



Ashton House

Key Stage 4 Options Information 2025



Introduction

It is a very exciting time for our young people to get to the stage in their education where they can begin to personalise their curriculum to their interests and strengths.

As adults we know that Key stage 4, and it's exam pathways, can lead to lots of anxiety for young people. At Birch Wood we work really hard to ensure that we are aspirational for all students, whilst safeguarding their mental health and supporting them in becoming independent.

We recognise that making these decisions about options can sometimes be difficult. Some students have a clear idea about the pathway they wish to make but most are unsure. In our experience, at this age, it is important that students keep an open mind and choose a curriculum which is broad and balanced.

To support you and your child in making this decision

- You will find information about the Key Stage 4 curriculum at Birch Wood in this booklet.
- On Thursday 13th March 2025, we will have a parents evening and options evening where you will be able to talk through your child's progress and options choices with teachers.
- On this evening we will also have our Careers advisor in school to support you and your child in making these important choices.

We ask that all Options forms are completed and back in school for **Friday 21st March**. Please ensure that you have completed a 1st and 2nd choice for each option.

We will then endeavour to process this so that students get their first choice wherever possible. In some circumstances certain courses will not run if the number of students choosing a subject is too small. Students and parents will be notified of any subsequent changes made. Clearly, it is our aim to keep these amendments to an absolute minimum.

As always your child's education is a partnership between school and parents and we look forward to discussing this with you.

Yours Sincerely

Michelle Walker

Assistant Head (Curriculum and Progress)

The Aims of Our Curriculum



An education at Birch Wood School...

E	Empowering pupils for independent lives.
N	Nurture
A	Aspire and Achieve
B	Belonging
L	Love of learning grows
E	Engage and Interact
S	Safe and happy

A Curriculum to ENABLE



Ensuring our curriculum for students means success at the end of Year 11, we work hard to evaluate each course on offer. Recent reform has led to the formation of two types of qualification available at the end of Year 11.

These are:

- ✓ **GCSEs** - now graded 1 to 9 with grade 9 being the highest. These linear qualifications are based on between 60% and 100% assessment by written examination. All the written exams are taken at the end of the course.
- ✓ **Technical Awards** - graded pass, merit or distinction. These qualifications consist of approximately 25% external assessment with the remainder set as tasks completed in school. These include BTEC and other National Qualifications.

We also offer:

Entry Levels - If we feel that a student is not yet ready to study GCSE level, we will offer them the chance to take an alternative qualification. Entry Level courses are designed to help students develop basic literacy and numeracy skills and to improve their confidence.

It is important to consider the type of assessment when choosing a course. Many traditional GCSEs are now 100% written exam and for some students these do not always lead to the success we aspire to. It is better that students choose courses giving a mixture of assessment formats. We have, in some instances, chosen to offer a technical award qualification for a subject area instead of a GCSE. We know this will offer a better chance of success for students at all ability levels. We also know that both technical awards and GCSEs offer the same opportunities for progression onto Post 16 courses.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education

At Birch Wood each student has the opportunity to promote their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through different subject areas. This provision is also enhanced in the following ways

- ✓ PSHE Program
- ✓ Core Religious Education lessons
- ✓ Extra-curricular opportunities such as sport, performance and trips.

We value the importance of preparing our students for life in modern Britain. We feel it is important that students gain broad knowledge of the community, society and the world, and understand the nature of citizenship. In addition, they should understand the role they have in modern Britain and conform to fundamental British values of belief in democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect of other faiths and beliefs.

At Key stage 4 the curriculum offer is:



Curriculum Area	Lessons Each week	Time each week
Core Curriculum		
Maths	5 x 45 minutes	3 hr 45 min
English	4 x 45 minutes	3 hr
Reading	5 x 30 minutes	2hr 30min
Science	4 x 45 minutes	3 hr
PSHE	1 x 45 minutes	45 min
Wellbeing and Self Awareness	1 x 45 minutes	45 min
ICT	1 x 45 minutes	45 min
RE	1 x 45 minutes	45 min
Core PE	2 x 45 minutes	1 hr 30 min
Options		
Option A	3 x 45 minutes	2 hr 15 min
Option B	3 x 45 minutes	2 hr 15 min

