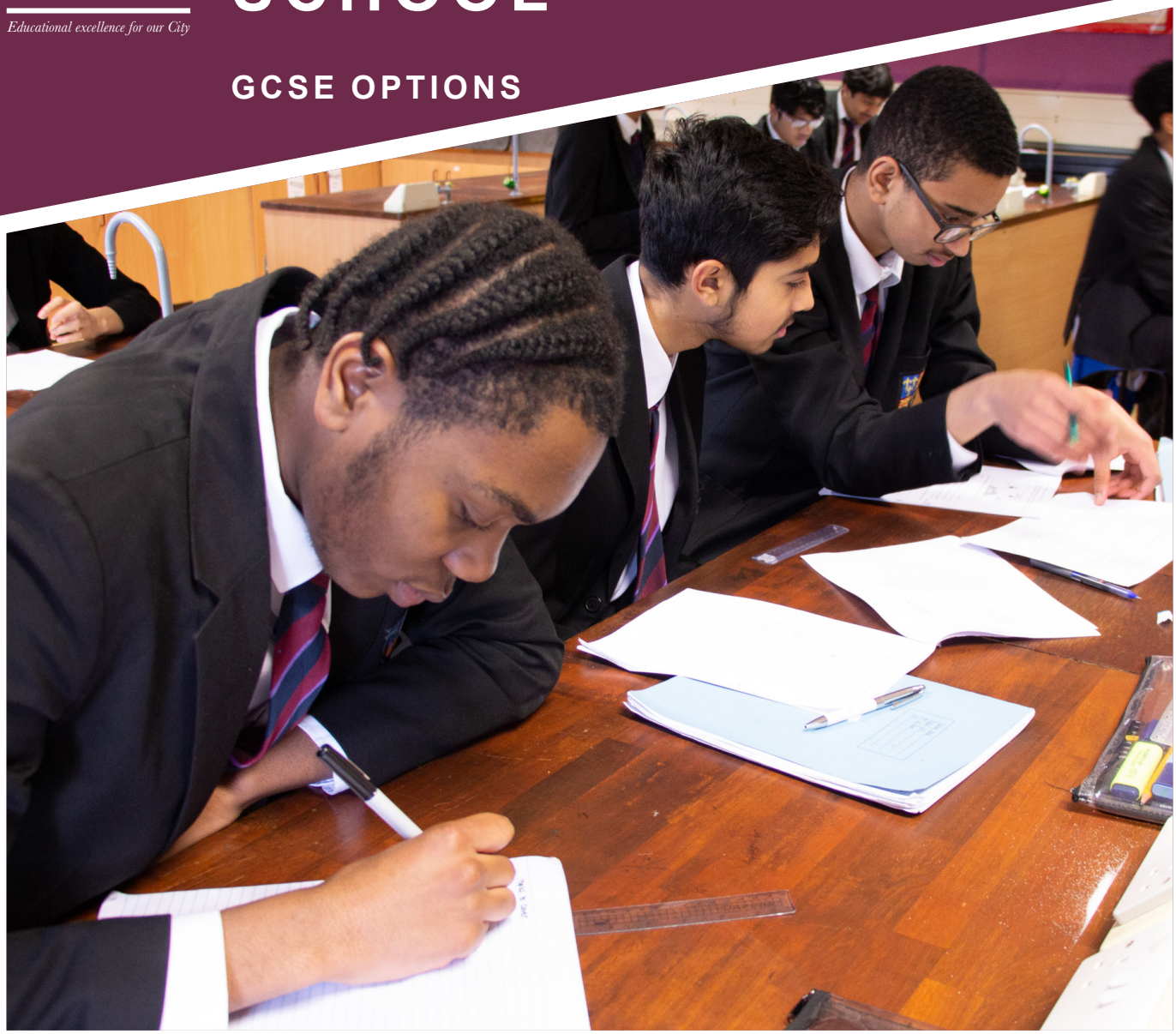
KING EDWARD VI ASTON SCHOOL

Educational excellence for our City

KING EDWARD VI ASTON SCHOOL

GCSE OPTIONS



A GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS SINCE 1883

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

The Year 9 options process is the first time in your life in which you start to focus on your career as an adult.

It is totally conceivable that in the 21st century, you may pursue more than one career, yet this is the time to think about the importance of qualifications and how they might open up opportunities in the years ahead.

The options booklet is a great start to help you on your way. It is important that you use this information, along with advice gleaned from your teachers, parents, older siblings and your wider family.

It's also important to strike a balance between what you're good at and what you enjoy. Our KS4 core curriculum is both broad and demanding and tests a variety of skills.

Make sure that the options you choose complement this; it's worth considering that a curriculum which challenges you in different ways will allow you to explore a wider range of skills, experiences and learning methods.

It's also important that you are aware that the government considers the English Baccalaureate an important component of your education at GCSE. The Modern Foreigh Language you chose to pursue in Year 8 is a fundamental part of this programme along with History or Geography.

As a grammar school, we believe that all of the options to you at Aston are valuable and that there are no pre-conceived suite of subjects which is more prestigious than the next.

As ever, if you have questions about the suitability of validity of a subject, don't hesitate to ask.

With warmest wishes.

MATT BRADY | HEADTEACHER

CONTENTS

KEY STAGE 4 CURRICULUM

Students will study 10 GCSEs during Years 10 and 11. Compulsory subjects at GCSE level include English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and a language (Chinese, French or German).
In addition, students will study several other compulsory non-examined subjects, including, PSHE, Physical Education & Games and core Religious Education

In addition to these compulsory elements, students will have three optional subject choices

1. Humanity Option - Students must choose one humanity option from either Geography or History.
2. Two Free Choices from the following subjects; Art & Design, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Food Preparation & Nutrition, Music, Physical Education, RE or a second Humanity option (History or Geography).

Please note that students cannot study the following two options combinations:

1. Design & Technology and Food Preparation & Nutrition.
2. Art & Design and Food Preparation & Nutrition

Some subjects, such as Computer Science, Art & Design and Physical Education, have limited teaching groups. If demand exceeds availability, places will be allocated based on Year 9 academic performance in that subject.

When choosing GCSE options, students should consider coursework-heavy subjects like Art & Design and Design & Technology, as these require significant time. With good planning and organisation, students can excel, especially if they are academically strong or passionate about the subject. For guidance, they should consult subject teachers, form tutors, or their Head of Year.

