

# Key Stage Four Courses 2019-2021

Help your child to:  
Make the right decisions  
Make the best of courses  
Achieve their full potential



# A Message from the Head

Parent(s) or Carer(s),

Key Stage 4 is a really important time for students. We continue to provide a broad and balanced curriculum but we now offer students the opportunity to express a preference for courses in which they are particularly interested. We don't expect them to be making definite career decisions at this stage but they do need to be aware of their strengths and interests and I know many of them are already looking ahead to the courses we offer in our Sixth Form which has a high profile, superb facilities in our new school and achieves excellent results.

The Government have a focus on the "English Baccalaureate" which expects students to gain GCSEs in:

English

Maths

Two or more Sciences

A Modern Foreign Language (compulsory for some students)

A Humanities subject (History and/or Geography).

Within this framework we also want to continue to offer a wide range of opportunities in Dance and Drama through our Arts College status, as well as opportunities to study courses related to sports and other interests. Our second specialism in Mathematics and Computing allows us to offer a range of ICT based options. In conjunction with other South East Shropshire schools, we also offer the one day "Off Site Learning" courses as part of our Vocational programme. Further details are in this booklet.

Further Government change, first examined in 2017, have led to almost all courses being linear, with more exams and the majority of examinations and assessments taking place at the end of a two-year course. Together with the loss of Controlled Assessment in many subjects, the drop in subject pass rates and "harder syllabus materials and exams" will have a potentially dramatic effect on students' success levels. In all subjects the results are graded on a scale of 9-1 in place of A\*-G, which is shown on the next page. It is a change, and is challenging!

We hope that together with your daughter or son, you will take the opportunity to read carefully the course descriptions in this booklet and discuss together the best options for them. Some of you will already have been given separate information and guidance about a vocational pathway. If you have any queries or concerns related to a particular subject, please contact the relevant Subject Leader. If you have a more general query, please get in touch with your child's tutor in the first instance or myself / Mr Beard (Assistant Head) / Ms Murray (Data manager and timetable) who will lead on the options process. Additional guidance can be gained from the House Leaders; Mrs Bennett, Mr Burrell, Mr Tipton and Mr Wilson, Mr Connolly (Deputy Head) and Mr Crook (Head of Sixth Form) who will also be able to assist with enquiries about 14-19 curriculum opportunities.

Our students know that we expect commitment and hard work as they prepare for their examinations. Most of our courses are GCSEs and this fits nicely with another Government initiative to remove "equivalencies" or subjects which count as GCSEs but without the same rigour or approach. We want each and every student to achieve their potential and succeed in reaching their individual targets. To help them do this, they need to make careful and considered preferences in Year 9 which will support their interests and needs. We have created a curriculum which offers different pathways for students depending on their ability and interests. Guidance will be given to make sure that students select the right pathway, involving courses that will challenge them and maximise their potential. We want to continue working in partnership with you to help your child gain as much as possible from these two years. They will have increasing opportunities to take on responsibilities within their House or in the wider school and to make a really positive contribution to more aspects of school life. We want them to "be the best they can be", achieving high academic grades but also to enjoy the next two years as they prepare for a successful future.

**Geoff Renwick (Head)**

# Understanding Qualifications

## Level 1 Qualifications - What are they?

These are nationally recognised qualifications that we offer as a course in conjunction with Idsall and other local schools. Students develop knowledge, skills and understanding in broad vocational areas and Key Skills in Application of Number, Communication and Information Technology.

These Level 1 courses are designed to broaden the range of qualifications available at Key Stage 4, and to provide a challenging and demanding vocational option for students. It involves a one-day release from school and after completion at Key Stage 4 students can progress to Level 2 through the vocational route or transfer to other post-16 routes.

The GCSE points equivalent gained by students depend on the individual course (see individual subject leaflets). This option would count as low grade equivalent (3-1) only.

IMI Level 1 Diploma                      Light Motor Vehicle

BTEC Level 1 Diploma                  Construction

## Entry Level Certificate

You will notice that some subjects include information about the Entry Level Certificate. These are mainly portfolio based courses which are designed specifically for those whose needs are not catered for by a GCSE examination. Such students require a form of assessment which is appropriate to their particular needs and we shall be advising them individually.

Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations. It achieves points below those achieved by a GCSE grade 1.

## What are GCSEs?

GCSE stands for **General Certificate of Secondary Education**.

A GCSE usually comprises one subject, sometimes two combined, usually taught for two hours a week over two years, with the exception of English and Mathematics that has four hours a week over two years.

Science is taught in two hour slots for each of the three separate areas of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, unless they are taking the vocational pathway.

## How the examination of GCSEs has changed?

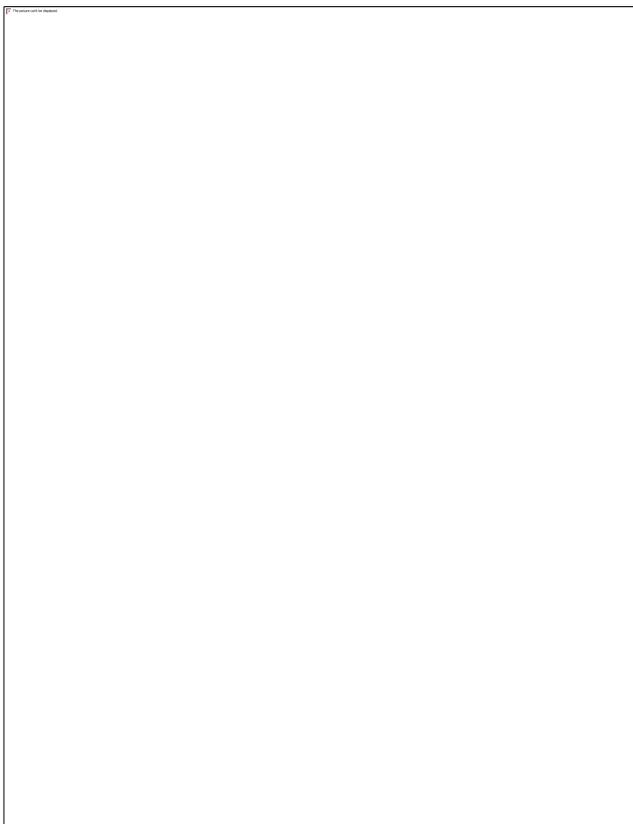
Testing understanding and skills is more difficult than testing knowledge. Students have to show they can use their knowledge to find out information and interpret data. So, although GCSEs in the past were a mix of exam performance and controlled assessments, many are now based on longer terminal exams at the end of Year 11.

This will make it important for students to develop their writing and revision skills because in most subjects their grade will be the result of these 'one off' summer exams, like you and I probably took when we were at school.

The new GCSE grading structure has been introduced gradually over the last few years. They are now all graded from 9 to 1, instead of A\* to G.

# Understanding Qualifications

(...Continued)



The diagram to the left shows the link between the current and the new grading structure.

## **Changes to the pass grade...**

In the lettered GCSEs, a C grade is classed as a pass; however, under the new system there are now two pass grades;

**Grade 4 = 'good pass'**

**Grade 5 = 'strong pass'**

There are some important performance indicators that students should try to achieve that provide the threshold to the next stages of their education/working life. These are obviously dependent upon a student's own ability, but we expect students to make at least expected progress between the end of primary school (Key Stage 2 results) and their GCSE results. This target data is shown on a student's report and progress towards this will be monitored and reported on by teaching staff.

## **Making GCSE grades consistent**

GCSEs are set by examination boards under criteria laid down by the Ofqual. They are 'moderated' or checked by outsider examiners, whatever the board or subject.

## **Making GCSEs suit all abilities**

To cover the wide range of ability among GCSE candidates, some boards set 2 'tiers' of papers. The 'Foundation' tier will contain questions, up to and including Grade 5. A 'Higher' tier overlaps by setting questions across Grades 9-4. In most subjects the level of entry for each student will be decided during the two years. Occasionally the level of entry can be decided on the day itself.

