



ST BERNARD'S
HIGH SCHOOL

Curriculum Information Evening

GCSE Options

2026



Our Vision and Ambition

- At St Bernard's, we support every student to grow academically and personally
- GCSE options shape future learning and opportunities
- The best choices reflect strengths, interests, and aspirations
- Informed decisions, supported by home and school, help students thrive



Support Through the Options Process

- Head of Year, Miss Nice
- Form Tutors
- Subject teachers
- Careers Coordinator, Mrs Phillips
- Learning Mentors





Options Information and Guidance

- **Careers workshops** last term on “Making Good Post-14 Choices”
- A **PSHE lesson** this half term focused on options choices and an options workbook will be provided to help guide students.
- The **Curriculum Information Booklet**, now available on the school website, provides details of the Key Stage 4 curriculum at St Bernard’s and information about each of the courses offered.
- **Taster Day** in March for students to experience lessons in 6 GCSE subjects.



Curriculum Information Booklet

- Examination Board
- Specification code
- Specification and assessment details
- Career opportunities

SUBJECT: PHOTOGRAPHY

EXAMINATION BOARD: AQA

EXAMINATION SYLLABUS: 8206

Specification and Assessment:

GCSE Photography offers students an exciting opportunity to develop their creative voice while mastering the technical skills behind compelling imagery. Through hands-on exploration of both traditional and digital techniques, learners experiment with composition, lighting, and visual storytelling to produce thoughtful and imaginative work. The course encourages students to think critically about the power of images in contemporary culture, helping them build confidence as independent artists and visual communicators. Whether students aspire to pursue further study in the arts or simply want to broaden their creative horizons, GCSE Photography provides a dynamic and inspiring foundation.

Areas of study:

Students are required to work in one or more areas of photography, such as those listed below:

- Portraiture
- Location photography
- Studio photography
- Experimental imagery
- Documentary photography
- Animation and moving image
- Fashion photography.

They may explore overlapping areas and combinations of areas.

Assessment:

This qualification is assessed holistically meaning that all work produced can be submitted for assessment. Students must produce the following units:

Component 1 / Portfolio / 60% of GCSE/ Coursework

A portfolio that evidences explicit coverage of the four assessment objectives. It also includes a sustained project showcasing the journey from initial engagement to the realisation of intentions and a selection of further work undertaken during the course. Students submit this before Christmas in Year 11.

Component 2 / Exam / 40% of GCSE / Externally Set Assignment.

Students respond to an externally set assignment paper from which they choose a theme to explore. At the end of the assignment students sit a 10-hour practical examination where they are required to realise their intentions into a practical outcome. They are required to work independently during the examination.

Career Opportunities:

Fashion photographer, Content creator, Commercial photographer, Photojournalist, Forensic photographer, Gallery curator, Sports photographer, Portrait photographer Architectural photographer, Documentary photographer, Photo editor, Media creator, Medical or Scientific photographer.

SUBJECT: SEPARATE SCIENCES –BIOLOGY

EXAMINATION BOARD: AQA

EXAMINATION SYLLABUS: GCSE (9–1) in Biology
8461

Specification:

This course, *taken alongside GCSE Chemistry and GCSE Physics*, is an optional alternative intended for students who have an enthusiasm for the Sciences and would appreciate the opportunity of extra time to broaden their studies.

This course emphasises scientific literacy. It focuses on the knowledge and understanding with which students need to engage, as informed citizens, with science based issues. This course is designed to focus on the topics of Biology which are relevant to the modern world, and to explore, research, and discover just why Biology is so important in the 21st Century.

Students will become aware of many of the topics of study, since there is a strong emphasis on the way Science is reported in the media, such as newspapers, television, radio and the internet.

The course is split into 5 topics with 18 chapters.

- Cells and organisation: Cell structure, Cell division, Digestion, Organisation
- Disease and Bioenergetics: Communicable / Non communicable, Photosynthesis, Respiration
- Biological Response: Hormones, The Nervous System, Homeostasis
- Genetics and reproduction: Reproduction, Variation, Evolution, Genetics
- Ecology: Adaptations, Interdependence and Competition, Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Assessment:

This course is examined in May/June of Year 11. It leads to the award of a GCSE in Biology.

There are 2 written papers, each lasting 1 hour 45 minutes and each contributing 50% to the total mark. Each paper has 100 marks.

To gain the award students will be given the opportunity to carry out experimental and investigative work throughout the course.