KING EDWARD VI ASTON GCSE INFORMATION

ASSESSMENT AT GCSE

All GCSEs are linear in nature. This means that all of the written papers will be taken in the summer of Year 11. The examination timetable begins in early May and continues until the last week of June.

GCSE qualifications follow the grading system of 9 - 1. Please note that there is no direct correlation between the 9-1 and the more traditional A* - G grading system.

Not only are there more grades (nine instead of eight), but they are also deliberately skewed towards the top end to allow greater differentiation between high performing pupils and to meet the government's aim of more rigorous exams.

COURSEWORK / NON-EXAMINED ASSESSMENT

Details of these are provided by departments.

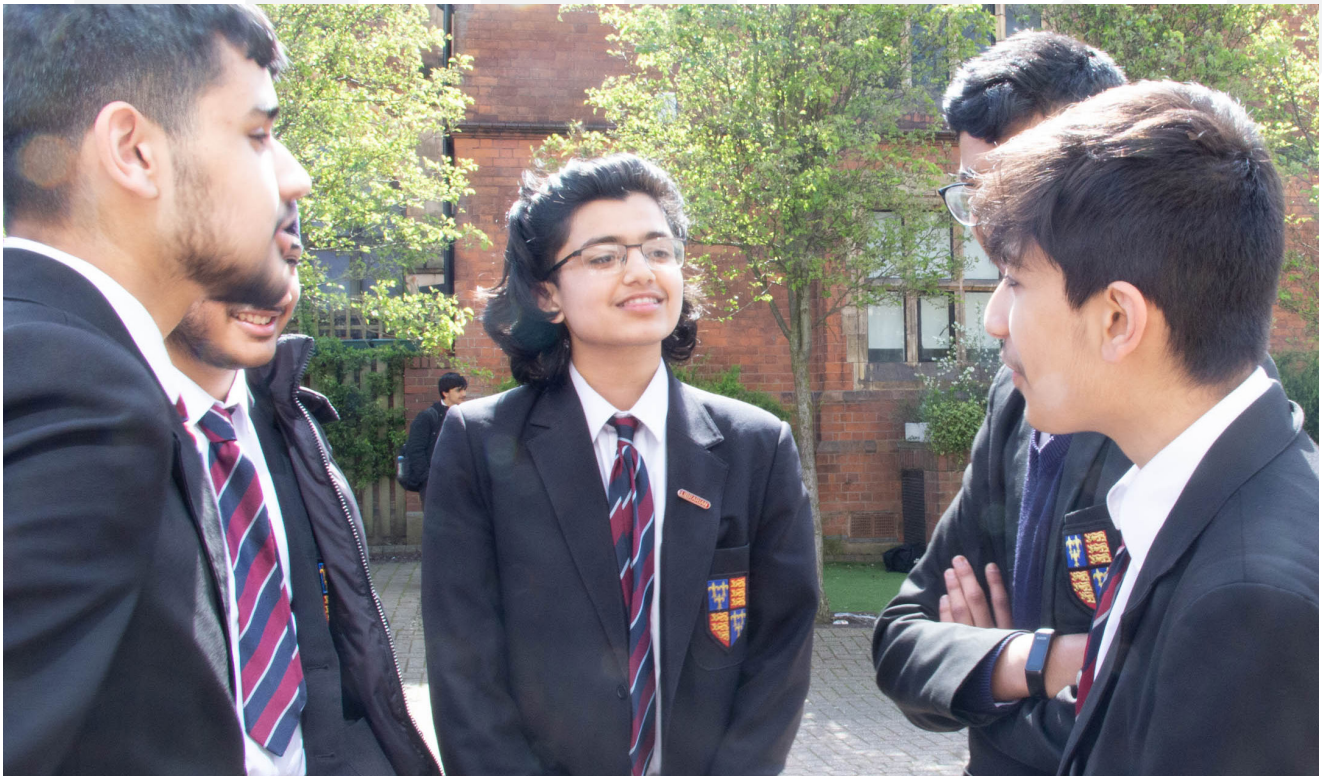
EXPECTATIONS AT GCSE

Managing multiple GCSE courses effectively requires strong organisational skills, such as maintaining well-structured notes and meeting deadlines, which are crucial for success over the two years.

It is also essential that students catch up any work missed due to their absence.

INTERNAL EXAMS

To prepare students for external GCSE exams, they will sit end of year internal exams in the Summer term of Year 10 and Autumn term of Year 11. This will give them invaluable experience in revising for a set of exams in a short time period as well as familiarising them with the formal exam procedures. The results from these exam periods will be used to monitor the progress made by students.



MOVING INTO THE SIXTH FORM

Although this may seem a long way off at the moment, when choosing subjects students need to give some thought as to how GCSE choices may impact on A-Level choices.

All A-Levels also follow linear courses. You should also be aware that the school has specific entry criteria for the Sixth Form. More information on these requirements can be found at https://www.keaston.bham.sch.uk/sixth-form-admissions.

POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING YOUR OPTIONS

1. Students are highly recommended to follow a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 10 & 11 to widen the scope of their future career choices. So students are strongly encouraged to make at least one of your two free choices Art & Design, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Food Preparation & Nutrition, Music or Physical Education.
2. As all students study a language and due to the options structure choice, as advised in point 1, all students will have the opportunity to achieve the English Baccalaureate.
3. In Art, Music, Design & Technology and Food Preparation & Nutrition, there will be limited numbers of students allowed to choose each subject. Students are unable to study both Design & Technology and Food Preparation & Nutrition or Art & Design and Food Preparation and Nutrition. In the case of over-subscription performance in Year 9 assessments will be used as the determining factor.

Students make their option choices via the Microsoft form received from Mrs Lally as an email. All students **MUST** choose three options choices.

Students will be given more information about this process via an assembly delivered by Mrs Lally in school. Students also have the ability to leave any comments about their choices, but this is not compulsory. In addition, parents can e-mail Mrs Lally if they wish to add any further comments to the option process. Please e-mail Mrs Lally on k.lally@ast.kevibham.org.

Please note the deadline for choosing GCSE options is Monday 20th April 2026.

KING EDWARD VI ASTON
CHOOSING A SUBJECT

Unless you are certain about your future career path you should continue to follow a broad and balanced curriculum in Years 10 & 11.