A typical week at Key Stage 4 looks like:

8.50- 9.10	Tutor Time				
L1- 9.10- 9.55	Science	Maths	PSHE	Science	PE
L2-9.55- 10.40	Science	English	English	English	PE
10.40- 11.00	Break				
11.00- 11.30	Reading				
L3- 11.30-12.15	Maths	Option B	RE	Option A	English
L4- 12.15- 1.00	Option A	Option B	Maths	Option A	Science
1.00-2.00	Lunch				
2.00-2.10	Tutor Time				
L5- 2.10-2.55	ICT	Wellbeing and Self Awareness	Option B	Maths	Maths
2.55- 3.20	Tutor Time				



The Options choices at KS4 are:

Option Choice A			
Art	Food	Design	Drama

Option Choice B			
Sport	Food	Photography	Dance

How to Choose a Course

So that you can make the best possible choices for you, you will need to find out as much as you can about the courses available to you, talk to your teachers and discuss your ideas with your parents/carers.

Do choose courses because:

- ✓ You enjoy the subject
- ✓ You are good at the subject
- ✓ It will help you with your future when you leave Birch Wood Vale
- ✓ It will give you a good balance of subjects so you have options to study what you want if you go to college

Do not choose courses because:

- ✓ Your friends have chosen it
- ✓ You like the teacher—you may have a different teacher next year
- ✓ You dislike the teacher who is teaching you at the moment—you may have a different teacher next year

We ask all students to make a first and second choice for each Option.

In the next section you will find about the core and option curriculum in more details



KS4

Core

Curriculum

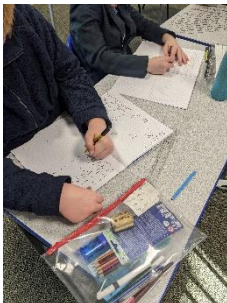


KS4 Core Subject

English

4 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
Eduqas GCSE English	One 1 ¾ hour examination, and one 2-hour examination in May/June at the end of year 11.	One paper based on fiction texts (stories). One paper based on non-fiction texts (articles, letters, speeches, leaflets).
AQA Entry Level Step up to English	Three modules. All tested throughout KS4 via externally set 1 ½ hour long tests.	Students complete Entry Level papers on three different topics. Two papers are based on literacy topics, such as charities, hobbies and music. One paper is based on creative reading and writing, including two short stories or extracts from stories. The stories could be gothic horror, dystopian or crime fiction.



Why study English?

- As students leave Birch Wood, Mathematics and English are always the two subjects that colleges and employers will be most interested in.
- English is a key life skill in supporting a student with being independent. Reading is the bedrock of learning.
- They will use the skills they learn in English throughout their time at school and in the wider world.



KS4 Core Subject

Mathematics

5 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
AQA GCSE Mathematics	3 x 1.5-hour examinations done in May/June at the end of year 11. 1 x calculator paper 2x non-calculator paper	There are 6 areas of learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number • Ratio • Algebra • Geometry • Probability • Statistics
AQA Entry Level Mathematics	8 modules. All tested throughout KS4 via externally set 45-minute tests.	They study 8 modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties of Number • Four Operations • Ratio • Money • The Calendar and Time • Measure • Geometry • Statistics

Why study Maths?



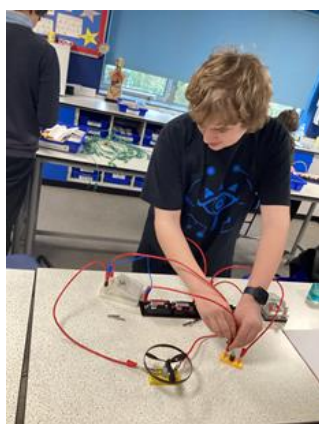
- As students leave Birch Wood and move to college Mathematics and English are always the 2 subjects that colleges will be most interested in.
- Key life skill in supporting a student with being independent as they prepare for adulthood.
- They will use the skills they learn in Maths in many other subjects such as DT, Science and Art and in the future at college and at work.



