

TBSHS

FOUNDATION YEAR OPTIONS BOOKLET



Background

Over the past few years the educational landscape has changed significantly. There is a clear shift towards “more demanding” GCSEs and A levels.

Changes to GCSE

There have been significant changes to GCSEs that will affect your child. The main changes are:

- A **grading scale of 9 to 1** will be used, with 9 being the top grade. This will allow greater differentiation between students and will help distinguish the new GCSEs from previous versions.
- **Assessment will be mainly by exam**, with other types of assessment used only where they are needed to test essential skills. This means there will be less coursework required.
- There will be new, **more demanding content**, which has been developed by government and the exam boards.
- Courses will be designed for two years of study – **they will no longer be divided into different modules and students will take all their exams in one period at the end of their course.**
- Exams can only be split into ‘foundation tier’ and ‘higher tier’ if one exam paper does not give all students the opportunity to show their knowledge and abilities.
- Resit opportunities will only be available each November in English Language and Maths and students must be over 16 years of age to sit these.

The diagram below shows how the new gradings compare with the previous ones. Please note that there are now 3 grades (4, 5 & 6) that cover C and B grades.

NEW GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE									
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	U
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.■ Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as achieve an A and above.■ The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.									
CURRENT GCSE GRADING STRUCTURE									
A*		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U

The English Baccalaureate Performance Measure

Currently, a student can ‘achieve’ the ‘E-Bacc’ by gaining a 9-4 grade in each of the following subject categories:

- GCSE English Language (not Literature)
- GCSE Mathematics
- Two GCSE Sciences – two of the three ‘separate’ sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics) *or* GCSE Trilogy Science *or* Computer Science with one other GCSE Science (but where at least two have been studied)
- Either GCSE Geography *or* GCSE History – but not Religious Studies
- A GCSE in a modern or ancient foreign language, French, German or Latin

However, this is not a qualification in itself, but more of a suite of qualifications. Uncertainty remains as to how this suite of qualifications will be viewed by universities and employers in the future. There has to date been no clear indication from universities (and particularly from the ‘top’ universities) as to whether the E-Bacc will become a requirement or expectation for any universities or degree courses. The Government’s view is that over 90% of students should be entered for the E-Bacc by 2025.

Overall, we recommend that Year 8 students and their parents consider the English Baccalaureate as an important factor that they should bear in mind when choosing foundation options later this term and GCSE options for Years 10 & 11. In particular students who are eventually likely to apply for places at the ‘top’ universities should certainly consider very carefully a course combination that meets the full E-Bacc criteria, and any decision not to opt for an E-Bacc eligible course should be taken for informed reasons.

Changes to A-level

In 2007 the Government stated that students must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday if they were born on or after 1st September 1997.

The options are:

- full-time education – e.g. at a school or college
- an apprenticeship or traineeship
- part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

Many of your children will choose to stay on at school and study A Levels. Although this seems like a long way into the future it is worth mentioning that there have also been changes to A- level qualifications to make them more demanding. Here is a summary of the changes:

- **AS qualifications and A levels are 'decoupled'**
In March 2013, the Government decided that AS qualifications should be separated from A levels, making them completely freestanding. At the moment, although AS qualifications are awarded in their own right, their assessments also contribute to students' final A level grades (with an intended weighting of 50 per cent).
- **AS qualifications and A levels will be assessed at the end of the course**
- **In principle, all AS qualifications will be exam-only**

The Foundation Options – Year 9

As a result of the National changes we decided to change the way we structure our curriculum from September 2015 onwards. These changes will affect your child as they move from Year 8 into Year 9. The curriculum structure will be as follows:

- We will retain a two year Key Stage 3 but revert back to a two year Key Stage 4. Year 9 will become a GCSE Foundation year where students will learn the skills they require to successfully complete their GCSEs in Years 10 & 11
- Students will narrow down the number of subjects they will study in Year 9 but will make their final GCSE subject choices to continue studying in Year 10

The Core Foundation Year Curriculum

In Year 9 all students will continue to study the following subjects:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- A modern Foreign Language
- Computer Science
- Physical Education
- Citizenship

Students will then be able to make some choices as to which subjects they would like to continue studying. The tables below demonstrate these choices.