Students considering studying languages at university are strongly encouraged to study two languages. Your 'reserve' option must be a subject that you are prepared to study. It is not always possible to give all students their first four subject choices and when such instances occur parents will be informed.

THESE ARE SOME GOOD REASONS TO CHOOSE A SUBJECT TO STUDY FOR GCSE:

- You like it or find it interesting.
- You are good at it.
- You need it or it is useful for your future career.
- You can develop new skills by doing it.
- You think you will do well in it.
- It will give you satisfaction.
- Your teachers think it is a suitable choice for you.
- It will combine well with other subjects and help your general education.
- You like the method of assessment and teaching.
- It is a subject you would like to become good at.

TRY NOT TO PICK GCSE SUBJECTS BASED ON THESE REASONS:

- Your friends are doing it.
- You think you should do it even if you do not want to.
- Your parents think it is a good idea but you do not.
- You know someone who has done it and they say it is great.
- You cannot think of anything else to choose.
- You think it will be easy.
- It sounds good even though you have not found out about it.
- You really like the teacher you have at the moment.
- You think it will impress people now or later.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KING EDWARD VI ASTON COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

EXAMINED SUBJECTS

- Biology
- Chemistry
- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Modern Foreign Languages (Chinese, French, German)
- Physics

NON-EXAMINED SUBJECTS

- Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHE)
- PE & Games
- Core Religious Education

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mrs J Dhillon

COMPULSORY COURSE
BIOLOGY

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The aims of the course are: to build on the understanding of biological concepts first met during lower school Biology and Science lessons. During the GCSE course, greater depth of treatment is given to topics covered and many new areas are also encountered. Students will be able to develop essential knowledge and understanding of different areas of the subject and how they relate to each other. They will have opportunities to develop and demonstrate a deep appreciation of the skills, knowledge and understanding of scientific methods and develop competence and confidence in a variety of practical, mathematical and problem-solving skills. The course will also expect students to gain understanding of how society makes decisions about scientific issues and how the sciences contribute to the success of the economy and other parts of day to day lives.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Students who study GCSE Biology can take the subject at A Level. A level Biology enables students to pursue degree courses in a science-based field, such as medicine, dentistry, physiotherapy, optometry, veterinary science and also in the rapidly expanding fields of biotechnology and genetic engineering.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students may have opportunities to attend activities at the University of Birmingham.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1	Topics 1 – 4: Cell biology; Organisation; Infection and response; Bioenergetics.	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE
Paper 2	Topics 5 – 7: Homeostasis and response; Inheritance, variation and evolution; and Ecology	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr R Giubertoni

COMPULSORY COURSE
CHEMISTRY

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

Chemistry is the study of the matter around us, its interactions and properties. Through an understanding of these properties chemistry has found a vast number of uses in the modern world and underpins many aspects of scientific development and industry that have helped to forge the modern world we live in today. At King Edward VI Aston School, we aim to enable students to gain a full and deep understanding of chemistry and be able to use it to inform their views on the world around them.

The GCSE specification at King Edward VI Aston School covers all the content of the exam board specification but looks to produce able and enquiring chemists who are ready both for further chemistry study and to apply their knowledge to the world around them..

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Studying chemistry can open up a wide range of opportunities and career paths. Pursuing chemistry can take you into the medical profession, the pharmaceutical industry, the oil and petrochemical industry, the Food and Beverage industry, Forensics Science, Materials Science and Chemical engineering.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Trips to universities to experience chemistry at a higher level through the Salters experience days. Opportunities to take part in competitions such as the Royal Society of Chemistry Top of the Bench competition.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1	• Atomic structure and the periodic table • Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter • Quantitative chemistry • Chemical changes • Energy changes	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE
Paper 2	• The rate and extent of chemical change • Organic chemistry • Chemical analysis • Chemistry of the atmosphere • Using resources	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	LANGUAGE LITERATURE	Mr C Laverty

COMPULSORY COURSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE / LITERATURE

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The overall aims of the English language and literature courses are to ensure both subjects are enjoyable, engaging and rewarding.

In the English language GCSE, students are taught to read fluently and write effectively. The course will enable students to demonstrate confidence in their control of Standard English as well as endow them with the ability to write grammatically correct sentences, employ linguistic techniques effectively and analyse texts perceptively.

In the English literature GCSE, students will encounter a wide range of stimulating texts by writers including Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, J. B. Priestley and poets as diverse as Wordsworth and John Agard; the ideas explored by these writers will challenge and stretch students as well as inculcate a life-long love of English literature.

In both courses, students will hone essay writing skills, including how to write effective introductions and conclusions as well as how to structure the main body of their responses to develop ideas and arguments successfully. Pupils will develop higher thinking skills such as how to analyse the effect of form, structure and language by discussing how meaning is created as well as the impact on the reader. Pupils will learn to synthesise ideas and evaluate the various methods employed by writers. Moreover, the department aims to instil resilience in students so that they can meet the demands of the rigorous curriculum and cultivate a growth mind-set so that students strive to improve and act on barriers to learning.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

To get into a good sixth form, students are required to attain a Grade 5 or, in many cases, a Grade 6 in GCSE English.

The ability to read thoughtfully and analytically as well as to write fluently and speak confidently are skills required in all subject areas and all walks of life. A good GCSE in English language and literature will indicate a student's ability to express themselves effectively which makes them an ideal candidate for A level courses.

Universities will also look favourably on candidates attaining high grades in English language and literature because students with these qualifications will possess the qualities to tackle the rigours of degree level.