KS4 Core Subject Science

5 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
AQA GCSE Science Trilogy	6 x 1.5-hour examinations done in May/June at the end of year 11.	Biology – Cells and organisation Disease and bioenergetic Genetics and reproduction Ecology Physics – Energy and energy resources Particles Forces in action Waves, electromagnetism, and space Chemistry – Atoms Chemical reactions Organic chemistry Earth's resources
AQA Science Entry Level Double award	12 modules 6 Teacher devised practical assessments 6 Externally written assessments done in class and externally moderated.	Biology – The human body Environment, evolution, and inheritance Chemistry – Elements, mixtures, and compounds Chemistry in our world Physics – Energy, forces, and the structure of matter Electricity, magnetism, and waves



Why study Science?

- In science students are encouraged to develop their confidence, questioning, and curiosity through a science curriculum that is designed around their needs and abilities.
- Students learn problem solving skills that will help them develop and grow
- They will use the skills they learn in science in many other subjects such as Maths, English, DT, and Art and in the future at college and at work.



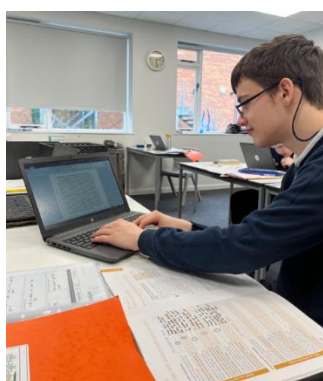
KS4 Core Subject

Religious Education

(RE)

1 lesson a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
Beliefs and Values (Short Course)	Students complete units from the range provided. These are completed during student lessons. Students complete a set number of challenges.	<p>The unit's students can study is extensive and are tailored to suit our students' interests and ability level.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Units can include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values, beliefs and decision making • Environment • Crime and Punishment • Peace and Conflict • Beliefs and Practice • Inspiration



Why study RE?

- As students leave Birch Wood, it is imperative that our young people have developed skills to support them in the real world and support them in adulthood.
- Having the knowledge and understanding of becoming a good citizen is an important skill we believe is important for our young people.

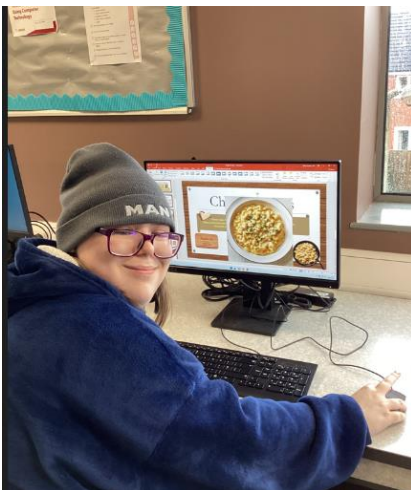


KS4 Core Subject

ICT

1 lesson a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
<p>TLM Entry Level 1-3 Level 1 Level 2 IT User Skills</p>	<p>Students complete units from the range provided in class. These are moderated on-line.</p>	<p>The unit's students can study is extensive and are tailored to suit our students' interests and aspirations. Coursework is easily managed and the marking criteria is unambiguous.</p> <p><u>Units can include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation Software ● Word Processing ● Using Email ● Using the Internet



Why study ICT?

- As students leave Birch Wood, it is imperative that our young people have developed IT skills to support them in the real world and support them in adulthood.
- ICT is a key life skill in supporting a student with being independent.
- They will use the skills they learn in ICT throughout their time at school and in the wider world.



KS4 Core Subject

PE

1 lesson a week in Key Stage 4

What is studied?

The PE curriculum at Birch Wood School covers 4 different Units of work over the school Year. Within these units students will typically cover 1-3 different sports or activities (E.g. Net Games. Activity examples: Volleyball, Tennis).

Lessons use these sports and activities as vehicle for students to develop their communication skills to enhance their ability to engage and interact with their own environments and build both interpersonal and enterprise skills.

Physical competence is also part of the study in order to continue to develop students fundamental movement patterns to enable them to access the best quality of physical and mental well-being by removing barriers to exercise and creating a variation of opportunities to all students.

