range of skills students gain throughout the course. Geography also has many cross curricular links helping students with their other subjects and developing their skills in ICT, literacy, and numeracy. This subject gives students a well-rounded outlook and enables them to discover what is really happening in the world around them.

## LINK TO THE SYLLABUS

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/207307-specification-accredited-gcse-geography-b-j384.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

**German, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

**Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The new German GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course, which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The course covers the following 6 thematic contexts: “My Personal World”, “Lifestyle and Wellbeing”, “My Neighbourhood”, “Media and Technology”, “Studying and My Future”, “Travel and Tourism”.

Each topic provides contexts where students learn about Germany and other German speaking communities, developing awareness and understanding. The course is designed to challenge, enthuse, and motivate students but at the same time provide them with a suitable basis for further study and practical use of the language, in all four key skills.

The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Coupled with their topic-based studies, students will continue to build upon key grammatical concepts, using German in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. Students enjoy working independently, in pairs or small groups.

At some point during the course, depending upon interest / uptake, there will hopefully be an opportunity to take part in a residential trip and / or other opportunities extracurricular event involving the Goethe Institut, for example.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed in all four skills. There are final examinations (from May in Year 11) in all skills. Each skill makes up 25% of the qualification:

- Listening – 25%
- Reading – 25%
- Speaking – 25%
- Writing – 25%

There are two tiers of entry: Foundation (Grades 1 - 5) **or** Higher (Grades 4 – 9).

The target language is required throughout. There will be mock exams in Years 10 and 11, which include opportunities to experience a full Speaking exam. Students will have regular opportunities to practise all skills throughout.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students who are taking this qualification should have studied German in Year 9 and are willing to commit to regular vocabulary learning.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Without doubt a GCSE in German should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices. Many universities require that candidates have at least a GCSE in a language to be able to access their courses. Many job opportunities are enhanced with a GCSE in German, combining very well with other subjects and is part of the EBacc qualification.



## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/German/2024/specification-and-sample-assessments/gcse-9-1-german-specification.pdf>

We use the “Pearson Edexcel GCSE German Higher” textbook (with support using additional materials) and subscribe to Active Hub, which complements this course.





## COURSE TITLE

### **History, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

### **Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course covers a wide range of topics enabling students to understand the world today by exploring events of the past. Students will use detective skills to analyse, evaluate and interpretate sources, look at change and continuity and use evidence to form their opinion on some of History's most significant events. The course will help students develop skills they will be able to use in many aspects of life, both academically and personally.

During the course the students will engage with a broad and diverse study of the history of Britain and the wider world, which will give them skills that will support progression to further study of history and a wide range of other subjects.

GCSE History is made up of four topic areas, each focusing on a distinct period or theme in history:

- Crime and Punishment through time, c1000 – present (including a historic environment study of Whitechapel, c1870–c1900: crime, policing and the inner city).
- Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88
- Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39
- Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941-1991

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be in the form of written examinations at the end of the course.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

This is a very academic course which provides students with the relevant skills for all higher education options. Excellent for those considering a career in journalism, medicine, the criminal justice system, politics, social work, teaching, science, human resources, media, advertising, archaeology and many more.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/History/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/gcse-9-1-history-specification.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

# Hospitality & Catering, Technical Award (Equivalent to 1 GCSE)

## EXAM BOARD

**WJEC**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering will develop students' knowledge and understanding of the Hospitality and Catering sector and provide them with opportunities to develop associated practical skills. It covers the hospitality and catering industry and hospitality and catering in action.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Unit 1: The Hospitality and Catering Industry	Written Examination 1 hour 20 mins 80 Marks 40% of the overall qualification
Short and long answer questions based around a range of applied situations.	
Unit 2: Hospitality and Catering in Action	Controlled Assessment approx. 12 Hours 120 Marks 60% of the overall qualification
An assignment brief will be provided by the exam board that students will need to respond to. It will include a scenario and a range of tasks to complete.	

