



# CARDINAL POLE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

# WELCOME

You are about to make some important **choices about your subjects** for Years 10 and 11. These are known as your GCSE options.

Options are the subjects you choose to study **alongside your compulsory subjects**: English, Maths, Science and RE. This is your first chance to shape part of your timetable around your interests, strengths and future goals.

Choosing your options matters because you will be studying these subjects for **the next two years**. They will help you develop new skills, explore subjects in more depth and prepare you for further study, training or employment after Year 11. However, it is important to remember that these choices do not decide your future career - they are simply a step along the way.

This booklet is designed to help you make informed choices. Inside, you will find **information about each subject**, how they are assessed, and the skills they develop. You will also find guidance on how to choose subjects that are right for you.

Take your time, talk to your teachers and family, and choose subjects that you will enjoy and feel motivated to succeed in.

<b>Monday 23rd February</b>	Y9 one-to-one careers interviews start
<b>Wednesday 25th February</b>	Y9 Options Assembly
<b>Wednesday 18th March</b>	Y9 Options Evening
<b>Thursday 26th March</b>	Y9 Parents Evening
<b>Thursday 23rd April</b>	Y9 Options Deadline

# KEY DATES

# ADVICE ON CHOOSING WISELY

CHOOSING YOUR OPTIONS CAN FEEL EXCITING, BUT IT CAN ALSO FEEL A BIT OVERWHELMING. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO MAKE CHOICES THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU.

Choose subjects you **enjoy and can succeed in**

- You are more likely to do well in subjects you enjoy, because you will be motivated to engage in lessons and keep up with home learning. A subject you enjoy and work hard at can often lead to better results than one you choose simply because you think you “should” take it. It is also important to consider subjects you are good at!

Think about **the future** - without pressure

- Some subjects can link to future careers or further study, and this can be helpful to think about. However, you do not need to have a clear career plan right now. Many careers can be reached through different subjects, and the skills you develop - such as problem-solving, communication and creativity - are just as important as the subjects themselves.

Don't believe the **myths**

- There are lots of myths around options choices. No subject is “only for smart students,” “only for boys or girls,” or “too hard if you don't already know everything.” What matters most is your effort, attitude and willingness to learn.

**REMEMBER: OPTIONS DON'T DECIDE YOUR WHOLE FUTURE**

THE CHOICES YOU MAKE NOW ARE IMPORTANT, BUT THEY DO NOT LOCK YOU INTO A JOB OR CAREER FOR LIFE. MANY STUDENTS CHANGE DIRECTION AT COLLEGE, SIXTH FORM OR UNIVERSITY. THESE OPTIONS ARE ABOUT BUILDING SKILLS, CONFIDENCE AND A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR THE NEXT STAGE OF YOUR EDUCATION.

# SUBJECT PATHWAYS

Russell Group universities are a group of 24 highly respected universities in the UK, including Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, and Manchester. They are known for strong teaching, research, and graduate career prospects.

If a student wants to go to a competitive university or study a high-demand course (like medicine, law, or engineering), Russell Group universities often look for strong GCSE and A-level results, especially in certain subjects known as facilitating subjects. These are GCSE or A-level subjects that keep the most options open for further study. They are usually “academic” subjects like:

- English
- Maths
- Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- History
- Geography
- Modern foreign languages

Studying these subjects gives students more choices for A-levels and makes it easier to apply to competitive courses or universities. Some degree courses, especially at Russell Group universities, prefer students to have studied facilitating subjects.

# COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE

GCSE English develops students' reading, writing and communication skills - essential for every subject and future career. English Language focuses on understanding and analysing texts, writing clearly for different purposes, and speaking and listening confidently. English Literature explores novels, plays and poetry, helping students think critically about characters, themes and ideas while learning to express their own opinions.

**To succeed in GCSE English, students should:**

- Have a strong interest in reading and discussing texts
- Be able to write clearly and structure ideas logically
- Be willing to analyse language, ideas, and themes
- Be organised and committed to regular practice and revision

### English Language Exams

Paper 1: 'Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing'	(50%)
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Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives	(50%)
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### English Literature Exams

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th Century Novel	(40%)
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Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry	(60%)
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## MATHS

GCSE Maths develops essential problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy skills that are used in almost every career and daily life. Students learn to work with numbers, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability, building confidence in logical thinking and decision-making.