Lessons also create opportunities for creativity. These opportunities are created through a variety of experienced that give students opportunity for thoughtful processes as well as to practise transferable life skills such as problem solving which enables them to access independent living within their own capacity.

Lessons also provide students with challenge which encourages development of resilience giving students confidence to embrace challenge, seek opportunities to fail in order to grow and constantly strive for aspiration and achievement.

Units can include:

- Striking and Fielding
- Invasion Games
- Net Games
- Functional Movement Patterns



Why study PE?

- Expose students to a wide range of enrichment opportunity through the study of a range of sports and activities.
- PE is important core subject for instilling in students the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- Essential to maintain the progression of students fine and gross motor skills
- Development of key communication skills needed to access the community
- Development of key skills for employment such as teamwork, problem solving and using initiative.
- Development of organisation and independent skills.
- Develop the confidence to empower students to become happy, healthy and confident students who are prepared and motivated to participate in lifelong physical activity and lead a healthy lifestyle.



KS4

Options



KS4 Option Subject

Art

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
GCSE in Art Fine Art 2 Year Course	<p>Component 1 is Assessment in the form of Coursework assessed by teacher and externally moderated for exam board.</p> <p>Component 2- externally set examination based on a starting point. Produce a portfolio of work with a final outcome, assessed and moderated by the exam board</p>	Unit 2: 60% (Internal)	Component 1: Personal Portfolio: Sweets & Snacks 60% of qualification 72 marks
		Unit 1: 40% (External)	Component 2: Externally Set Examination: 10 hours (over 2 days) 40% of qualification 72 marks

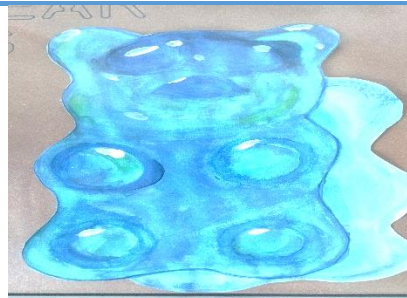
The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1 Assessment Objective 1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources (18 marks)

AO2 Assessment Objective 2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes (18 marks)

AO3 Assessment Objective 3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses (18 marks)

AO4 Assessment Objective 4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language (18 marks)



Why study Graphic Communication

Students will produce 2D work for Art: Fine Art and understand how a range of sources inspire the development of ideas. Through the analysis of artists, craftspeople, designers, students will explore a variety of themes and create work personal to their purpose. An element of written annotation and use of specialist vocabulary is an expectation for this course.

What can study this course lead to:

Students can continue their study in Art, Design, Graphics at FE College or an apprenticeship. GCSE Art & Design also provides a starting point for a career in this area, these include: Art Director, Craft and Fine Artist, Fashion/ Textile Designer, Graphic Designer, Industrial Designer, Architect, Interior Designer, Multimedia artist and Animator.



KS4 Option Subject

Design

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
GCSE in Art Graphic Communication 2 Year Course	Component 1 is Assessment in the form of Coursework assessed by teacher and externally moderated for exam board. Component 2- externally set examination based on a starting point. Produce a portfolio of work with a final outcome, assessed and moderated by the exam board	Unit 2: 60% (Internal)	Component 1: Personal Portfolio: Projects: Design Skills, 3D Tag, Music Point-Of-Sales/ 3D Footwear 60% of qualification 72 marks
		Unit 1: 40% (External)	Component 2: Externally Set Examination: 10 hours (over 2 days) 40% of qualification 72 marks

The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1 Assessment Objective 1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources (18 marks)

AO2 Assessment Objective 2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes (18 marks)

AO3 Assessment Objective 3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses (18 marks)

AO4 Assessment Objective 4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language (18 marks)



Why study Graphic Communication

Students will produce 2D & 3D work for Design: Graphic Communication and understand how a range of sources inspire the development of ideas.

Through the analysis of artists, craftspeople, designers, students will explore a variety of themes and create work personal to their purpose. An element of written annotation and use of specialist vocabulary is an expectation for this course.