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students need to be extremely organised, remembering to bring ingredients and aprons each week, for the practical lessons. They need to understand they will need to complete a substantial piece of coursework as well as prepare for their exam which is still a good proportion of the final grade.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

The course prepares students who may wish to pursue a career in hospitality and catering, and it is a qualification well regarded within the industry. Career opportunities include restaurant management and chef work. There are also career opportunities in licensed retailing, management, promotions, and event management.

This course is also a good grounding for students who wish to study further Level 3 courses in Hospitality and Catering and apprenticeships in this sector.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

[https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/ukvevv1a/wjec\\_l1-2-vocaward-hospitality\\_and\\_catering\\_spec-e\\_11-09-2023-1.pdf](https://www.wjec.co.uk/media/ukvevv1a/wjec_l1-2-vocaward-hospitality_and_catering_spec-e_11-09-2023-1.pdf)







## COURSE TITLE

**ICT**

**BTEC in Digital Information Technology (Equivalent to 1 GCSE)**

## EXAM BOARD

**Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This qualification is for learners who want to acquire technical knowledge and technical skills through vocational contexts by studying the knowledge, understanding and skills related to data management, data interpretation, data presentation and data protection as part of their Key Stage 4 learning. The qualification covers the following areas:

- User interface design
- Data modelling using spreadsheet software
- Cyber security and keeping information safe and secure
- How companies use ICT within their businesses

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Students will study 2 coursework units which will contribute 60% of their overall grade and 1 examination unit which will contribute the remaining 40% of the grade. Each unit will be graded L1P-L2D which is the equivalent of grades 1-9.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Study of the qualification as part of Key Stage 4 learning will help learners to make more informed choices for further learning, either generally or in this sector. The choices that learners can make post-16 will depend on their overall level of attainment and their performance in the qualification.

Learners who generally achieve at Level 2 across their Key Stage 4 learning might consider progression to:

- A levels as preparation for entry to higher education in a range of subjects.
- Study of a vocational qualification at Level 3, such as a BTEC National in IT, which prepares learners to enter employment or apprenticeships, or to move on to higher education by studying a degree in the digital sector.

## FURTHER VOCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

BTEC Level 3 Qualification in Information Technology.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/btec-tec-awards/information-technology/2022/specification-and-sample-assessments/btec-tech-award-digital-information-technology-spec.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

### Media Studies, GCSE

## EXAM BOARD

### EDUQAS

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Learners study products of the media in terms of a theoretical framework, which consists of **media language, representation, media industries** and **audiences**. Aspects of this framework are studied in the following way across the **three** components of assessment.

GCSE Media Studies is based on the theoretical framework for exploring and creating media. The framework is based on four inter-related areas:

- **Media language:** how the media through their forms, codes and conventions communicate meanings.
- **Representation:** how the media portray events, issues, individuals and social groups.
- **Media industries:** how the media industries' processes of production, distribution and circulation affect media forms and platforms.
- **Audiences:** how media forms target, reach and address audiences, how audiences interpret and respond to them, and how members of audiences become producers themselves.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

**External Assessment: Written Examinations: 70%**

### **Component 1: Exploring the Media (1 hour and 30 minutes, 40%)**

**Section A: Exploring Media Language and Representation:** This section assesses media language and representation in relation to two of the following print media forms: magazines, marketing (film posters), newspapers, or print advertisements. There are two questions in this section: **one** question assessing media language in relation to one set product (reference to relevant contexts may be required) and **one two-part** question assessing representation in relation to one set product and one unseen resource in the same media form. Part (a) is based on media contexts. Part (b) requires comparison through an extended response.

**Section B: Exploring Media Industries and Audiences:** This section assesses two of the following media forms: film, newspapers, radio, video games. It includes: **one** stepped question on media industries and **one** stepped question on audiences.

### **Component 2: Understanding Media Forms and Products (1 hour and 30 minutes, 30%)**

This component assesses all areas of the theoretical framework and contexts of the media in relation to television and music.

**Section A: Television:** **one** question on either media language or representation, which will be based on an extract from one of the set television programme episodes to be viewed in the examination (reference to relevant contexts may be required) and **one** question on media industries, audiences or media contexts.