**To succeed in GCSE Maths, students should:**

- Have a secure understanding of Key Stage 3 maths topics
- Be willing to practise regularly and tackle challenging problems
- Be organised and able to revise systematically
- Enjoy problem-solving and logical thinking

### Maths Exams

Paper 1: Non-Calculator	(33.3%)
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Paper 2: Calculator	(33.3%)
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Paper 3: Calculator	(33.3%)
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# COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

## SCIENCE

GCSE Science develops students' understanding of the natural world, how it works, and how scientific ideas affect everyday life. Students study Biology, Chemistry and Physics, learning to investigate, analyse data, and solve problems. The course builds practical skills, logical thinking, and scientific literacy - all valuable for further study and future careers.

To succeed in GCSE Science, students should:

- Have a solid understanding of Key Stage 3 science
- Be curious about how the world works
- Be willing to carry out experiments and analyse results
- Be organised and committed to revision and independent study

### Combined Science (Trilogy) Exams

Biology Paper 1	(16.7%)
Biology Paper 2	(16.7%)
Chemistry Paper 1	(16.7%)
Chemistry Paper 2	(16.7%)
Physics Paper 1	(16.7%)
Physics Paper 2	(16.7%)

### Triple Science Exams

Biology Paper 1	(50%)
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Biology Paper 2	(50%)
Chemistry Paper 1	(50%)
Chemistry Paper 2	(50%)
Physics Paper 1	(50%)
Physics Paper 2	(50%)

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE RE explores the beliefs, teachings, and practices of the Catholic faith, alongside ethical and philosophical questions about life, morality, and society. Students learn to understand and reflect on Catholic beliefs, analyse religious texts, and discuss moral and social issues thoughtfully.

To succeed in GCSE RE, students should:

- Be curious about religion, ethics, and society
- Be willing to read and understand religious texts
- Enjoy discussing different viewpoints and forming opinions
- Be organised and committed to completing written work

### Religious Studies Exams

Paper 1: Catholic Christianity	(50%)
Paper 2: Judaism	(25%)
Paper 3: Philosophy and Ethics	(25%)

# FACILITATING SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY GCSE HISTORY?

GCSE History helps students understand how the modern world has been shaped by key events, people and ideas from the past. It is a highly respected academic subject that develops strong thinking, writing and analysis skills valued by sixth forms, universities and employers.

Students learn to analyse historical sources, explain causes and consequences, and write clear, well-structured answers - skills that support success across many subjects, including English, Politics, Law and the Sciences.

To succeed in Edexcel GCSE History, students should:

- Have a secure standard of reading and writing
- Be willing to analyse sources and interpretations
- Enjoy discussion and questioning ideas
- Be organised and committed to regular revision

### History Exams

Paper 1: Crime & Punishment in Britain c1000-present and Whitechapel, 1870-1900	(30%)
Paper 2: Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88 & Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941-91	(40%)
Paper 3: Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39	(30%)

## WHY STUDY GCSE GEOGRAPHY?

GCSE Geography helps students understand the world around them, from natural hazards and ecosystems to cities, development and global challenges. It is a respected academic subject that combines scientific understanding with human and environmental issues.

Students develop valuable skills such as data analysis, problem-solving, map skills and extended writing. Geography supports a wide range of future pathways, including science, economics, environmental studies, travel and planning.

To succeed in Edexcel GCSE Geography, students should:

- Have a secure standard of reading, writing and numeracy
- Be able to interpret data, maps and graphs
- Show curiosity about real-world issues and current events
- Be organised and committed to regular revision and fieldwork

### Geography Exams

Paper 1: The Physical Environment	(37.5%)
Paper 2: The Human Environment	(37.5%)
Paper 3: Geographical Investigations (30%)	(25%)

# FACILITATING SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY GCSE FRENCH OR SPANISH?

GCSE French or Spanish develops students' communication skills and cultural understanding by learning how to understand, speak, read and write in another language. It is a respected academic subject that supports a wide range of future pathways, including travel, business, education and international careers.

Students build confidence in speaking and listening, improve memory and literacy skills, and develop an awareness of other cultures - skills that are highly valued by colleges, universities and employers.

**To succeed in AQA GCSE French or Spanish, students should:**

- Have a secure standard of reading and writing in English
- Be willing to practise speaking regularly in class
- Have a good memory for vocabulary and grammar
- Be organised and committed to regular revision

### MFL Exams

Practical Exam: Speaking	(25%)
Paper 1: Listening	(25%)
Paper 2: Reading	(25%)
Paper 3: Writing	(25%)



# ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY GCSE 3D DESIGN?

\*students are not able to study both 3D Design and Art and Design

GCSE 3D Design develops students' creativity, problem-solving and practical making skills through the design and manufacture of three-dimensional products. Students explore materials, processes and designers while learning how to turn ideas into high-quality outcomes.

