



Birchwood High School

Year 8 Options Information Advice and Guidance 2021

Year

8

Options





Welcome to the Options Process

Dear Year 8 Students, Parents and Carers

Birchwood continues this year with its excellent academic and diverse curriculum as you move on to our three-year Key Stage 4. We want to be clear with you about why we are doing this. Our reasons are based on powerful national research which shows that students who spend time gaining a deep, rich learning experience will achieve better results in their time at school and enjoy the experience far more. Studying a GCSE for three years rather than two means that there is also time for teachers to go into more depth on key topics and organise educational trips and visits where required. This has clearly been a vital component for our existing GCSE students as we emerge from the disruption of lockdown measures and has recently been recognised by OFSTED as a major benefit for schools adopting this model.

We also feel that on studying the intake of students, you as Year 8 students are more than capable of accessing the requirements of Key Stage 4 and that your teachers have planned a staged approach that will mean that no-one is left behind as you make your way to Year 11.

In this booklet we have aimed to set out as much information, advice and guidance as we feel is relevant and of course our website has further information available. Whilst students in Year 9 will have to study English, Maths and Science, there is plenty of choice elsewhere across the curriculum to enable students to choose the subjects they are good at and enjoy. We carefully establish a suitable route for our students through the curriculum plan model.

Of course, in a 'normal' school year we would be inviting parents into school for an options evening to discuss all of the above. As you recognise, unfortunately this remains impossible for us to do this academic year. Therefore, on Thursday 29 April we will launch our virtual Options Evening and we hope that you take advantage of the presentations on the school website, as well as the wealth of guidance information on the website and contained within this booklet.

During PHSCE lessons we will be giving students guidance on how their option choices can be linked to future career plans and we will also be offering taster lessons for Year 8 students during curriculum time in May, which will allow them to get a feel for new subjects and their requirements.

Year 8 have already had Parents Evening this year, as well as a set of interims in February when you were able to check progress in individual subject areas which will help with decision making. Furthermore, as you hopefully are aware, you can contact us by e-mail, 'phone or in person.

The deadline for applications is Friday 28 May. We have purposefully built in this long period of time as we want you to be happy with the choices you make and feel confident that you have made the right decisions.

Chris Ingate

Dr C Ingate
Principal



Dear Year 8 Students

As you may well know, the process of choosing your examination subjects is fast approaching. It is vitally important that you dedicate a great deal of time and thought into this process because it will shape what you study in the next three academic years and potentially influence further choices in your future. It is my wish that you complete Year 11 with the best set of results you can, because high quality qualifications can open doors for you in terms of further education, give future employers a clear picture of your strengths and abilities, as well as providing you with the knowledge and skills required for the modern working environment. Your decisions now are really important.

Many subjects are compulsory as they are seen to be vital for your future success, but where you need to choose, choose wisely. Some suggestions:

- Think about what you have been discussing in form time regarding future choices and your aspirations.
- Recognise the foundational nature of level 2 (GCSE and level 2 BTEC) options and note that if you don't take a particular subject at this level, it usually won't prevent you from studying it at a higher level in the future.
- Seek advice and email or contact your teachers and tutors through Teams, talk to parents, older brothers and sisters, and students currently taking the courses. Find out what the courses are like but bear in mind that curriculum content does change.
- Think about which combination of subjects might give you the best chance of examination success.
- Avoid thinking about what your friends may be choosing – this is about you and your future.
- Choose your options based on the course content, not the teacher teaching it currently – they might not be the one teaching you.
- Please think carefully about your reserve choice. Whilst the school will do its best to get you your first choices, it isn't always possible.

You now have a month before your option forms have to be submitted. Please use this time wisely as it is unlikely that changes will be possible once the deadline has passed.

Once you have made your choices, please do still continue to work to the best of your ability in all subjects, including those that you may not be continuing. The learning you acquire will also remain with you for life.

In line with all of this it is critical that you are attending school and are on time to your lessons. Without this you will not be able to make informed choices and you may end up starting GCSE subjects with gaps in your knowledge.

I wish you all the very best in your decision making!

