

Year 9 Options - Course Overview

Vocational & Technical Qualifications (VTQs –OCR Nationals, NCFE)

Level 1 – Equivalent to GCSE Grades 1 – 3

Level 2 – Equivalent to GCSE Grades 4 – 9

Business & Enterprise (OCR Level 1/2)

Pros: Great for students who are interested in business studies but may struggle with 100% examination as this course consists of 2 internal coursework/NEA assessments, each completed in year 10 and 11 and one externally assessed written exam completed during year 11. It focuses on studying micro, small and medium businesses, including local businesses rather than huge multi-national companies.

Consider: It involves building a port-folio of evidence over the 3 units so effective time management, and commitment to completing coursework elements is needed to gain a higher level.

Information Technology (OCR Level 1/2)

Pros: Great for students who do not wish to complete a GCSE Computing course but **do** want to continue with a form of IT studies. This course consists of 2 internal coursework components, each completed in year 10 and 11 and one externally assessed written exam completed during year 11.

Consider: Organisation and being able to stick to deadlines are important factors in being successful on this course.

Engineering (OCR Level 1/2):

Pros: Great for those students who are technically minded but not particularly creative. The practical element of the course is prescriptive, which means that you will be told what to make. Therefore, there is no designing. There is an exam which is worth 40% of the qualification, with 60% being gained from three units of NEA.

Consider: Being organised and methodical is crucial as the majority of your qualification will be gained from NEA. Only 22% of the total marks for the qualification area gained from practical work, so be prepared for written work in the form of; planning, analysing quality, and researching and report writing about modern technology.

Health and Social Care (OCR Level 1/2)

Pros: Great for students wanting to have a career in the caring professions. The course includes assessments completed within lessons which are worth 60% of their final grade and there is also a written examination at the end of year 11 (worth the remaining 40%).

Consider: The course is continuously assessed. It involves extended writing tasks, so effective time management is important as well as full engagement in all lessons.

Music Technology (NCFE Level 1/2)

Pros: This is a very practical, computer-based course. Almost all of your time will see you working at a computer. If you have enjoyed the GarageBand work in years 7, 8 and 9, the course allows you to explore this in much more detail. You do NOT need to be able to play an instrument to do well on this course, other than being able to play the keyboard as we do in class. If you DO play an instrument though, you can include that in your work. For your overall mark 60% comes from a non-examined assessment and 40% from an exam.

Consider: You need to be good at motivating yourself and working independently. The five units require you to put together a presentation and a piece of music for each, so a lot of the course is spent in your own world with headphones on.

Creative iMedia (OCR Level 1/2)

Pros: Great for students who like working creatively with digital media. This course equips students with the practical skills and knowledge and consists of an exam unit (worth 25% of the final grade) and three practical projects (worth the remaining 75% of the final grade). All digital equipment and editing software are supplied by the school.

Consider: Prior knowledge of Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Rush (video editing software) would be advantageous, but students will be taught how to use both pieces of software, so it is not compulsory.

Sport Studies (OCR Level 1/2)

Pros: Great for students who are interested in Physical Education but may struggle with 70% examination assessment. You would complete 3 internally assessed units including Contemporary issues in sport (Externally assessed written paper), Performance and leadership in sports activities, alongside one additional unit. Lessons will be practically based or in a computer room.

Consider: The assessment for the two internally assessed units is an ongoing portfolio that you would build up over time.
Level 1 NCFE Certificate in Food and Cookery is a designated course for students on Pathway 3 for whom GCSE wouldn't be suitable. It has no terminal examination and is continually assessed. It includes practical cookery and therefore has a great life skill element to it. **This is not an option subject, but part of the pathway 3 curriculum.**

GCSEs – Grades 1 – 9

Art

Pros: Great for students who love to be creative and learn through practical experimentation working with different materials and using specialist equipment and techniques. This course is entirely 'coursework' base using a wide portfolio of evidence with a practical, not written, exam at the end of towards the spring of year 11.

Consider: There is still a requirement to communicate, through written work and annotations, their intentions and ideas. Effective time management is essential to keep their portfolio up to date and basic art equipment at home is needed to continue their work at home. Practical lessons will require energy, creativity and a willingness to try new things.

Business Studies

Pros: Great for students who have an interest in businesses and how they function. The course consists of several modules looking at two papers (Business 1 & Business 2) each worth 50% of the final grade. These are completed at the end of the course. Where possible, visits and outside speakers will be available to support learning.

Consider: There are lots of theoretical topics and extended writing opportunities. Being able to extend answers and use knowledge of real-world business organisations is crucial to developing a deep understanding of topics.

Computer Science

Pros: Great for students who want to focus on computer systems, algorithmic thinking and programming skills. Final exam, divided in two papers, each worth 50% of the final grade. Computer Systems looks at how computer and network systems work, and the main components that constitute them. Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming, aims to develop programming skills and algorithmic thinking. The course provides great opportunity to learn Coding and Networks fundamentals, both highly valued in the job market.

Consider: To be successful, students need to have a real grasp of mathematics by the end of year 9 as there is quite a lot in the course.