**Section B: Music (music videos and online media):** **one** question on either media language or representation (reference to relevant contexts may be required) and **one** question on media industries, audiences or media contexts.

**Controlled Assessment: 30%**

### **Component 3: Creating Media Products**

An **individual** media production for an intended audience in response to a **choice of briefs set by EDUQAS**, applying knowledge and understanding of **media language** and **representation**.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

A Level Media Studies and A Level Film Studies. The specification provides an excellent foundation for students intending to pursue careers in journalism, TV, film, photography, film and TV editing.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/1ckd54eo/eduqas-gcse-media-studies-spec-from-2017-e-2.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

**Music, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

**OCR**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

GCSE Music aims to develop skills, knowledge, enjoyment and understanding in performing, composing, listening and appraising. The course is accessible to, and enjoyed by, a wide range of musicians (from Classical through to Rock and Pop) and is designed to enable students to choose a path that is best suited to their interests. Over the course students will study in detail 'My Music', the Classical Concerto, Music from around the world, Film Music and Pop/Rock music up to the present day. The course encourages the development of aural perception, musical sensitivity and imaginative response. Social and personal skills are also developed through the creation and performance of music with others. This could be within the music industry, academic study or for personal interest. The course will give students lifelong enjoyment and understanding of music as a listener or performer at any level.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

There are three papers making up the final mark:

Integrated Portfolio ( <i>'my music' performance &amp; free composition</i> )	30%
Practical Component ( <i>Ensemble performance &amp; composition set by exam board</i> )	30%
Listening and appraising exam	40%

Please note 60% of the final mark comes from performing and composing coursework done in school.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

It should be noted that performing is a significant part of the course and therefore students are expected to learn an instrument or sing. Instrumental lessons are subsidised by 25% in school.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

The course offers a good grounding for those wishing to go on and take Music courses post 16. It is also a good way of starting out on a career in performing and composing industries. In addition, it's a great way to show you have commitment, dedication, communication skills, a wide range of academic and non-academic skills and have been involved in many extra-curricular activities while at school.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/219378-specification-accredited-gcse-music-j536.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

### **Physical Education, GCSE**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is divided into 4 components:

- Component 1: Fitness and Body Systems (36%)
- Component 2: Health and Performance (24%)
- Component 3: Practical Performance (30%)
- Component 4: Personal Exercise Programme (10%)

## EXAM BOARD

### **Edexcel**

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Component 1 is assessed as a written exam at the end of the course. The paper is out of 80 marks and is 1 hour and 30 minutes long.

Component 2 is assessed as a written exam at the end of the course. The paper is out of 60 marks and is 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

Component 3 is the practical assessment of 3 chosen practical activities. This is internally marked and externally moderated. The students' practical activities can be assessed throughout the course, with the final moderation taking place between March and April of Year 11.

Component 4 requires the students to; plan, carry out, analyse and evaluate a Personal Exercise Programme. As with the practical this component is internally marked and externally moderated.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

It has become extremely evident that those learners who wish to succeed to a good level on this course should be actively taking part in school/club sport. Those participating outside of school for external clubs can often capitalise on this and use their sports for their assessments. Those students who only take part in core PE will struggle to access the full range of marks available for being assessed in 3 different sporting activities. In this case, the Cambridge National Sport Science course will be a more suitable option.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

After studying GCSE PE, the following Key Stage 5 courses are offered at Birchwood;

- A Level Physical Education (OCR)
- BTEC Level 3 Diploma Sport

GCSE provides a suitable foundation for specialist study in both Physical Education and Sports Studies. The specification provides an excellent foundation for students intending to pursue careers in teaching and coaching, sports development, the leisure industry, recreational management, health, leisure and fitness and professional sport.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Physical%20Education/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/GCSE-physical-education-2016-specification.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

### **Religious Studies, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

### **EDUQAS**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course covers philosophical and ethical topics and is ideal for those who want to think deeply about big issues. Students taking this course like debating, reasoning and enjoy being challenged by new and exciting ideas. Students will be expected to develop their opinions, be able to explain those of others and be prepared for their mind to be stretched by huge concepts that have been debated for thousands of years, as well as those that are very much 21st century issues. Questions addressed include 'is there an afterlife?', 'is abortion acceptable?', 'do we have a duty to stand up for human rights?' and many more. A variety of Christian, Muslim and non-religious positions, alongside those of the students themselves, will be studied. The course also develops key study skills, such as research, analysis and evaluation of information, which prepare students for higher level courses.