Chris Ruggins

Head of Year 8
Mr C Ruggins

Thursday 29 April 2021 Year 8 Options Evening Online
Friday 28 May 2021 Year 8 Options Deadline

Support available

Tutors / Subject Teachers / Head of Year



Key Stage 4 Curriculum Plan explained

At Birchwood we operate a three year KS4 (Key Stage 4), meaning students select their GCSE option choices in Year 8 to commence study in Year 9. We believe that our broad and balanced curriculum and appropriate weighting to EBacc subjects means that students can follow a wide range of subjects including The Arts, PE and Technology related subjects.

This model is also designed to enable students to develop deeper knowledge and understanding of their chosen GCSE subjects, ensuring that students are challenged in Year 9 to build firm foundations for their further GCSE study in Years 10 and 11. Studying GCSEs over three years also means that enrichment opportunities including educational trips are provided.

A comprehensive package of advice and guidance is in place to help and support students through this process. We seek to ensure all students have access to a wide range of subjects, whilst equipping them with a core of subjects tailored to their future progression beyond GCSE.

To enable this progression there are three different curriculum plans for students to choose from

Curriculum Plan 1 is designed to cater to students following the EBacc suite of subjects. This includes the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Students are also required to choose a languages option (French, Spanish or German) and a humanities option (History or Geography). They are able to supplement this with two further option choices.

Curriculum Plan 2 students also have the opportunity to study for an EBacc suite of GCSEs should they choose to do so. This includes the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. Students are required to choose a languages option (French, Spanish or German) OR a humanities option (History or Geography). They are able to supplement this with three further option choices.

Curriculum Plan 3 is designed to cater for a small number of students who will benefit from a more tailored suite of subjects. This includes the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. They are able to supplement this with three further option choices. However, students also have the opportunity to study for an EBacc suite of GCSEs should they choose to do so.

All students will receive an additional core entitlement to PSHCE. This encompasses elements of RS, Citizenship and PSHCE. This will be a non - examined unit. All students will also retain an entitlement to core PE.

In addition, we would expect all students to avail themselves of the extensive extra-curricular programme we have in place at Birchwood to supplement their option choices at GCSE. This is designed to ensure students are able to continue their development in areas they may not continue to study at GCSE.

Whatever their choices, rest assured that at Birchwood your child can enjoy a wide and varied programme, both as part of their taught curriculum and their extra-curricular activities, ensuring that they are fully equipped for the next stage in their educational and personal development.

Steve Connor

Mr S Connor
Assistant Principal
Good luck.



SUBJECT & COURSE INFORMATION

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**Course Description**

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

The subject aims to develop:

- *Creative and imaginative ability and the practical skills for engaging with and for communicating and expressing original ideas, feelings and meanings in Fine Art.*
- *Investigative, analytical, experimental and interpretative capabilities, aesthetic understanding and critical and enquiring minds, with increasing independence.*
- *Cultural knowledge and understanding of Fine Art, craft and design and of the media and technologies used in different times, contexts and societies.*
- *Personal attributes including self-confidence, resilience, perseverance, self-discipline and commitment.*

Type of Assessment

Component 1 Art and Design Personal Portfolio (60%): Students will produce a series of work based around set topics and will aim to demonstrate exploration, research, acquisition of techniques and skills, including a finished piece(s). The current topics are Still Life Story and Layers.

Component 2 Art and Design Externally set assignment (40%): Students receive an externally set thematic starting point from which they produce a personal response. Previous topics have been Reflection; Beginning and/or End; Past, Present and/or Future. Students will be given a period of time in which to plan and prepare as determined by the centre. Students will be given **ten** hours of controlled time in which to work on realising their ideas by creating a final piece.

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

Special Requirements

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

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/art-and-design-2016.html>



Course Title

Art and Design Foundation Year - Fine Art (Year 9)

Course Description

This pre-GCSE year will build up a technical handbook that students can refer to during their GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.

The year aims to develop student's confidence and skills in a broad exploration of Fine Art techniques. The students will build on skills and techniques learnt at KS3 and introduce new techniques such as watercolour painting and lino printing. They will become more confident at observational drawing, painting, photography, printing and clay building.

The students will explore the main art genres of still-life, portraits, landscapes and figure drawing, providing technical knowledge to refer to during their GCSE course.