- Please note that a Grade 4 can be gained for ALL GCSE subjects on all tiers of entry although many subjects do not have higher and foundation papers, with all students taking one common examination.

# The Key Stage 4 Curriculum

In Key Stage 4, students study a broadly based curriculum which enables them to continue and carry forward a wide range of subjects - this is their entitlement. In addition, thanks to a preference system, students are able to take extra courses which are appropriate to their own interests and experiences.

In summary, all students follow the curriculum below:

- Science (usually 2 or 3 qualifications)
- English Language & Literature
- Mathematics
- Physical Education
- Personal, Social, Citizenship and Health Education (PSHCE) with some elements of RE
- Weekly assembly
- Daily 20 minute Tutor time– including mentoring time, to assess progress and set targets on an individual basis – alongside some literacy work
- Preference subjects<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A separate form details the preference choices for you to discuss and consider over the next five weeks.

We are running two types of day release course with limited places offered to selected students:

1. College Course (Level 1) – 3 subjects
2. Work Experience – practical experience with no formal qualification.

There are limited numbers of places on each of the above courses. We are trying to be open about the process and the more detailed individual guides provide further details about any individual course requirements. On top of just the course details, you must give thought to:

1. Transport times
2. Mixing with students from other schools
3. Being taught at another school with specialist buildings
4. Working with new staff

# People Who Can Help

Mr G Renwick	Head
Mr J Connolly	Deputy Head (Sydney)
Mr S Beard	Assistant Head (Inclusion)
Mrs J Caldwell	Assistant Head (London)
Miss C Watkins	Assistant Head (Beijing)
Ms M Lacey	SENCO
Mr M Wilson	Athens House Leader
Mr B Tipton	Beijing House Leader
Mr A Burrell	London House Leader
Mrs R Bennett	Sydney House Leader
Ms N Murray	Data manager and timetable

## Subject Leaders & Assistants

English	Mr E Brickley & Ms C Holyoake
Mathematics	Mr A Chadwick & Mr S Williams
Science	Mr J Brett/Mrs J Edge/Dr D Hearle
Business Studies	Mr A Burrell
Design & Technology	Miss E Jones
Information & Communication Technology	Mr S Beard/Mr Crook/Mr Williams
Art	Miss A Perry
History	Mr M Koenig
Religious Education	Mr A Black
Geography	Mrs L Brooks
PSHCE	Miss C Partridge
Performing Arts	Mr M Henson
Modern Languages	Mrs C Crowther
Physical Education	Mrs C Jardine
Careers Advisor	Mrs M Lawrence

Individual subject teachers will also be happy to provide further information and advice along with your child's tutor.

# Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

<b>AQA</b>	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance
<b>OCR</b>	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations
<b>EDEXCEL</b>	Formerly Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC) and University of London Examinations & Assessment Council (ULEAC)
<b>C &amp; G</b>	City and Guilds, providers of vocational qualifications
<b>Level 2 course</b>	A pass in a Level 2 course is equivalent to 9-4 GCSE standard and are worth up to 3 GCSE passes according to the course selected. The Level 2 courses we offer are: GCSE, BTEC.
<b>Level 1 course</b>	A pass in a Level 1 course is equivalent to 3-1 GCSE standard. This mainly affects our Off Site Learning courses in Construction, Hair & Beauty Therapy and Light Motor Vehicles although we offer some entry level courses in Geography, History and Study Support.
<b>English Baccalaureate</b>	This is a qualification that is growing in importance for University and Government status. It ensures that students have taken a broad spread of challenging core subjects. These are English Language, Mathematics, two Sciences, a Modern Foreign Language and a Humanities subject (History/Geography).
<b>Controlled Assessment</b>	This is the element of a course that is assessed within school, usually in a teaching classroom, and then marked by school staff. It replaced the old coursework part of an exam course but has very strict rules that dictate how students should behave and the times when the assessment can take place. Like any examination, if a student is absent then they cannot re-sit the work at a later time.
<b>KS3</b>	Key Stage 3; secondary school years 7, 8 & 9
<b>KS4</b>	Key Stage 4; secondary school years 10 & 11