The subject encourages independent thinking, creativity and resilience, and supports future pathways in design, engineering, architecture, product design and creative industries.

**To succeed in GCSE 3D Design, students should:**

- Enjoy practical, hands-on learning and creative problem-solving
- Be willing to develop ideas through research, design and modelling
- Show commitment to coursework and meeting deadlines
- Be able to explain and evaluate their design decisions in writing

3D Design Exams	
Coursework: Personal Portfolio	(60%)
Practical Exam: Externally set assignment	(40%)

## WHY STUDY GCSE ART & DESIGN?

GCSE Art & Design develops students' creativity, visual awareness and ability to express ideas in a personal and meaningful way. Students explore a range of materials, techniques and artists while building an independent and creative approach to their work.

The course encourages resilience, problem-solving and self-motivation, and supports future pathways in art, design, fashion, architecture and the wider creative industries.

**To succeed in AQA GCSE Art & Design, students should:**

- Enjoy creative and practical work
- Be willing to experiment, refine and improve their ideas
- Show strong commitment to coursework and meeting deadlines
- Be able to analyse and reflect on their work and the work of others in writing

Art Exams	
Coursework: Personal Portfolio	(60%)
Practical Exam: Externally set assignment	(40%)

# ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY GCSE DRAMA?

GCSE Drama develops students' creativity, confidence and communication skills through practical performance and the study of plays and theatre practitioners. It is a dynamic and engaging subject that encourages teamwork, self-expression and critical thinking.

Students learn how to create, perform and evaluate drama, while developing skills such as collaboration, presentation, empathy and problem-solving - all of which are highly valued by colleges, universities and employers.

### To succeed in Edexcel GCSE Drama, students should:

- Be willing to perform and work collaboratively with others
- Show commitment to rehearsals and practical work
- Be able to reflect on and evaluate their own work and the work of others
- Have a secure standard of written communication for coursework and the written exam

### Drama Exams

Practical Exam and Coursework: Devising – performance & portfolio	(40%)
Practical Exam: Performance from Text	(20%)
Paper 3: Theatre Makers in Practice	(40%)

## WHY STUDY GCSE MUSIC?

GCSE Music develops students' musical skills, creativity and understanding through performing, composing and listening to a wide range of musical styles and genres. It is a respected subject that encourages self-expression while building discipline and confidence.

Students learn how music is created and structured, develop performance and composition skills, and improve listening and analytical skills that support wider learning.

### To succeed in WJEC GCSE Music, students should:

- Have an interest in music and be willing to practise regularly
- Be able to perform on an instrument or voice (solo and/or ensemble)
- Be willing to compose and develop musical ideas
- Have a secure standard of written communication for the listening exam

### Music Exams

Practical Exam: Performing music – solo and ensemble	(30%)
Coursework: Composing Music – brief and free	(30%)
Paper 3: Appraising	(40%)

# ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY GCSE PSYCHOLOGY?

GCSE Psychology helps students understand how humans think, feel and behave. The course explores topics such as memory, development, criminal behaviour, social influence, and mental health. It develops critical thinking, research, and analytical skills that are valuable for further study and a wide range of careers.

Students learn to evaluate evidence, analyse behaviour, and communicate ideas clearly, combining scientific thinking with real-world applications.

**To succeed in AQA GCSE Psychology, students should:**

- Have a secure standard of reading, writing, and numeracy
- Be curious about human behaviour and society
- Be able to analyse evidence and evaluate different viewpoints
- Be organised and committed to regular revision and independent study

### Psychology Exams

Paper 1: Cognition and Behaviour	(50%)
Paper 2: Social context and Behaviour	(50%)

## WHY STUDY GCSE SOCIOLOGY?

GCSE Sociology helps students understand society and the social issues that shape people's lives, such as family, education, crime and inequality. It is a thought-provoking academic subject that encourages students to question assumptions and explore different viewpoints.

Students develop strong analytical and evaluation skills, learn how to use evidence to support arguments, and improve extended writing - all of which support success in subjects such as English, Psychology, Law and Politics.