Moreover, employers in all sectors will be interested in people who have demonstrated the communication skills necessary to gain top GCSEs in English.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The English department offers a range of enrichment opportunities such as participating in debating competitions, creative writing workshops, book clubs as well as attending trips to events such as Poetry Live and theatre performances in Birmingham and Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Students also have the opportunity to earn achievement points by taking on reading challenges to review the department's recommended books.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
English Language Paper 1	Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing. Section A – Four questions in response to a fiction text Section B – Creative extended writing task	End of Year 11 external examination – 1 hour 45 minutes
English Language Paper 2	Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives. Section A – Four questions in response to two non-fiction texts Section B – Persuade and argue extended writing task	End of Year 11 external examination – 1 hour 45 minutes
Spoken Language endorsement	Students research, write and deliver a three to five minute speech on a topic of their choice. They will also respond to questions posed by peers and teachers following the speech.	Year 10 internal examination
English Literature Paper 1	Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel. Students will write two essays, one on Macbeth and the other on The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.	End of Year 11 external examination – 1 hour 45 minutes
English Literature Paper 2	Literature paper 2: Modern texts and poetry. Students will write four responses (three extended and one brief) on An Inspector Calls, a selection of Power and Conflict anthology poems and two unseen poems.	End of Year 11 external examination – 2 hours 15 minutes

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
Pearson Edexcel	CLICK HERE	Mr J Berwick

COMPULSORY COURSE MATHEMATICS

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

During this course, students will learn how to solve problems and break tasks down into clear steps , helping them to think logically. There will be a strong focus on solving problems in both familiar and unfamiliar GCSE contexts.
Students are assessed across six strands:

- Number
- Algebra
- Ratio and proportion
- Geometry and measures
- Probability
- Statistics

The course aims to:

- develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
- enable students to acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
- develop mathematical reasoning, including making deductions and inferences, and drawing conclusions
- help students to comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a range of forms, appropriate to the information and context

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

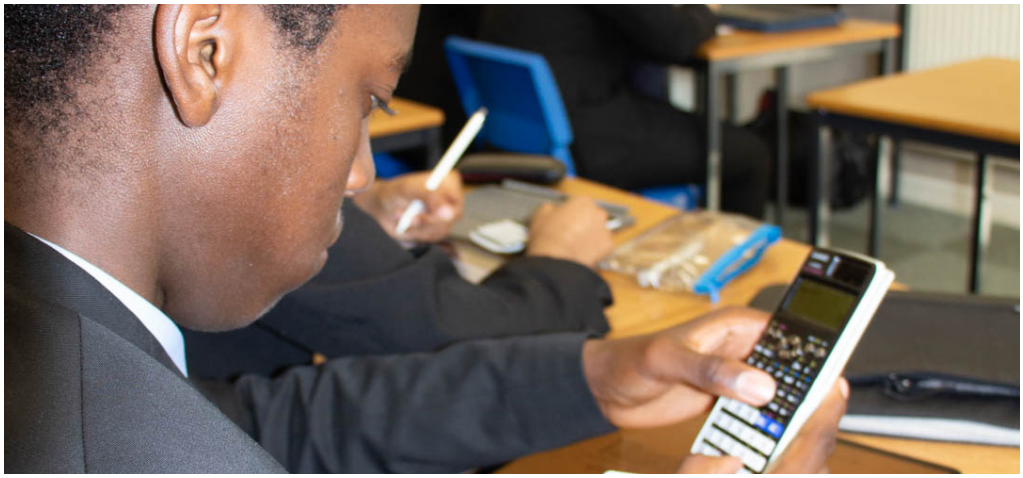
Mathematics can lead to a wide range of routes, including:

- a degree in science, mathematics, or another subject of interest at higher level
- actuarial work, accountancy, and other financial services
- risk management

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Broader study is an essential feature of Mathematics at Aston, and students are encouraged to take part in activities such as UKMT Challenges and other competitions, including the Birmingham Big Maths Quiz (winners in 2025), and visits to ‘Popular Mathematics’ lectures at university and elsewhere.

Students placed in the top set for GCSE Mathematics will have the opportunity to take the AQA Level 2 Further Mathematics Award, which provides a bridge between GCSE and A Level Mathematics. This is an ideal course for students who are enthusiastic about Mathematics. It runs for 30 minutes each week, at Thursday lunchtime, throughout Years 10 and 11, and is graded in the same way as GCSE Mathematics. The specification can be accessed here: AQA Certificate Mathematics 8365 | Specification | AQA



COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Non-calculator	All content outlined on the specification can be assessed in each of the papers	Written examination 90 minutes, 80 marks All papers equally weighted
Calculator 1	All content outlined on the specification can be assessed in each of the papers	Written examination 90 minutes, 80 marks All papers equally weighted
Calculator 2	All content outlined on the specification can be assessed in each of the papers	Written examination 90 minutes, 80 marks All papers equally weighted

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	HEAD OF FACULTY
AQA	CHINESE	Mrs N Wiessmann-Hubbard
Pearson Edexcel	FRENCH	
Pearson Edexcel	GERMAN	

COMPULSORY COURSE MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

OVERVIEW:

Your son will continue to study the language that he chose in Year 8. The GCSE curriculum builds on the foundations established at Key Stage 3, strengthening vocabulary, grammar and confidence in communication. By the end of whichever language course your son has chosen to study, he will be able to understand and use language more accurately and spontaneously across a range of real-world topics.

THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING A LANGUAGE:

Studying a language opens doors academically, culturally and professionally. It helps students:

- Develop strong communication and memory skills
- Build problem-solving, creativity and analytical thinking
- Gain insight into other cultures and global perspectives
- Stand out to universities and employers
- Prepare for careers in a variety of fields including business, law and engineering

Languages are also recognised as facilitating subjects that support applications to Russell Group universities and form part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

WHAT WILL STUDENTS STUDY?

Across all languages, students will explore topics such as:

- Identity and culture
- Technology, media and free time
- Local area, travel and tourism
- School, future study and career ambitions
- Lifestyle, wellbeing and global issues

They will develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, including translation tasks and understanding authentic materials.In GCSE examinations, these areas will each carry a weighting of 25%.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students may have opportunities to take part in:

- Trips abroad or visits linked to the target language
- Cultural events and workshops
- Film and media activities
- Language clubs or drop-in sessions

These experiences help students to develop confidence and a wider cultural understanding of their chosen language.