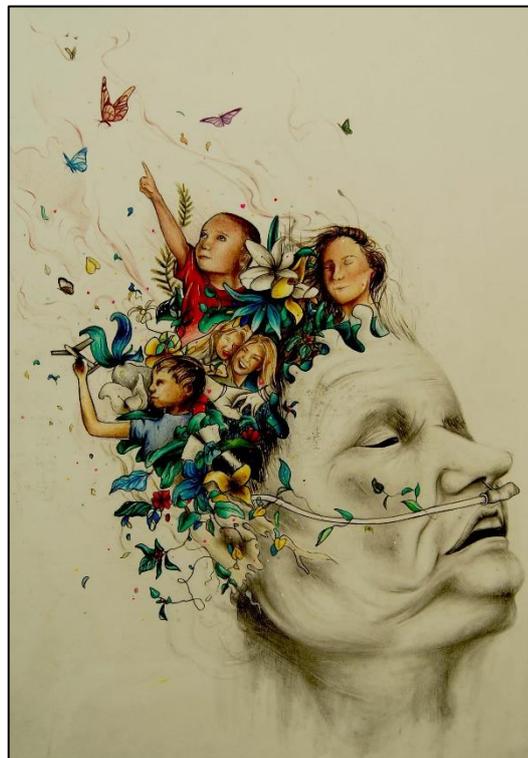
The key skill of critical analysis ensuring the confidence to discuss students own work and that of others will also be developed during the year. The understanding of how to construct a project is also covered during the year so that each student is fully equipped to tackle their GCSE coursework and exam units.

Type of Assessment

Students work will be assessed regularly as per the Faculty policy.

Marking of home learning will be on a regular basis with specific targets set for the students to act on and make improvements to their work.

Class work will also be marked as part of their ongoing skills development.



**Course Description**

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

Students must complete the following three components:

Component No.	Component Name	Component type	Component Weighing
1	Exploring Enterprise	Internal assessed assignment	30%
2	Planning for and Running an Enterprise	Internal assessment assignment	30%
3	Promotion and Finance for Enterprise	External and Synoptic (case study and activities)	40%

Type of Assessment

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Further Vocational and Academic Qualifications

BTEC Level 3 in Business

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-tech-awards/enterprise.html>





Course Title

Exam Board

Computer Science GCSE

OCR

Course Description

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

Other topics that students will study are:

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

Type of Assessment

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

Special Requirements

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/computer-science-j277-from-2020/>





Course Title

Exam Board

Dance GCSE

AQA

Course Description

Component 1: Performance and choreography – practical examination

Component 2: Dance appreciation – written examination

Type of Assessment

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

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

Special Requirements

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

Students should only really consider taking Dance if they are working at a level 5 or above in English.

Career and Progression Opportunities

A Level Dance

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/dance/gcse/dance-8236/specification-at-a-glance>



**Course Description**

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

In years 9 and 10 students will be developing skills to prepare them for their GCSE coursework (Non Examined Assessment). Students will work with Timbers, Metals, Polymers, Textile and Papers & Board. They will create several products that will prepare them for their next year and to develop skills to support their portfolio. They will explore a range of designing techniques from freehand sketching through to CAD as well as developing research and analysis skills.

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

If students have a particularly strong desire to focus on Textiles in their final NEA project, this can be indicated on the Options form. However, all students will study all aspects of the syllabus.

Type of Assessment

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

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





Course Description

Students who choose GCSE Drama will be embarking upon a three year journey that will provide them with a broad depth of theatrical knowledge and experience. In Year 9, students will lay the foundations of this knowledge by seeing and evaluating live theatre performances as well as producing their own original pieces. Students are expected to work collaboratively with others in a practical context and also complete written work and meet specific deadlines.

Once in Year 10 students begin the GCSE course. The course is made up of three components, one that focuses on devising, one on performing a text and one that focuses on practical understanding of a performance text.

Throughout the course, students will develop a multitude of skills, including collaboration, communication and an understanding of how to amend and refine work in order to make a smooth transition into their next level of study.

The topics we explore in Drama are diverse. We reflect on social and cultural issues and encourage students to develop personal opinions and allow time for these opinions to resonate and influence the practical work that is created. Studying Drama enables students to behave truthfully under imaginary circumstances and will give them experiences they will always remember.

Type of Assessment

60% of the course is practical with 40% as a written exam.