**To succeed in AQA GCSE Sociology, students should:**

- Have a secure standard of reading and writing
- Be willing to discuss and debate social issues
- Be able to explain and evaluate different viewpoints
- Be organised and committed to regular revision

### Sociology Exams

Paper 1: The Sociology of Families and Education	(50%)
Paper 2: The Sociology of Crime & Deviance and Social Stratification	(50%)

# VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY BUSINESS?

Business helps students develop a strong understanding of how organisations operate in the real world. The course combines real-life examples with theory, teaching students how businesses are set up, managed and grown. It is ideal for students interested in entrepreneurship, marketing, finance, management or future careers in business-related fields.

Students gain knowledge of key business areas such as finance, marketing, human resources and operations, while developing problem-solving, teamwork, decision-making and communication skills.

### To succeed in Business, students should:

- Have an interest in how businesses work and current events
- Be willing to analyse information and apply ideas to real-life scenarios
- Be organised and committed to completing coursework and assessments
- Be able to communicate ideas clearly in writing and discussion

#### Business Exams

Coursework: Exploring Enterprises	(25%)
Coursework: Planning & Presenting a MicroEnterprise Idea	(25%)
Paper 1: Marketing & Finance for Enterprise	(50%)

## WHY STUDY HEALTH AND FITNESS?

Health and Fitness helps students develop a strong understanding of health, fitness, exercise and wellbeing. The course combines practical activity with theory, teaching how to lead a healthy lifestyle and improve personal fitness. It is ideal for students interested in sports, coaching, personal training or health-related careers.

Students gain knowledge of anatomy, physiology, nutrition and training principles while building practical fitness skills, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities.

### To succeed in NCFE Health and Fitness, students should:

- Have an interest in sport, exercise and wellbeing
- Be motivated to participate in practical activity and apply theory to practice
- Be organised and committed to completing assignments and assessments
- Be able to communicate ideas clearly in writing

#### Health & Fitness Exams

Coursework: Externally set assignment	(60%)
Paper 1: Written examined assessment	(40%)

# VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

## WHY STUDY HOSPITALITY AND CATERING?

Hospitality and Catering teaches students practical and theoretical skills in food preparation, nutrition and the hospitality industry. Students learn how to plan, prepare and present dishes while understanding health and safety, menu design and customer service.

The course develops practical cooking skills, creativity, organisation, time management and teamwork - all of which are highly valued in the hospitality sector and wider employment.

To succeed in WJEC Hospitality and Catering, students should:

- Enjoy practical cooking and working in a hands-on environment
- Be organised and able to manage time effectively
- Be willing to follow instructions carefully and work safely
- Be able to complete written assessments explaining processes, planning and nutrition

### Hospitality & Catering Exams

Coursework: Hospitality and Catering in action	(60%)
Paper 1: The Hospitality & Catering Industry	(40%)



# SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

You are not expected to make your options choices on your own. There is plenty of support available to help you make informed and confident decisions.

**If you have questions or are unsure about your choices, you can speak to:**

- Subject teachers, who can explain what their course involves and whether it suits your strengths
- Your form tutor, your Pastoral Support Manager or your Head of Year, who know you well and can offer general guidance
- Mr Howard, our Careers adviser, who can help you think about future pathways and subject links
- Senior staff, who can support with the options process and answer any concerns

## **SEN and additional support**

Students with special educational needs or additional support needs will be fully supported throughout the options process. Guidance will take account of individual needs, strengths and future pathways. Parents and carers are encouraged to discuss any concerns with Ms Toma, Assistant Headteacher and SENCo, or relevant staff to ensure the most appropriate choices are made.

## **How parents and carers can help at home**

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting students with their choices. You can help by:

- Talking through subject options and encouraging open discussion
- Helping students reflect on what they enjoy and where they do well
- Avoiding pressure and keeping choices realistic and balanced
- Encouraging students to seek advice from school staff if they are unsure

Working together helps ensure students choose subjects that suit them and support their success over the next two years.

# CHOOSING YOUR OPTIONS

Subject	Preference
History	
Geography	
French	
Spanish	
Art & Design*	
3D Design*	
Drama	
Music	
Sociology	
Psychology	
Business	
Health & Fitness	
Hospitality & Catering	

Everybody **must** choose **three options** (marked with a tick) to study and include **two reserve** options (marked with a R). Students must choose one subject in **each block**. This will be done in prep in w/c 20th April so students are supported in the process but please do make notes together here.

If a subject is oversubscribed, students will be allotted one of their reserve choices and so it is important to think carefully about the subjects that you choose.

**\*students are not able to study both 3D Design and Art and Design.**



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