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr S Kumar

COMPULSORY COURSE PHYSICS

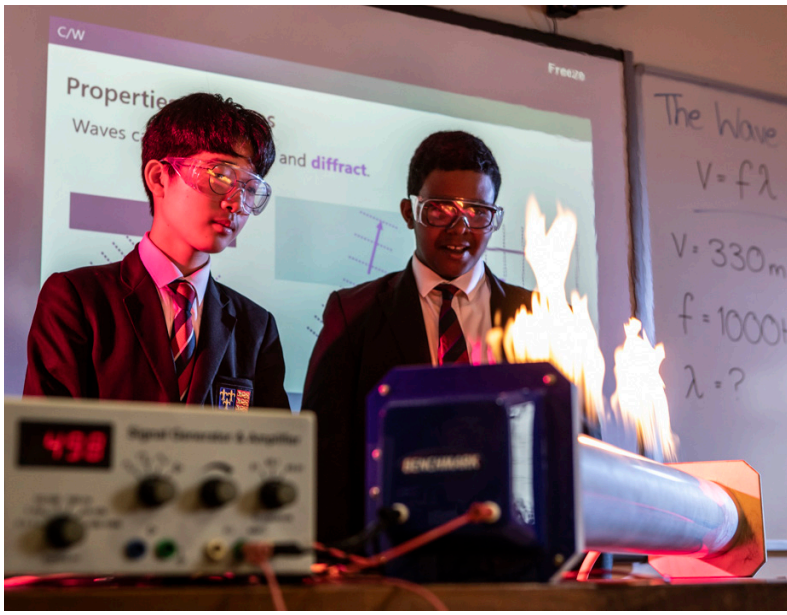
COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The GCSE Physics course involves investigating how the natural world works and is designed to engage students' interest at every level by providing relevant inspiring academic content, practical opportunities to undertake scientific enquiry and learn about the scientific process. Students will have the opportunity to develop the following skills:

- Knowledge and understanding to pose, define and solve scientific questions and problems.
- An understanding of the continuously evolving relationship between science and society.
- Communication, literacy and numeracy skills in a scientific context Planning skills, including the management of risk Investigative skills, including the collection, selecting, processing and analysing of secondary data to provide evidence.

The content is taught to a higher level and bridges the gap between GCSE and A level, extending students understanding of the scientific world and challenging students to make synoptic links between topics.

Lessons are a mixture of practical work to develop understanding of the topic areas, developing skills to question and investigate scientific principles and ideas, literacy activities to demonstrate student understanding and engaging activities to support learning and progress.



WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

AQA GCSE Physics (Higher Tier) provides opportunities for progression. It is rigorous and provides students with a good grounding for taking Physics further in the Sixth Form. There is a good balance between practical work and theory in this course, and students can apply the transferable skills in other disciplines.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the regular course of studies, a number of students choose to become involved in extra-curricular activities such as mentoring younger students within the school, Mastery and Leadership awards and visiting local and national universities for talks and seminars.

The department also encourages participation in the British Physics Olympiad and a number of students attend extra classes to help prepare for this event; these classes also prove popular with those students looking to apply to top universities for their undergraduate studies.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1	Topics 1-4: Energy; Electricity; Particle model of matter; and atomic structure.	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE
Paper 2	Topics 5-8: Forces; Waves; Magnetism and electromagnetism; and Space physics.	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE

KING EDWARD VI ASTON OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

YOU NEED TO SELECT THREE OF THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS TO STUDY AT GCSE LEVEL:

- Art & Design
- Computer Science
- Design & Technology
- Food Preparation & Nutrition
- Geography
- History
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Studies

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
OCR	CLICK HERE	Miss J Moore

OPTIONAL COURSE
ART & DESIGN

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

- To enable pupils to express themselves through various creative mediums.
- To look at the work of others to inform your own artistic style.

This course will also develop personal skills such as self-management, time management, organisation, presentation skills, critical analysis and enabling pupils to question what they see and develop as a learner beyond the subject itself.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

The GCSE would suit students who have an aptitude towards art and have achieved highly over their KS3 curriculum within all areas. It also suits students who can work independently and investigate their own source imagery. This course will allow students to explore many materials and processes especially drawing and painting. Students will be taught how to manipulate acrylics and be confident to work on a large scale.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

- A-Level Art
- Any A-Levels that are creative such as DT / ceramics / Foundation course in art
- Advertising, Architecture, Art therapist, Art valuer, Automotive, Design Conservator, Court room artist, Creative director, Fashion, Journalism, Game designer, Landscape architect, Film/Medical photographer, Illustrator, Print maker, Teaching.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Dark room lunch club
Gallery visits

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
1. Portfolio	Students produce a portfolio of practical work showing their personal response to a set starting point, brief, scenario or stimulus. The portfolio may be presented in appropriate formats for the specification title they are following and chosen area of study, including sketchbooks, digital presentations, mounted sheets, maquettes, prototypes, animated work, scale models or illustrated written work. The portfolio must provide evidence that the student has met all four assessment objectives.	120 marks 60%
2. Externally set task	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.	80 marks 10 hours 40%

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
OCR	CLICK HERE	Mr A Russell

OPTIONAL COURSE
COMPUTER SCIENCE

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

- Understand how computers work: the role of components in a computer and how computers can be networked together. Students can then decide the most appropriate equipment and setup for different situations.
- Develop the skills required to write and correct computer programs. Students will understand best practices when coding which ensures their code will be easy to maintain and reduce the chance of errors occurring.
- Consider the impact of technology. This includes how technology affects the environment, how social media and artificial intelligence affect society and the laws that govern computer use.
- Understand how data is stored on a Computer. This allows students to calculate the size of files and know how to change files to reduce the file size.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

- are interested in how computers are used for solving problems.
- want to develop or improve a fundamental way of thinking and problem solving, which is called “Computational Thinking”.
- enjoy challenge and want to study a logical and a creative subject at the same time.
- have an acute attention for detail. This is beneficial when understanding the specific role of components and finding errors within computer code.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

This course gives students a real, in-depth understanding of how Computer technology works and provides excellent preparation for higher study and employment in Computer Science. Studying Computing helps in developing problem solving skills such as the ability to think logically, algorithmically and recursively which are considered very useful skills to have if you wish to pursue a career in Programming, Software engineering, Data analysis, Gaming industry, Mathematics, Science, Economics, Art and Design & Technology.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- BEBRAS and Oxford University Computing Competition
- The Perse Coding Team Challenge

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Unit 01 Computer Systems	Systems Architecture; Memory and Storage; Wired and wireless networks; Network topologies, protocols and layers, System security; System software; Ethical, legal, cultural and environmental concerns	50% of the qualification Written Paper, 80 marks 1hr 30 mins
Unit 02 Computational thinking, algorithms and programming	Computational thinking, algorithms and programming algorithms; Programming techniques; Producing robust programs; Computational logic; Translators and facilities of languages	50% of the qualification Written Paper, 80 marks 1hr 30 mins

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr M Hodgkinson

OPTIONAL COURSE
DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

- To give pupils a practical set of skills working with a variety of materials.
- To build pupils knowledge of the Iterative Design process and the importance of its role within society, using design and modelling to explore their ideas.
- To build pupils' confidence and ability to take creative risks.
- To teach pupils how to use industry standard software and machinery effectively to assist in the development of their ideas.
- To inspire pupils to pursue further study in the Design, Engineering or Creative sectors.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

- Enjoyed and demonstrated aptitude in Design and Technology throughout Years 7-9.
- Have an interest in Design, Engineering and how it has and continues to shape the world around us.
- Enjoy fast-paced projects, problem-solving and opportunities to work both independently and within groups.
- Want to develop their knowledge outside the classroom environment, taking ownership of their learning and actively looking for information.
- Take pride in their work and enjoy demonstrating what they are really capable of!