Component 1: Devising	40% - Internally assessed practical and written work
Component 2: Performance from a text	20% - Externally assessed practical
Component 3: Theatre Makers in Practice	40% - Written exam 1 hour 45 minutes

Special Requirements

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/drama-2016.html>





Course Description

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

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

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

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

Type of Assessment

External Assessment: Written Examinations: 70%

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

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

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

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

Controlled Assessment: 30%

Component 3: Production

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

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

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

**Course Description**

In Year 9 students prepare and cook a wide variety of products and they gradually build up their skills when following and adapting recipes, building on skills learnt at Key Stage 3, making main meals, desserts, cakes, snacks, biscuits and bread products. In making this variety of products, they will build up their making skills, for example, the preparation and cooking of meat, fish and poultry, fruits and vegetables, rubbing in, whisking, sauce making, making and handling different pastries and dough. Knife skills and meat skills are covered. Theory work will be based on nutrition, balanced diet, macro, micro-nutrients and the functions of some of the basic ingredients.

In Year 10 students will start their GCSE. It is expected that students will learn about safety and hygiene related to food preparation, specific nutritional needs for target groups together with functions of ingredients, the science behind the making of the individual food products and food safety. They will also learn about the food provenance (where food comes from) and environmental issues associated with the foods that we eat, e.g. sustainable foods, food miles and fair trade. It is expected that students will select their coursework topic from a range of assignment briefs set by the exam board; the length and type of coursework is still to be decided.

At the beginning of Year 11 the students will have to complete Assessment 1, which is The Food Investigation Assessment and is worth 15% of the total marks. This will include research, planning, investigation into the working characteristics and the functional and chemical properties of ingredients. This is followed by Assessment 2 which is The Food Preparation Assessment and is worth 35% of the total qualification.

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

Type of Assessment

50% Coursework; 50% Exam (Single Tier)

Special Requirements

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

This qualification supports progression into further study (including Food Technology A Level) or training. Food Technology is the basis of all food product development. This subject is especially useful if you are considering a career in areas associated with hospitality, leisure, health and fitness, food manufacturers or retailers, marketing or journalism, public health, dietetics or teaching. Visit www.foodmanjobs.co.uk to see some of the range of careers available. This shows just a few of the opportunities available for Food Technology students. In addition this can lead on to further courses or employment in the Catering industry.

Link to Syllabus

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/food/gcse/food-preparation-and-nutrition-8585>



Course Title

Exam Board

French GCSE

Edexcel

Course Description

The French GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The GCSE course will cover topics within themes including 'Identity and Culture', 'Local area, holiday and travel', 'School', 'Future aspirations, study and work' and 'International and global dimension'.

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

Students will focus on grammar within topics and on building their own, personal grammar reference book starting in Year 9. Coupled with their topic based studies, students will continue to work towards their GCSE qualification, using French in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students enjoy working independently, in pairs or small groups.

In Year 9, there is an opportunity to take part in a study visit to Northern France and there may be other opportunities to attend evening events such as the French Film Festival in Year 11. These trips add to the enrichment of our programme.

Type of Assessment

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

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

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

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

Special Requirements

Students who are taking courses leading to this qualification at Key Stage 4 should normally have followed the corresponding subject at Key Stage 3.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/french-2016.html>

We use the textbook 'Studio' and subscribe to Active Learn which complements this course.

**Course Description**

Geography is an exciting and dynamic course. The topics studied are contemporary and engaging providing students with an interest in different places, people and environments, whilst ensuring an appreciation of the geography of the UK in the 21st century. A wide range of topics are covered which include both the human and physical elements of the subject. Through the study of Our Natural World (Unit 1) learners will gain an appreciation of the natural world around them including tectonic and weather hazards, climate change, the UK's distinctive landscapes and the global ecosystems which support life on the planet. Unit 2 explores the complexities of People and Society through studying why more than half of the world's population live in urban areas, the dynamic nature of development, the UK in the 21st century and human reliance on key resources for survival and economic gain. Unit 3 is a skills based exam involving a decision making exercise which is based on the content and skills learnt from Units 1 and 2.

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

Geography GCSE allows students to actively engage in the processes of Geography, to develop as effective and independent learners, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds. Geographical and fieldwork skills ensure that learners become both adaptable and resilient to prepare them for the future.

Type of Assessment

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

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

Special Requirements

Compulsory residential two day UK field trip.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to the Syllabus

<http://www.ocr.org.uk>





Course Title

Exam Board

German GCSE

Edexcel

Course Description

The German GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The GCSE course will cover topics within themes including 'Identity and Culture', 'Local area, holiday and travel', 'School', 'Future aspirations, study and work' and 'International and global dimension'.