Choose 2 from
Geography
History
Religious Studies

Choose 2 from
Art
Business Education
Design Technology
Drama
Music

Many of the subjects in the tables above are subjects that your child will already be familiar with. However, some will be new to your child and therefore the next section contains a brief overview of what will be taught.

Business Education

During the foundation year your child would learn the basics of setting up their own business. Key topics will include: market research, creating a business plan, creating a financial forecast and doing a break even graph. This would then lead into a focus on profitability and how to increase sales and lower costs. A case study would then be completed analysing the performance of a local business.

The GCSE Options – Year 10

In February/March of Year 9 your child will make a further series of choices to decide which subjects he wishes to continue to study to GCSE level.

Your child must study the following subjects:

English Language (and possibly English Literature), Maths, Science, one Modern Foreign Language (French or German) and one Humanity (Geography, History or Religious Studies)

Your child will then be able to make **two additional choices**. The choice of options subjects may change, but at present, we envisage offering the choice of:

A second Modern Foreign Language (French or German)

A second Humanity (Geography, History or RS)

Art

Business Studies

Computer Science

Design Technology

Drama

Music

Physical Education

Separate Science – Biology, Chemistry, Physics

The Timeline

Wednesday 9th February – Foundation Options Information Meeting

There will be one presentation to explain the process.

Monday 31st January - Work with Tutors

Students will start to work on their option choices with their Tutors and accessing the school website for information.

Week beginning Monday 7th February –Information Assembly

Subject Leaders for subjects that students have not studied so far in the school will present their subject to students. Subject Leaders will detail the course overview and benefits of taking their subject.

Thursday 24th February - students and parents are invited to a face to face Parents Evening to discuss their child's progress in all their subjects. This is an ideal opportunity to ask subject staff about their child's suitability to study subjects to GCSE level and beyond.

Thursday 10th March - Foundation Options Deadline

Parents/students **MUST** complete the online options forms by 10th March. Students who hand their forms in late risk being given a lower priority.

April to June – Construction of the timetable for all year groups

July – students informed of their choices.

Frequently Asked Questions

“What if I decide to take a subject and don’t like it. Can I swop during the year?”

No. Once you have started your studies in Year 9 you will need to complete the year on the choices you made. You can choose to drop the subject for Year 10.

“If I decide not to study a subject in Year 9 does that mean I can’t study it in Year 10?”

No. If you do not study a subject in Year 9 you can still study it in Year 10 but you will be at a disadvantage as other student will have studied skills and knowledge to better prepare them for GCSE study that you will not have studied. There will be work you will need to catch up with.

“Why does my child have to study a language?”

As part of the school’s ‘truly all round education’ all students study a language at KS4. The ability to study a language is highly prized by employers and forms one part of the Government’s Ebacc portfolio of qualifications.

“Can I continue to study two languages?”

Possibly. It may be possible to provide an opportunity in twilight time to allow students to continue to study two languages. This will depend upon demand and timetabling factors.

“What if my child doesn't get his choices?”

If your child does not get all of his choices then his Head of Year will contact him and discuss his options with him. It is vitally important that students put down reserve choices.

“When will my child find out which options he will take in Year 9?”

Students will find out their confirmed option choice during the second half of the summer term, realistically in July.

“When will we know which GCSE subjects are available to study in Years 10 & 11?”

This information will be available at the GCSE Options Information Evening usually held before February half-term next year.

Practice Form - please use this to decide on your options before transferring them onto the online form for which a link will be emailed to you.

Which Language will you choose to continue studying in Year 9?

French

German

If you are interested in studying a second language in twilight time please tick this box

Please select 2 subjects from the table below and place them in order of preference with 1 - first choice and 2 - second choice. You may only study two humanities subjects in Year 9.

Subject	Preference
Geography	
History	
Religious Studies	

Please select 3 subjects from the table below and place them in order of preference with 1 - first preference, 2 - second preference and 3 - reserve preference. You will only study two of your three choices and, where possible, we will give you your top two choices.

Subject	Preference
Art	
Business Education	
Design Technology	
Drama	
Music	