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

A GCSE in Design and Technology is more than just a route into A-level Product Design or AAQ Level 3 Engineering (although those are both excellent options!), it is an opportunity to develop key transferable skills that will are invaluable as students move to the next stage of their educational career.

Students will leave Design and Technology as critical thinkers, problem-solvers, calculated risk-takers, innovators and confident communicators – these skills are all highly desirable in both education and industry.

At the end of Year 11 students will be in a prime position to continue the subject at A-level or to look for apprenticeships in Design and Engineering vocations. The top-performing students will be invited to apply for Arkwright scholarships (in December of Year 11) that offer sponsorship to students studying STEM subjects at A-level and are committed to continuing that path at university.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Involvement in EDT Industrial Cadets Silver programme (including a half-term residential opportunity that students can apply for).
- Weekly lunchtime workshop access to allow students to further develop skills.
- Entry into national competitions where viable (we have previously won an Industrial Cadets People's Choice award, the Bougues Future Cities challenge and two national Architecture into Education Awards).
- Support with Arkwright Scholarship applications.
- We aim to offer students one fieldtrip to an industrial experience during the course, for example, a visit to the Silverstone Museum and Innovation Centre.
- After a successful visit to Iceland with the cohort in 2026, we are in the exploratory stages of offering this opportunity to DT students again in 2027.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Written paper	Core technical principles A mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions assessing a breadth of technical knowledge and understanding. Specialist technical principles Several short answer questions (2–5 marks) and one extended response to assess a more in-depth knowledge of technical principles. Designing and making principles A mixture of short answer and extended response questions.	Written examination: 2 hours 100 marks 50% of GCSE grade
Non-examined assessment (NEA)	• Substantial design and make task • Contextual challenges to be released annually by AQA on 1 June in the year prior to the submission of the NEA • Students will produce a prototype and a portfolio of evidence	NEA: 30-35 hours (approximately) 100 marks 50% of GCSE grade Work will be marked by teachers and moderated by AQA

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr M Hodgkinson

OPTIONAL COURSE FOOD PREPARATION & NUTRITION

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

- To continue developing pupils' love of recipe creation and execution
- To prepare pupils for possible careers in dietetics, nutrition, health, food science and hospitality
- To equip pupils with a diverse skill set using a range of ingredients
- To develop pupils' understandings of health, nutrition, personal needs and how these impact our daily lives
- To enable students to undertake food science experiments, better understanding the properties and functions of ingredients
- To empower pupils to make good food choices by equipping them with an in-depth knowledge of nutrition, health and food provenance

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

- Have an interest in food, food science, nutrition and wellbeing and the theory that underpins these topics
- Enjoy taking creative risks with dishes, evaluating their successes and looking for ways to improve
- Recognise the role that good food preparation and nutrition play in society, and want to understand better how they can play a part in this
- Enjoy a challenge both independently and when working as a team.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

A GCSE in Food Preparation and Nutrition will empower students with the theoretical and practical knowledge to pursue further studies in the fields of nutrition, health, dietetics and food science.

Opportunities to study the subject at A-level or through vocational routes with other educational providers are available, and students will be well-prepared to explore careers in health, nutrition, product development and hospitality.

Regardless of whether students choose to pursue the subject as A-level or apprenticeship post GCSE, they will have an in-depth knowledge of the key relationship that exists between food, nutrition and health. This crucial skill's importance extends far beyond the classroom and is something they will be able to apply no matter what they choose to do in life after GCSE.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- All students are encouraged to enter the annual House cooking competitions to showcase their skills
- Masterclasses run by external professional chefs when viable
- Visits from external speakers on a range of food, health and nutrition topics
- Visit to a local produce grower
- Opportunities to support in-school events with catering requirements

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Written examination: Food Preparation and Nutrition	• Food, nutrition and health • Food science • Food safety • Food choice • Food provenance Multiple choice questions (20 marks) Five questions each with a number of sub questions (80 marks)	Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes 100 marks 50% of GCSE
Non-examined assessment (NEA)	Task 1: Food investigation (30 marks) Students' understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients. Assessed through: written or electronic report (1,500–2,000 words) including photographic evidence of the practical investigation. Task 2: Food preparation assessment (70 marks) Students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the planning, preparation, cooking, presentation of food and application of nutrition related to the chosen task. Students will prepare, cook and present a final menu of three dishes within a single period of no more than three hours, planning in advance how this will be achieved. Assessed through: Written or electronic portfolio including photographic evidence. Photographic evidence of the three final dishes must be included.	Non-examined assessment: 100 marks 50% of GCSE

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Miss K McMahon

OPTIONAL COURSE GEOGRAPHY

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The GCSE Geography programme of study at Aston is designed to excite our students' minds, challenge perception and stimulate their investigative and analytical skills. It aims to produce global citizens ready for the challenges of work in the 21st century.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

GCSE Geography would suit students who wish to learn more about the world we live in today. Geography will provide you with knowledge and transferable skills that will reward you personally and advance you professionally. No doors are closed in Geography, making it the ideal subject to choose if you wish to develop essential skills such as problem solving, decision making, synthesising ideas, identifying issues and communicating findings.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Geography closes no doors. Due to the many skills involved, it sits perfectly alongside almost every subject at GCSE and A-level. Of course, your studies and enjoyment of the subject could lead to Geography at degree level and beyond.

For future careers, Geography is great for any kind of career that involves the environment, planning, or collecting and interpreting data. Popular careers for people with geography qualifications include: town or transport planning, surveying, conservation, sustainability, waste and water management, environmental planning, tourism, and weather forecasting. The army, police, government, research organisations, law and business world also significantly value the practical research skills that geographers develop.