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

Students will focus on grammar within topics and on building their own, personal grammar reference book starting in Year 9. Coupled with their topic based studies, students will continue to work towards their GCSE qualification, using German in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students enjoy working independently, in pairs or small groups.

During the course, there will hopefully be an opportunity to take part in an exchange with our partner school in Ahrweiler and there may be other opportunities to attend evening events such as German film events in Year 11. These trips add to the enrichment of our programme.

Type of Assessment

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

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

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

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

Special Requirements

Students who are taking courses leading to this qualification at Key Stage 4 should normally have followed the corresponding subject at Key Stage 3.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/demo/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/german-2016.html>

We use the textbook 'Stimmt!' and subscribe to Active Learn which complements this course.

**Course Description**

This GCSE History course covers a huge breadth of time and topics which students should find both stimulating and challenging. The course aims to build on and complement, rather than repeat, the topics students have considered in KS3 and will broaden and deepen their understanding of the past and the impact it has had on our present.

Crime and Punishment Through Time

In studying this fascinating (and at times gory) topic, students will understand how the development of crime and punishment were linked with the key features of society in Britain between 1000AD and the Present, in doing this they should develop an understanding of the nature and process of change. They will discover how crimes have changed and also how and why the police and law and order systems have developed in this country by considering the way society has evolved over the last thousand years!

Early Elizabethan England

This in-depth study focuses on England between 1558 and 1588 and is a detailed look at a very different time period to our own. Students will consider how Elizabeth governed her country and controlled religion, the threats she faced both at home and abroad as well as considering how Elizabethan society adapted in this age of exploration. This builds on KS3 knowledge and is excellent preparation for our KS5 course!

Weimar and Nazi Germany

By investigating Germany in 'Interwar Years' students will assess the origins and challenges faced by German government after WWI, they will consider Hitler's rise to power and explore how a democratic society was subverted and what life was like in a Nazi police state. This investigation of the early C20th links heavily with our KS3 course and will help students to understand the democratic and multicultural country we are lucky enough to live in today.

Superpower Relations and The Cold War

This unit investigates the origins of the Cold War and examines some key crises including the Berlin Wall, Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan & the Cuban Missile Crisis. It aims to help explain key events of the C20th and consider how the world survived the later C20th without nuclear armageddon.

Type of Assessment

This specification will be assessed and examined by three exams in Year 11.

Career and Progression Opportunities

History plays an important role in the wider curriculum and will help give a broad education to students at Birchwood. A Level History is a very well regarded 'facilitating subject' which is academically challenging as well as highly interesting and at Birchwood, performs very well academically. In recent years a significant number of students have gone on to read History at university.

Qualifications in History are highly regarded by employers as the skills generated by its study, such as research, explanation, argument, analysis, source evaluation and the testing of evidence are eminently transferable to many disciplines from the law to customer services.

A qualification in History can lead to careers as researchers, such work drawing on their skills in evaluating and analysing documentary evidence. Employment can also be found within government departments and agencies, not-for-profit organisations and associations. Positions can include Policy Advisors, who serve as planners, evaluators and policy analysts. Additionally, with specialist training, History can lead to professions in Cultural Resources Management and Historic Preservation. Other careers include: Lawyer, Teacher, Librarian, Museum Curator, Archivist, Genealogist, Records Manager, Detective, Journalist and Information Officer. Though the transferrable skills History provides can lead anywhere!

Link to the Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/history-2016.html>

**Course Description**

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

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

Type of Assessment

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

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

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

Further Vocational and Academic Qualifications

BTEC Level 3 Qualification in Information Technology.

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/btec-tec-awards/information-technology/2017/specification-and-sample-assessments/Spec-BTEC-L1-2TECHAWD-DIT.pdf>





Course Description

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

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

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

Type of Assessment

External Assessment: Written Examinations: 70%

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Controlled Assessment: 30%

Component 3: Creating Media Products

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/media-studies/gcse/>



Course Description

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

Type of Assessment

There are three papers making up the final mark:

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

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

Special Requirements

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

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

www.ocr.org.uk



**Course Description**

This is the same course as GCSE Music, however the focus will be on producing coursework using ICT technology rather than traditional instruments or singing. Over the course students will study in detail 'My Music', the Classical Concerto, Music from around the world, Film Music and Pop/Rock music up to the present day. The course encourages the development of aural perception, musical sensitivity and imaginative response. Social and personal skills are also developed through the creation and performance of music using ICT skills. This could be within the music industry, academic study or for personal interest. The course will give students lifelong enjoyment and understanding of music as a listener or performer at any level.