What can study this course lead to:

Students can continue their study in Art, Design, Graphics at FE College or an apprenticeship. GCSE Art & Design also provides a starting point for a career in this area, these include: **Graphic Designer, Freelance and/or Employed, Advertising Art Director, Animator, Illustrator, Printmaker, Design and Marketing Manager, Web Designer.**



KS4 Option Subject

Photography

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
GCSE in Art Photography 2 Year Course	Component 1 is Assessment in the form of Coursework assessed by teacher and externally moderated for exam board. Component 2- externally set examination based on a starting point. Produce a portfolio of work with a final outcome, assessed and moderated by the exam board	Unit 2: 60% (Internal)	Component 1: Personal Portfolio: Macro, Fragmentation 60% of qualification 72 marks
		Unit 1: 40% (External)	Component 2: Externally Set Examination: 10 hours (over 2 days) 40% of qualification 72 marks

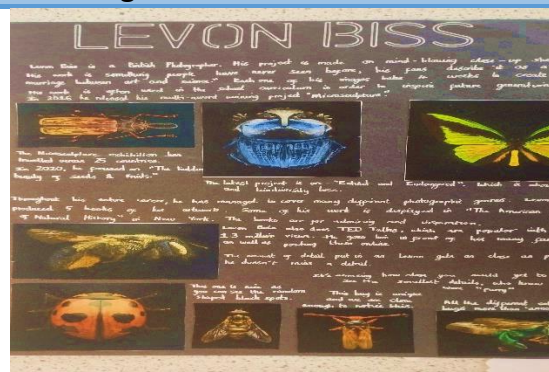
The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1 Assessment Objective 1: Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources (18 marks)

AO2 Assessment Objective 2: Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes (18 marks)

AO3 Assessment Objective 3: Record ideas, observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses (18 marks)

AO4 Assessment Objective 4: Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language (18 marks)



Why study Digital Photography

Students will produce work for the Digital Photography and be required to understand how a range of sources inspire the development of ideas. Through the appreciation and analysis of artists, craftspeople, designers, events, environments and issues students can explore a variety of themes and create work personal to their purpose. An element of written annotation and use of specialist vocabulary is an expectation for this course.

What can study this course lead to:

Students can continue their study in Art through further education or an apprenticeship. GCSE Art & Design also provides a starting point for those students wishing to pursue a career in this area, these include: **Digital Learning Content Support, Online GCSE Photography Tutor, Multi-Channel Marketer apprentice, Content Creator, Sales Support Specialist**



KS4 Option Subject

Drama

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
WJEC Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Performing Arts 2 Year Course	Units 2 & 3- Practical Coursework assessed by teacher and recorded for exam board 60% Unit 1 – Practical Exam based on themes of what has been learnt 40%	Unit 2: 30% (Internal)	Unit 1: Performing Controlled assessment: Practical Drama Skills based on productions.
		Unit 3: 30% (Internal)	Unit 2: Performing Controlled assessment: Practical Drama Skills based on theatre
		Unit 1: 40% (External)	Unit 3: Performing Arts in Practice External controlled

The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding from across the specification.

AO2: Apply skills (including practical skills), knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts and in planning and carrying out investigations and tasks.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate information, making reasoned judgements and presenting conclusions.



Why study Drama?

- It supports student's communication and self-confidence.
- It supports students who would like to move into creative or performing arts subjects.
- increase their confidence and self-esteem
- employ the skills of problem solving and creativity
- make creative decisions when creating Drama pieces
- understand the effectiveness of working in teams to develop ideas, rehearsals and performances
- develop performance disciplines and styles of Drama

What can study this course lead to:

Courses and Career after studying Drama at KS4 can lead to a number of routes that can be taken such as acting, directing, teaching, stage management, costume design, set construction, lighting and sound technical work to name a few.



KS4 Option Subject

Hospitality & Catering

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
WJEC Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Hospitality & Catering 2 Year Course	Unit 2 Controlled Assessment in the form of Coursework assessed by teacher and recorded for exam board 60%	Unit 2: (Internal)	Unit 2: Modern Themes about: Hospitality and catering in action Practical & Theory Learning Controlled assessment
	Unit 1- externally set examination , assessed by the exam board 40%	Unit 1: (External)	Unit 1: Themes around: The hospitality and catering industry Written examination:

The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding from across the specification.