The units studied will be broken down into three sections:

- The study of Christianity
- The study of Islam
- Philosophy of Religion and Applied Ethics – Issues of Relationships, Issues of Good and Evil, Issues of Human Rights and Issues of Life and Death.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be in the form of written examinations.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

This is a very academic course which provides students with the relevant skills for all higher education options. Excellent for those considering a career in the medical profession, the criminal justice system, politics, social work, teaching, science, human resources, care work, faith-based ministry, the armed forces and youth work.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/wpojvjm0/eduqas-gcse-rs-spec-full-from-2016-e-14-05-2020.pdf>





## COURSE TITLE

### Spanish, GCSE

## EXAM BOARD

### Edexcel

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The new Spanish GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course, which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The course covers the following 6 thematic contexts: “My Personal World”, “Lifestyle and Wellbeing”, “My Neighbourhood”, “Media and Technology”, “Studying and My Future”, “Travel and Tourism”. Each topic provides contexts where students learn about Spain and other Spanish speaking communities, developing awareness and understanding. The course is designed to challenge, enthuse, and motivate students but at the same time provide them with a suitable basis for further study and practical use of the language, in all four key skills.

Coupled with their topic-based studies, students will continue to build upon key grammatical concepts, using Spanish in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

In 10 students will., hopefully, have the opportunity to take part in a study visit to Madrid, Spain. There may be other opportunities to attend evening events such as the London Spanish Film Festival.

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed in all four skills. There are final examinations (from May in Year 11) in all skills. Each skill makes up 25% of the qualification:

- Listening – 25%
- Reading – 25%
- Speaking – 25%
- Writing – 25%

There are two tiers of entry: Foundation (Grades 1 - 5) or Higher (Grades 4 – 9).

There will be mock exams in Years 10 and 11, which include opportunities to experience a full Speaking exam. Students will have regular opportunities to practise all skills throughout.

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students who are taking this qualification should have studied Spanish in Year 9 and are willing to commit to regular vocabulary learning.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Without doubt a GCSE in Spanish should prepare students to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices. Many universities require that candidates have at least a GCSE in a language to be able to access their courses. Many job opportunities are enhanced with a GCSE in Spanish, combining very well with other subjects and is part of the EBacc qualification.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Spanish/2024/specification-and-sample-assessments/gq000027-gcse-spanish-specification-2024-issue-1.pdf>

We use the “Pearson Edexcel GCSE Spanish Higher” textbook (with support using additional materials) and subscribe to Active Hub, which complements this course.





## COURSE TITLE

**Sport Science, Cambridge National Award**

## EXAM BOARD

**OCR**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is divided into 3 components:

Reducing the risk of sports injuries and dealing with common medical conditions.

Applying the principles of training: fitness and how it affects skill performance.

The body's response to physical activity and how technology informs this,

## TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

R180: Reducing the risk of sports injuries and dealing with common medical conditions – written exam – 1 hour 15 mins (37%)

R181: Applying the principles of training: fitness and how it affects skill performance – written case study - (42%)

R182: The body's response to physical activity and how technology informs this – written case study - (21%)

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

The Sport Science course provides an excellent opportunity for students wishing to explore sport in more detail without them having to be proficient in 3 practical sports.

Those students who only take part in core PE will struggle to access the full range of marks available in 3 different sporting activities on the GCSE PE course. In this case, the Cambridge National course will be a more suitable option.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

After studying Sport Science the following Key Stage 5 courses are offered at Birchwood;

- A Level Physical Education (OCR)
- BTEC Level 3 Diploma Sport

Sport Science provides a suitable foundation for specialist study in both Physical Education and Sports Studies. The specification provides an excellent foundation for students intending to pursue careers in teaching and coaching, sports development, the leisure industry, recreational management, health, leisure and fitness and professional sport.

