



Year 9 Options

Frequently Asked Questions

What subjects do I have to take?

All pupils need to take the following core set of GCSEs:

- Maths
- English Literature
- English Language
- Combined or triple science
- History or geography

In addition, the vast majority of pupils will also take a modern foreign language

How many subjects do I get to choose?

Students choose between History and Geography and select their chosen language. In addition, most pupils will have two subjects that they choose out of the options pool. You also have to select two reserve subjects.

Are all subjects GCSEs?

Most of the subjects we offer at Backwell School will lead to GCSE qualifications but Sports Studies and Performing Arts will lead to different qualifications. In all of these subjects, the way pupils are assessed is slightly different to GCSEs but the qualification they receive is at the equivalent level and will be regarded by sixth forms, colleges and employers as such.

How do I choose my option subjects?

In tutor time you will complete activities which will help guide you through the process giving you the information needed to make informed choices. There are also videos on Frog which tell you what it is like to study the option subjects you have a choice in. Some pupils might be guided towards courses we think they are more suited for and this will be in conjunction with parents/carers. You can get in contact with your teachers who would be pleased to let you know more about their subject at GCSE.

Am I guaranteed to get the subjects I choose?

Last year 98% of pupils received their first choice of subject so there is a very high chance. However, due to timetable restrictions, this might not always be possible. In these rare cases, we will take your first reserve subject as a substitute.

What happens if more pupils than there are spaces choose a subject?

When more pupils opt for a subject than there are places available, we endeavour to staff multiple classes. If this is not possible we use the order of preference given to us to re-allocate students. This means that we would start by identifying students who have put this subject down as their

fourth preference and allocate them their first reserve. If this yields too many students, lots are drawn to ensure fairness.

Can I change subjects if I think I made a mistake?

Within reason, yes. We always want to give you the subjects you want to take but we also have to work within the restrictions of a timetable. We will make no further changes after September

Will the subjects I take affect my future career and/or Post-16 choices?

Choosing subjects you enjoy is the most important consideration. Access into sixth forms, college courses or training providers rely upon meeting minimum grade requirements set by the providers rather than having studied certain GCSEs. Any Post-16 provider will expect applicants to have taken English and Maths GCSE. In certain cases if a pupil wants to study a course they do not have a GCSE in (for example art based courses) then a provider might ask for them to demonstrate aptitude and interest in this subject necessary for studying it at a higher level.

What is the English Baccalaureate?

The English Baccalaureate was introduced by the government in 2010 as an indicator that young people have been successful in their studies of a range of GCSE subjects. It is **not** a qualification. Our options process enables the vast majority of pupils to successfully gain the English Baccalaureate, where they must achieve a 5 - 9 grade in the following subjects:

- English
- Mathematics
- Two Sciences (Core and Additional or Triple Science)
- Geography or History
- Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)

However, the English Baccalaureate model will not suit all of our students and there are courses available for all ability ranges. Senior staff will guide students (and their parents) in making the right, fully-informed decisions, so that the most suitable courses are chosen.

What about University applications?

For pupils aspiring to apply for university our curriculum model at Key Stage 4 will allow the vast majority of pupils to satisfy every university that they have studied a broad and balance curriculum. When making a university application, many institutions ask for a minimum number of GCSE subjects at a “good pass level” including English and maths. Due to the nature of grade reform at the moment there is no standard interpretation of this amongst universities despite the Education Secretary announcing that the standard pass grade at GCSE is a 4. For example, applications to King’s College London require a grade 5 in English and maths, but Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool Universities put a grade 4 as their requirement.

For further information regarding GCSE requirements for competitive universities and courses, please refer to the following website <https://russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/publications/informed-choices/>

Please contact Mrs Mason if you would like more information or to discuss how these points may affect the future choices of your son/ daughter.