As geographers learn about human and population development, Geography can be highly useful for jobs in charity and international relations too.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The course includes at least two days of fieldwork in Birmingham and Carding Mill Valley, Shropshire. We also offer optional overseas trips with past trips visiting Naples, Sicily and Iceland.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1 Living with the Physical Environment	The challenge of natural hazards The living world Physical landscape in the UK Geographical skills	Written exam – 1 hr 30 minutes 88 marks – 35% of the GCSE
Paper 2 Challenges in the Human Environment	Urban issues and challenges The changing economic world The challenge of resource management	Written exam – 1 hr 30 minutes 88 marks – 35% of the GCSE
Paper 3 Geographical Applications	Issue evaluation Fieldwork Geographical skills	Written exam – 1 hr 30 minutes 76 marks – 30% of the GCSE

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mrs C Cresswell

OPTIONAL COURSE HISTORY

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The GCSE History course at Aston is designed to follow naturally on from the students' KS3 studies and enables them to study different aspects of the past.

They are encouraged to engage with key issues such as conflict, understand what drives change and be aware of how the past influences the present.

The curriculum aims to resonate with students, helping them gain new insights into the world around them.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

- Have an interest in understanding why current events happen in the way they do
- Have an interest in understanding the modern world and how it got to be like this
- Like asking questions such as "why?" and "what if..."
- Like handling, interpreting and sorting information
- Like making arguments and having debates
- Are interested in people's stories

Students who choose to study History also need to be very active learners as there is a lot of discussion that takes place in lessons. Students should be prepared for a considerable amount of writing, as many of the exam questions are extended essays and answers.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

History is a subject that complements a wide range of other choices, and is considered invaluable in gaining access to many professions. The ability to work and research independently and present a closely detailed argument are skills valued in all professional walks of life; many History students develop careers in law, journalism, broadcasting, politics, social work and public services.

History is considered to be an academically rigorous subject by universities across the country and is therefore very highly regarded no matter what career path you wish to pursue in the future. In fact, a recent Telegraph survey placed only the options MFL and History in the top ten of graduate subjects leading to employment.

History is much more than an effective stepping stone to a successful career; it is an enthralling, engaging and dynamic subject. Through the study of History, you will gain vital key skills such as problem-solving, analysis of evidence, empathy and teamwork. These skills are essential, not only for history and other subjects in school but for any career. Therefore, History can gain you entry into a wide range of careers, including television, radio, journalism, the police force, social work and the civil service. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of History helps us improve the world we live in, and hopefully, preventing us from replicating the mistakes of the past.#

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The department runs a trip in Year 11 to a theatre for a revision day, which consists of grade boosting workshops and live production to support their revision of 3 of our 4 units.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

Students will sit two exam papers at the end of Year 11, each lasting 2 hours, both worth 50% of the total grade. There will be no separate coursework or controlled assessment; this is built into the second paper (see below). In both papers, students will be asked to apply their knowledge to evaluate historical sources and challenge historical interpretations.

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1 Understanding the modern world	Section A – Germany, 1890–1945: Democracy and Dictatorship Section B - Wider world depth studies Conflict and Tension, 1918–1939	Written exam: 2 hours 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
Paper 2 Shaping the nation	Section A - Britain: Health and the people: c1000 to the present day. Section B – Norman England 1066-1100	Written exam: 2 hours 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
Eduqas	CLICK HERE	Ms M Piroşcă

OPTIONAL COURSE
MUSIC

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

Music at Aston follows the Eduquas GCSE Music syllabus which enables students to explore three core areas of Performing, Composing and Listening.

Students who choose to study music must already have a passion for performing on either an instrument or voice.

Performing and Composing make up 60% of a music GCSE in coursework, leaving one Listening paper worth 40% of the final mark

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

- Already play a musical instrument or confidently sing and have the commitment to reach grade 3-4 in year 11 to achieve maximum performance marks.
- Play in an ensemble either in school or out of school
- Who enjoy composition and want to explore this further
- Are prepared to work hard and listen to a wide range of musical styles and develop a much deeper understanding.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Studying music has the ability to enhance all learning skills as it is the only subject where you use all parts of the brain. It develops communication skills, creativity, teamwork, discipline, cultural awareness, respect for others, and self-esteem through personal accomplishment. It is also a powerful way to relieve stress, lift our mood and relax. At GCSE level it is more important to choose subjects you enjoy and excel at. If you are aiming to apply to study at a top university you need to think beyond academic achievement, you will need to demonstrate your commitment to a whole range of extra-curricular activities and life-enhancing skills. So, this subject can take you anywhere you aspire to!

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The music department is a very lively place to be with a whole range of extra-curricular activities in Key Stage 4 & 5 to choose from.

- Orchestra
- Jazz Band
- String Ensemble
- Guitar Ensemble
- Group 440 (Advanced Choir)
- Brass Ensemble

In addition to the above, we have 13 visiting instrumental teachers who teach all instruments as well as offer specialist chamber music coaching. There are further opportunities for students to form their own ensembles, small jazz groups and rock bands. And finally, as part of the course you have part of your instrumental lessons subsidised by the school

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Component 1: PERFORMING Total duration of performances: 4-6 minutes	A minimum of two pieces, one of which must be an ensemble performance of at least one minute duration. The other piece(s) may be either solo and/or ensemble.	Non-exam assessment: internally assessed, externally moderated 30% of qualification
Component 2: COMPOSING Total duration of compositions: 3-6 minutes	Two compositions, one of which must be in response to a brief set by Eduqas. The second composition is a free composition for which learners set their own brief.	Non-exam assessment: internally assessed, externally moderated 30% of qualification
Component 3: APPRAISING	This component is assessed via a listening examination based on learning from four areas of study. 1: Musical Forms and Devices 2: Music for Ensemble 3: Film Music 4: Popular Music	Written examination: 1 hour 15 minutes 40% of qualification

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr C Smith

OPTIONAL COURSE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

GCSE PE is a brilliant introduction into the academic aspect of PE and sport. It is an academically rigorous subject that concentrates on sports science while also crossing over into many other fields of study. Within sports science students develop an understanding of the human body and its reaction to exercise, the psychology of sport, biomechanics of how we move, how we learn skills and develop our abilities and what happens during a performance. GCSE PE introduces students to the wider world of sport, including how commercialisation affects sport and factors affecting participation. GCSE PE also delves into the ethical considerations around drugs, aggression, violence and cheating in sport. It teaches students about the impact sport and PE has on the wider society and the importance of sport both as a business and to the health of the nation.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