*NB: Course structure/syllabus/awarding body/qualification maybe altered in line with securing the best outcomes for students.*

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/610952-specification-cambridge-nationals-sport-science-j828.pdf>







## COURSE TITLE

### **Statistics, GCSE**

## EXAM BOARD

### **Edexcel**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Statistics is a Higher GCSE course which complements the Higher GCSE Mathematics course. The main aim of the Statistics GCSE course is to increase students' awareness of the role that statistics play in everyday life. As part of the GCSE course, some of the statistical topics studied include Hypotheses, Data Collection/Comparisons, Histograms, Correlation and Box Plots. Probability is also taught in depth and mathematical models such as the Binomial Distribution and Normal Distribution look into the likelihood of everyday events occurring. Statistics is one of the most versatile areas of Maths. It gives students the skills to collect, present, analyse and interpret data. Statistics complements subjects such as GCSE Biology, Psychology, Geography, Business and Economics, and opens the door to a variety of careers – from weather forecasting to the biological sciences.

Students opting for the Statistics GCSE must enjoy working with numbers and analysing data and must be taking Mathematics at a Higher level to be able to access the Statistics course content.

## TYPE OF ASSESSEMENT

Higher Level: Two Written Exams: Paper 1 (1hr 30 min, 50%), Paper 2 (1hr 30 min, 50%)  
(Grades 9 - 5)

## SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students opting for the Statistics GCSE must enjoy working with numbers and analysing data and must be taking Mathematics at a Higher level to be able to access the Statistics course content.

## CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

Any further study of Mathematics and Science will benefit from an additional Statistics qualification.

## LINK TO SYLLABUS

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Statistics/2017/specification-and-sample-assessments/gcse-9-1-statistics-specification.pdf>



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

### **What are the differences between GCSE & BTEC courses:**

GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)

- Academic focus – traditional subjects such as Maths, English, Science, History, etc.
- Assessment – mostly exams at the end of the course, with some coursework depending on the subject.
- Grading – 9 to 1 (with 9 being the highest).

BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council)

- Vocational focus – more practical subjects such as Business, Hospitality, ICT, etc.
- Assessment – mostly coursework, though some courses include exams.
- Grading – Pass, Merit, Distinction (these can be compared to GCSE grades).

### **Can I take both GCSEs and BTECs?**

Yes. Some subjects like ICT, Hospitality, and Sport Science are offered as BTECs, while others are GCSEs. You can take a combination, depending on your interests and strengths.

### **Are BTECs easier than GCSEs?**

Not necessarily. BTECs focus more on coursework and practical assessments, while GCSEs are mostly exam-based. They suit different learning styles.

### **Will BTECs allow me to go to college or university?**

Yes. Level 2 BTECs (which you study in Years 10–11) can lead to Level 3 courses such as A-levels, further BTECs, or apprenticeships. Level 3 BTECs are accepted by many universities, especially for courses related to the subject.

### **What if I'm not sure which subjects to choose?**

That's normal. Talk to your subject teachers, form tutor, parents or carers, and older students. Think about what you enjoy, what you're good at, and where you see your future heading.

### **Will I get my first-choice subjects?**

We aim to give everyone their preferred options, but it may not always be possible. That's why choosing a well-thought-out reserve is important.

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

You don't have to, but French, Spanish, and German are part of the EBacc suite. Studying a language keeps options open for future pathways, especially if you're considering university.



**How will I know if I'm doing Triple or Trilogy Science?**

This decision is made by the Head of Science, based on your progress and performance. You don't need to choose between them yourself on the options form.

**What is the EBacc and why does it matter?**

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a group of core academic subjects that some universities and employers value. It includes English, Maths, Science, a language (French, Spanish, or German), and either History or Geography. While not compulsory, taking EBacc subjects can help keep your future options open.

**What if I need extra support with my learning?**

We offer tailored support for students who require an adapted curriculum. Speak with your form tutor or SENCO if you think this may apply to you.





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