Type of Assessment

There are three papers making up the final mark:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Integrated Portfolio ('My Music' ICT performance & free composition) | 30% |
| • Practical Component (ICT performance & composition set by exam board) | 30% |
| • Listening and appraising exam | 40% |

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

Special Requirements

It should be noted that a good level of competency as a musician is required for this course and an interest in creating music using ICT. Piano lessons are recommended to help students record using MIDI keyboards and can be subsidised 25% through the school.

Career and Progression Opportunities

The course offers a good grounding for those wishing to go on and take music courses post 16. It is also a great way of starting out on a career in the recording industry and sound engineering.

Link to Syllabus

www.ocr.org.uk





Course Description

The course is divided into four components:

Component 1: Fitness and Body Systems (36%)

Component 2: Health and Performance (24%)

Component 3: Practical Performance (30%)

Component 4: Personal Exercise Programme (10%)

Type of Assessment

Component 1 is assessed as a written exam at the end of the course. The paper is out of 90 marks and is 1 hour and 45 minutes long.

Component 2 is assessed as a written exam at the end of the course. The paper is out of 75 marks and is 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

Component 3 is the practical assessment of three chosen practical activities. This is internally marked and externally moderated. The students' practical activities are assessed at the beginning of the summer term of Year 11.

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

Special Requirements

There are no formal requirements although a history of participation in extra-curricular clubs inside and/or outside of school is preferred.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

A Level Physical Education (OCR)

BTEC Level 3 Diploma Sport

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

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

Link to Syllabus

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/physical-education-and-sport.html>





Course Description

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

The units studied will be broken down into three sections:

- The study of Christianity
- The study of Islam
- Philosophy of Religion and Applied Ethics

Type of Assessment

Assessment will be in the form of written examinations.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/religious-studies/gcse/>





Course Description

The Spanish GCSE is a dynamic, highly motivating course which strives to enthuse students and enable them to communicate effectively in the language. The GCSE course will cover topics within themes including 'Identity and Culture', 'Local area, holiday and travel', 'Future aspirations, study and work' and 'International and global dimension'.

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

Students will focus on grammar within topics and on building their own, personal grammar reference book starting in Year 9. Coupled with their topic based studies, students will continue to work towards their GCSE qualification, using Spanish in all four skills effectively in a variety of situations. The examined skills are in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Students enjoy working independently, in pairs or small groups.

In Year 9, students will have the opportunity to take part in a study visit to Madrid, Spain. There may be other opportunities to attend evening events such as the London Spanish Film Festival in Year 11. These trips add to the enrichment of our programme.

Type of Assessment

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

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

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

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

Special Requirements

Students who are taking courses leading to this qualification at Key Stage 4 should normally have followed the corresponding subject at Key Stage 3.

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/spanish-2016.html>

We use the textbook '¡Viva!' and subscribe to Active Learn which complements this course.



Course Title

Exam Board

Statistics GCSE

Edexcel

Course Description

Statistics is a two year GCSE course which complements GCSE Mathematics. The main aim of this course is to increase students' awareness of the role that statistics play in everyday life. Topics include Hypotheses, Data Collection and Comparisons, Histograms, Correlation, and Box Plots. Probability is also taught in depth and mathematical models such as the Binomial Distribution and Normal Distribution are covered to tackle the likelihood of everyday events occurring. Students who are able in Mathematics to GCSE level do have an advantage if opting for this course. However, those who do not have an aptitude for the core subject mentioned can still often enjoy Statistics. This is mainly due to the fact that there is very little algebra and equations work in the curriculum. It is nevertheless essential that students enjoy working with numbers and analysing data if they decide to choose this course.