Tiers of Entry:

Higher Tier - grades available are 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4

Career Opportunities:

The progression routes are the same as for Combined Science.

This combination of Biology, Chemistry and Physics at GCSE provides a sound foundation for students intending taking 'A' levels in either Physics and /or Chemistry and /or Biology. Science qualifications at 'A' level and University level are the cornerstone of many fields of employment including those in:

- medicine and other health related roles, agriculture, forensic science
- the engineering and communications industries, banking and finance
- the chemical and pharmaceutical industries.

The logical and analytical skills developed are also valued in many non-science roles.



The Options Process

Nov	Careers workshops - “Making Good Post-14 Choices”
4th Feb	Year 9 Assembly with Miss March - Introduction to Options
5th Feb	Options Evening - Information shared with students and parents
2nd Mar	Year 9 Taster Day for GCSE options subjects
5th Mar	Year 9 Parent Consultation Evening
Feb/Mar	Year 9 PSHE lesson on GCSE options
Mar	Students submit options choices
Apr-Jun	Classes and staffing allocation
Jun	Subjects confirmed by email to parents/carers and students



The Key Stage 4 Curriculum

The Core Curriculum

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Combined Science (worth two GCSEs)
- Religious Education
- Physical Education (non-GCSE)
- Personal Social & Health Education (non-GCSE)



The Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Options subjects

- Business
- Classics
- Dance
- Drama
- Economics
- Fine Art
- Food Preparation and Nutrition
- French
- Geography
- Graphic Communication
- Health and Social Care
- History
- Media
- Music
- Photography
- Psychology
- Physical Education
- Separate Science
- Sociology
- Spanish
- Textile Design



Choosing your subjects

- Choose three subjects plus one reserve
- Choices will be submitted in order of preference
- Some combinations of subjects may not be possible – students will be informed if this is the case.
- The reserve subject will be used either if a subject is full or if the subject combination is not possible.



Choosing your subjects

Students may choose **only one subject** from each of these lists:

- Fine Art, Graphic Communication, Textile Design, Photography
- Health and Social Care, Psychology, Sociology
- Business, Economics



Entry Requirements

Separate Science: students must achieve at least a Grade 5- in Science options exam to secure a place on this course (students with a Grade 4 may apply and will be considered by the Science department).

Psychology: Students must achieve at least a Grade 4- in Science options exam.

Physical Education: Students must routinely play at least one sport, ideally two sports.

Music: Students must be competent and creative musicians.

Classics: Students must achieve at least a Grade 4- in English in their progress report this half term.



The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The EBacc is not a qualification in its own right – it's a combination of GCSE subjects, including a language, that offer an important range of knowledge and skills to young people.

- **English language and English literature**
- **Maths**
- **Science** (combined or separate)
- **History or Geography**
- **A Language** (ancient or modern)

Research has found that students studying EBacc subjects for GCSE were more likely to stay in education after 16.



The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

EBacc future proofs our child's prospects.

While your child may not have decided on their future career path yet, choosing the EBacc at GCSE gives them access to a full range of employment options when they leave secondary school and the broad knowledge that employers are looking for.

If they are thinking of going to university, the EBacc is also recommended by Britain's most prestigious universities.

The Russell Group has named languages as subjects that open doors to more degrees at universities.

(The Russell Group is a group of 24 universities with a shared focus on research and a reputation for academic achievement)



The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

Choosing a Language

Languages are an important part of EBacc. Studying a foreign language can be extremely rewarding and exciting. They provide an insight into other cultures and can open the door to travel and employment opportunities. They can also broaden pupils' horizons, helping them flourish in new environments.

We know that employers value languages, as they are increasingly important to make sure we can compete in the global market.

Because of this, languages are increasingly becoming a requirement for many graduate schemes.

Having language skills under your belt will help make you stand out from the crowd, whether you're applying for an entry level position, a management role or an internal transfer.



Submitting your choices

- Choices are submitted using SIMS Options Online
- Each tutor group will have a workshop during registration **between Monday 16th March and Tuesday 24th March** to submit their choices.
- After this session, students will be able to login at home or in school to view or change their choices until the deadline on **Friday 27th March at 1pm** (the last day of the Spring Term).
- After the deadline, the website will be locked and changes can only be made by a parent/carer request by email to Miss March.



Options Evening - Subjects

Please now go to BH1 where staff and students are available to talk about each of the options subjects on offer.

Please use all 3 entrances to BH1.

At the end of the evening, please exit via the vehicle gate on Canewdon Road.

Thank you.