AO2: Apply skills (including practical skills), knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts and in planning and carrying out investigations and tasks.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate information, making reasoned judgements and presenting conclusions.



Why study Hospitality & Catering:

KS4 students will learn information about job roles, working skills, menu design, cooking and presentation of food, business procedures, polices and legislation, food spoilage and contamination, principles effecting food safety, sustainability, marketing, food processing and production and evaluation of practical work. This structure has been designed to develop in learners the knowledge and understanding related to a range of hospitality and catering providers.

What can study this course lead to:

Study a variety of courses at Further Education Colleges can lead to the following careers; **Accommodation manager, Catering manager, Chef, Conference centre manager, Event manager, Fast food restaurant manager, Holiday representative, Hotel manager, Public house manager and Restaurant manager.**



KS4 Option Subject

Sports & Coaching

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?	
WJEC Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Sports & Coaching Principles 2 Year Course	Unit 2 & 3 Controlled Assessment in the form of Coursework assessed by teacher and recorded for exam board. Unit 1- Externally Set Online examination, assessed by the exam board	Unit 2: 25% (Internal)	Unit 2: Improving Sporting Performance Controlled assessment: Written project reflecting on improving own Sporting performance.
		Unit 3: 35% (Internal)	Unit 3: Coaching Principles Controlled assessment: Students will plan a sports lesson and will be assessed practically
		Unit 1: 40% (External)	Unit 1: Fitness for Sport Online written examination

The Assessment Objectives: What New Skills and knowledge will be learnt?

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding from across the specification.

AO2: Apply skills (including practical skills), knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts and in planning and carrying out investigations and tasks.

AO3: Analyse and evaluate information, making reasoned judgements and presenting conclusions



Why study Sports?

- Supports communication and self-confidence.
- Starting path for a those with an interest in a career is Sport and Exercise.
- Develop leadership and teamwork skills.
- Develop skills of problem solving and creativity
- Enhance understanding of a healthy lifestyle
- Learn about contemporary issues in sport such as funding, participation, ethics and role models.

What can study this course lead to: Transition into Higher Education or an apprenticeship, working towards a career as a Physiotherapist, Sports Journalist, Sports Psychologist, Nutritionist, Police, Biomechanics, Sports Development, Coach or Teacher.



KS4 Option Subject

Dance

3 lessons a week in Key Stage 4

Examination Pathways	How are these examined?	What is studied?
Bronze Arts Award (Equivalent to a GCSE Grade 1-3)	1 Unit Consisting of 4 Parts It is teacher assessed and sent for moderation at Trinity College London.	Unit 1 Part A: Explore the Arts as a participant Part B: Explore the Arts as an audience member Part C: Arts Inspiration Part D: Arts Skills Share- Passing on Arts Skills to others.
Silver Arts Award (Equivalent to GCSE Grade 4 or Above)	2 Units Consisting of 4/5 Parts It is teacher assessed and sent for moderation at Trinity College London.	Unit 1 Part A: Plan an Arts Challenge Plan B: Review the challenge Part C: Review an Arts Event Parts D: Arts Research Unit 2 Part A: Plan a Leadership Project Plan B: Practical Issues Part C: Effective Leadership Parts D: Working effectively with others Part E: Leadership Project Review

Why study Dance?



- Dance is a way to self reflect and process change, providing an outlet for emotion.
- It develops physical skills such as balance, strength and stamina.
- It provides a space for creativity.
- It develops confidence and expression.
- It supports students who would like to move into creative or performing arts subjects at college.



Options Choices Form

Please hand in by Friday 21st March 2025

Student Name:

Class:

Please circle your **first** choice for **Option A**

Option Choice A			
Art	Food	Design	Drama

Please circle your **second** choice for **Option A**

Option Choice A			
Art	Food	Design	Drama

Please circle your **first** choice for **Option B**

Option Choice B			
Sport	Food	Photography	Dance

Please circle your **Second** choice for **Option B**

Option Choice B			
Sport	Food	Photography	Dance

Student Signature.....

Parental Signature.....