GCSE PE would suit students who currently have a good level of attainment in core PE and Games as the practical element of the course requires students to continue participating in sport beyond their lesson time. GCSE PE Students are expected to continue to contribute to the extra-curricular programme and representing the school in a range of sports. GCSE PE is a largely theory course with a practical element. It is very different to our core PE and Games offer where students work on their practical skills and students should expect to be in the theory classroom for over 80% of the course.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS:

1. Students need to be actively engaged with the PE and Games programme, and preferably the wider extra-curricular program, with attitude of at least “good” in PE in Year 9.
2. They should have represented the school in any sport during either or both of Year 8 and 9.
3. They should be at least “above” overall in PE in Year 9
4. Students must be prepared to continue playing multiple sports both for the school and or for a local club once they have started Year 10.
5. They should have a keen interest in watching and discussing sport and issues around sport and physical activity.

Your son’s PE teacher can advise if they meet the entry requirements if you are unsure.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Going beyond Year 11, GCSE PE complements A Level subjects such as; PE, Biology, Psychology, Economics, History, Physics and Sociology.

Beyond A Level it can lead to careers in: Medicine, Sports Medicine, Physiotherapy, Sports Science, Exercise Physiology, Sports Marketing, Journalism, Sports Psychology, Sports Engineering, Sports Technology, Data Analysis, Sports History and many more.

The breadth of the course covers material which is expanded further at A-Level - Links strongly with several A level courses such as Biology (anatomy and physiology) Physics (biomechanics) Psychology (sports psychology), to name a few.

Universities appreciate GCSE PE as it shows that a student has a breadth of knowledge has also played sport to a high level therefore it shows the ability to commit to teams and long-term goals. As well as an indicator of them having developed the ability in the “softer skills” such as communication which are required to be successful.

There are clear links to numerous future careers such as : Sport science, Physiotherapy, Sports therapy, Fitness industry, Sports management & development.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Lots of opportunities to play sport within school in their Games programme
- Opportunities for leadership experience through the sports partnership links.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1 The human body and physiology	Applied anatomy and physiology Movement analysis Physical training Use of data	Written examination 1hr15 mins 78 marks 30%
Paper 2 Socio-cultural influences and well-being in physical activity and sport	Sports psychology Socio-cultural influences Health,fitness and well-being Use of data	Written examination 1hr15 mins 78 marks 30%
Paper 3 NEA – Practical performance in physical activity and sport	Practical performance in three different physical activities in the role of the player/performer (one team, one individual and a third in either a team or individual activity) Analysis and evaluation of performance to bring about improvement	Internally assessed Externally moderated by AQA 100 marks 40%

EXAM BOARD	SPECIFICATION	COURSE LEADER
AQA	CLICK HERE	Mr M Wilcock

OPTIONAL COURSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE OVERVIEW AND AIMS:

The aims of this GCSE course are to ask big philosophical questions about various topics related to religion. In religion and life we ask: what gives life its value, and how might this impact our decisions about medical ethics? In religion, crime and punishment, we ask: should the death penalty be abolished, and what is the role of forgiveness in criminal justice? In religion, human rights and social justice, we question: do we currently live in a just society? Are there any limits to freedom of expression or belief? And with revelation and the existence of God, we explore if revelation is to be believed, what we know about God, and if there are any reasons for doubting revelation, does this mean such a God cannot exist? As well as exploring these questions, we learn in depth about the faith, beliefs and practices of two major world religions – Christianity and Islam.

Those students who do not elect to study RS at GCSE will still study our Core RS course – one period a week of RS where students study the historical development of the major religions around the world, before applying these studies to big social and philosophical questions later in the course. Students will study the 'Big 6' religions as well as diverse traditions including Baha'i, Daoism, Jainism, and many more belief systems, both in class and independently at home.

Those who choose to study the GCSE course will also attend the core lessons once a week – these two courses are designed to complement one another, and students will develop a detailed and rich understanding of religious belief and history, philosophy, and social issues if they elect to study both.

THIS GCSE COURSE WOULD SUIT CANDIDATES WHO:

... are interested in exploring the worldviews of diverse groups of people around the world, those who are interested in debating and discussing deep questions and critically thinking about key issues in today's society and systems of belief, are interested in exploring key ethical issues relevant to contemporary British life, and those students seeking to develop a greater understanding of the philosophies of the diverse people they are sure to encounter in their futures.

WHERE CAN THIS SUBJECT TAKE YOU:

Of course, those who enjoy the course are encouraged to consider A-level Philosophy, but beyond the specific subject knowledge of Christianity and Islam, Religious Studies gives you skills not only in detailed explanation of complex ideas, but in critical analysis and evaluation of ideas and arguments, as well as close textual analysis. Such skills are transferrable to a range of subjects and future degrees/careers including: law, engineering, computer science, politics, economics, mathematics, medicine, as well as of course academic pathways in humanities, theology, religion and philosophy.

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Each year the seven best philosophers in each form in year 10 are entered into our annual House Philosophy competition and Philosophy Morning. In the past this has been run with guests from Warwick University, York University and the Panpsycast Podcast. Feedback from students involved has been universally positive each year. In Year11, we participate in the inter-school Philosophy competition between King Edwards School called the Philosopher's Stone Competition, and we also participate in the Philosothon, a philosophy competition between King Edwards Schools. As well as encouraging wider reading through our reading lists and study packs, we also try to get Religious Studies students involved in as many Religious Studies/Philosophy conferences/ guest speakers as possible. Past visits have included Oxford University, University of Birmingham, and the annual University of Warwick philosophy and religion conference.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND ASSESSMENTS:

PAPER	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Component 1	Christianity beliefs, teachings and practices. Islam beliefs, teachings and practices.	50%, Written exam 1 hr 45 mins
Component 2	The existence of God and revelation Religion and life Human rights and social justice Religion, crime and punishment	50%, Written exam 1 hr 45 mins

KEY STAGE 4 PASTORAL TEAM

PASTORAL LEADER

Mr S Hall (Assistant Headteacher) | s.hall@ast.kevibham.org

YEAR LEADERS

Mr M Amin (Head of Year 10) | m.amin@ast.kevibham.org
Mrs H Mound (Head of Year 9) | h.mound@ast.kevibham.org

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