Drama

Pros: Great for students who like a balance between devising, performing and learning about how theatre is created, with lots of practical acting lessons, where working in groups is common. Where possible the students will go on 2 theatre trips.

Consider: There is written work and a 40% written exam. Students need to perform for the rest of the group regularly. 'I'm shy at performing' is not OK at GCSE. Practical lessons will require energy, creativity and a willingness to work with anyone else in the room. As we do so much work in groups, your attendance can significantly impact on the quality of your own work, and on the work of your peers. Should attendance be an issue, it will not be possible for students to present practical work for assessment and they will be required to submit 100% written work or lose their place on the course.

Design Technology

Pros: Great for students who are creative and practically minded. The course includes 15% of applied maths. It includes drawing, modelling, making and designing your own work, with 50% assessment (NEA) and 50% written exam.

Graphic Design - more focus on packaging, card, paper, CAD, and graphic elements, BUT you will also look at woods and plastics. Product Design - more focus on how things work/move, woods, CNC, CAD, BUT you will also look at graphical elements too.

Consider: Being organised is crucial to success with the NEA. Around 33% of lessons are core theory work. 33% focus on drawing and designing. 33% focus on CAD, modelling or making.

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Pros: Great for students who are really interested in all aspects of food. Students will cook almost every week in year 10. The course includes 2 NEAs which are taught and assessed in year 11 and together are worth 50% of the final grade. The remaining 50% of the grade is assessed through a terminal examination.

Consider: The AQA GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition course should not be considered as an 'easy' course. The practical work is highly skilled and is not suitable for anyone who struggled to bring ingredients to lessons at KS3.

French& German - MFL

Pros: Great for students who enjoy learning languages. Students are well prepared from KS3 already knowing lots of vocabulary and grammar. There is lots of opportunity for speaking, with a good balance between skills, and opportunities to learn about culture and traditions. MFL GCSE is highly regarded on 6th form, university and job applications.

Consider: This course is 100% exam without any resources with lots of vocabulary and grammar to learn. Full engagement and commitment need to be consistent throughout – this is not a subject that you can learn last minute.

Geography

Pros: Great for students who are interested in relevant global subjects for today such as: climate change, flooding, overpopulation, development and energy production. A subject of the future! Geography complements subjects such as the sciences and maths, as well as subjects like English and History. Universities value Geography because of its all rounded nature and transferable skills included extended writing and analytical thinking.

Consider: There is a lot of content and knowledge to learn (as with all Humanities subjects), so knowledge retention and retrieval is vital along with some mathematical skill.

History

Pros: Great for students who like History as a subject and are particularly interested in the topics in the options booklet, as these are taught in a really engaging way with a balance of discussion, videos, quizzes and extended writing. It is a useful subject if you are thinking of doing something analytical in the future such as Law, Politics or continuing with History.

Consider: There is a lot of information to learn but it is broken down so it is easily digested and there are different structures to exam questions, but similarly broken down using writing frames.

Music

Pros: GCSE Music is a serious, academic course which teaches you how to compose as well as learning about different styles of music from around the world and across time. Performing (either playing an instrument or singing) counts for 30% of your grade. Composing is another 30% with a listening exam being the other 40%.

Consider: To open up the full range of marks for performing, you need to be approximately Grade 3 standard on your instrument by the time you are in year 11 (you don't have to have taken the exam). If you are aiming for a top grade (7, 8 or 9), you probably need to be around Grade 5 in year 11.

Photography

Pros: Great for students who love to be creative and learn through practical experimentation working with different materials and using specialist equipment and techniques. This course is entirely 'coursework' based using a wide portfolio of evidence with a practical, not written, exam at the end of towards the spring of year 11.

Consider: There is still a requirement to communicate, through written work and annotations, their intentions and ideas. Effective time management is essential to keep their portfolio up to date and basic art equipment at home is needed to continue their work at home. Practical lessons will require energy, creativity and a willingness to try new things.

PE

Pros: GCSE PE is suitable for students with a keen interest in sport who enjoy PE, biology, food and nutrition. You are assessed in two exams and the completion of a fitness training program alongside your sporting ability across your best 3 sports. One sport must be a team sport and one an individual sport. You will have an extra practical PE lesson every other week.

Consider: You must represent the school or a local club in at least one of the three sports you are assessed in order to secure a good mark. 70% of your grade is based on two exams at the end of year 11.

Science Combined – all students study this course unless they choose triple science.

Pros: Choosing this route leaves an option block open for a 4th subject choice and still allows for entry to A-Level science (provided entry grade for college achieved). It is made up of all three sciences, which are equally shared and has the same academic rigour as Triple Science. (The same balance and mix of question styles, demand in assessment etc.)

Consider: This course will give you a combined grade for science such as; 4 – 5, 4 – 4, 6 – 7 etc, rather than a grade for each discipline, biology, chemistry and physics.

Science Triple

Pros: Great for students that have an interest in, or love of science! The content is no more difficult than combined, with the same number of exams, just more content with longer exams. It gives a broad foundation for A-Level Science and is used by some universities where there is high competition for places on courses such as, medicine, dentistry and veterinary science.

Consider: It is two and half more hours of science than Science Combined and does give you one less option of another subject so should only be chosen if you are really keen on science.