Type of Assessment

Course Structure

Higher Level: Two Written Exams: Paper 1 (1 hour 30 minutes, 50%), Paper 2 (1 hour 30 minutes, 50%) (Grades 9 - 1)

Career and Progression Opportunities

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

Link to Syllabus

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/statistics-2017.html>



Course Title, Exam Board and Link to Syllabus

Course Title	Exam Board
Art and Design GCSE - Fine Art	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/art-and-design-2016.html	

Course Title	Exam Board
Business BTEC First Award Level 1/2 in Enterprise	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-tech-awards/enterprise.html	

Course Title	Exam Board
Computer Science GCSE	OCR
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/computer-science-j277-from-2020/	

Course Title	Exam Board
Dance GCSE	AQA
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/dance/gcse/dance-8236/specification-at-a-glance	

Course Title	Exam Board
Design and Technology GCSE	AQA
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/design-and-technology/gcse/design-and-technology-8552	

Course Title	Exam Board
Drama GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/drama-2016.html	

Course Title	Exam Board
Film Studies	EDUQAS
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/film-studies/	

Course Title	Exam Board
Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE	AQA
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/food/gcse/food-preparation-and-nutrition-8585	

Course Title	Exam Board
French GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/french-2016.html	

Course Title	Exam Board
Geography GCSE	OCR B
Link to Syllabus	
http://www.ocr.org.uk	

Course Title	Exam Board
German GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/demo/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/german-2016.html	

Course Title	Exam Board
History GCSE	OCR
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/history-2016.html	
Course Title	Exam Board
ICT BTEC	OCR
Link to Syllabus	
https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/cambridge-nationals/creative-imedia-level-1-2-award-certificate-j807-j817/	
Course Title	Exam Board
Media Studies GCSE	EDUQAS
Link to Syllabus	
http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/media-studies/gcse/	
Course Title	Exam Board
Music GCSE	OCR
Link to Syllabus	
www.ocr.org.uk	
Course Title	Exam Board
Music Technology NCFE Level 2 Technical Award	NCFE
Link to Syllabus	
www.ocr.org.uk	
Course Title	Exam Board
Physical Education GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/physical-education-and-sport.html	
Course Title	Exam Board
Religious Studies GCSE	EDUQAS
Link to Syllabus	
http://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/religious-studies/gcse/	
Course Title	Exam Board
Spanish GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/spanish-2016.html	
Course Title	Exam Board
Statistics GCSE	Edexcel
Link to Syllabus	
https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/statistics-2017.html	



Key Stage 4 Curriculum Plans

Curriculum Plan 1

This plan is designed for students who are capable in languages and have the appropriate levels to pursue the English Baccalaureate subjects in full. Students would study for 9 or 10 GCSE level subjects depending on Science group.

Core	Core	Core	Core	Core	Block	Block	Block	Block
English Language English Literature	Maths	PE (Non Examined)	Triple or Double Science	PSHCE (Non Examined)	History Geography	French German Spanish	Music Music (Technology focus) Art Drama Dance French German Spanish Statistics PE History Geography Religious Studies Film Studies OR Media Studies Design & Technology Food Preparation & Nutrition Computer Science OR ICT BTEC Business (Enterprise) BTEC (Maximum two tech to be taken)	

Curriculum Plan 2

Students on this curriculum plan must choose either a language or a humanities subject. They are also free to follow the English Baccalaureate subjects in full should they wish to do so. Students would study for 9 or 10 GCSE level subjects.

Core	Core	Core	Core	Core	Block	Block	Block	Block
English Language English Literature	Maths	PE (Non Examined)	Triple or Double Science	PSHCE (Non Examined)	History Geography French	Music Music (Technology focus) Art Drama Dance French Statistics PE History Geography Religious Studies Film Studies OR Media Studies Design & Technology Food Preparation & Nutrition Computer Science OR ICT BTEC Business (Enterprise) BTEC (Maximum two tech to be taken)		

Curriculum Plan 3

This curriculum plan is reserved for students who may require some additional support at GCSE and are not yet at the level to follow the English Baccalaureate subjects in full. These students will also study for up to 9 GCSE / BTEC subjects.

Core	Core	Core	Core	Core	Block	Block	Block	Block
English Language English Literature	Maths	PE (Non Examined)	Double Science	PSHCE (Non Examined)				Music Music (Technology focus) Art Drama Dance PE History Geography Religious Studies Film Studies OR Media Studies Design & Technology Food Preparation & Nutrition Business (Enterprise) BTEC ICT (BTEC)