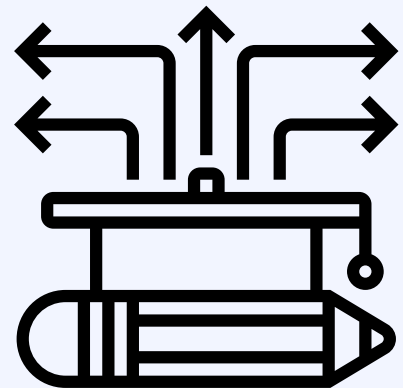
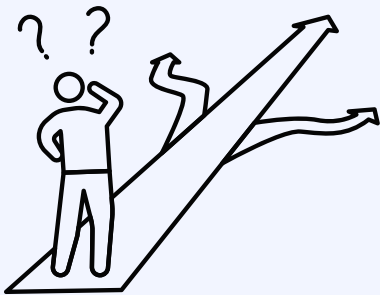




YEAR 9 OPTIONS 2026

St Mary's Catholic School



WELCOME

Welcome to your Options Evening. Year 9 Options is the first major opportunity for you, students, to begin shaping/moulding your education into a selection of qualifications that is unique to you. Options Evening represents an important part of that process, and we hope that you will find the evening informative and clear on what your next steps are.

This booklet contains all of the key information you need to help you, with the support of your parents and teachers, to make the right choices that will support your on-going education. Take the time to read this booklet carefully as it contains:

- A message of encouragement and advice from the Headteacher
- A list of our top ten DO's and DON'Ts for making good choices
- A description of the core curriculum that each KS4 student follows
- An explanation of the three different pathways offered at St Mary's
- A description of what each of the option subjects is like to study
- A timeline showing what the next steps will be in the options process
- A selection of frequently asked questions that students/parents often ask
- A list of Sixth Form subjects and required GCSE Grades

A Message from the Headteacher

Dear Parents and Students,

This booklet has been created to assist you as you embark on your decision-making process for Key Stage 4 and your GCSE examinations scheduled for Summer 2028. Students should view their studies in Key Stage 3 as a foundational preparation for the demanding yet rewarding tasks that lie ahead in their KS4 studies. Parents, given the significant changes that have occurred nationally in recent years, we trust that this booklet will prove beneficial in helping you understand these changes and how it influences what your child is learning and how they will be assessed.

Increasingly, Sixth Forms, employers, Universities, Colleges and apprenticeships are requiring students after GCSE to have a broad range of academic qualifications and so students must consider that when making choices; whilst at A Level and beyond you will be able to concentrate on just a few subjects, at GCSE you will study around eight subjects. Wherever possible choose subjects that you enjoy, and subjects in which you can find success. Your AP data, progress reports and teachers will be able to help you with this. If you have a particular career in mind after you leave school, you must choose the subjects that will help you. For the vast majority of students the English Baccalaureate will be important: this is the Government's recognition of pupils who achieve top grades in English, Mathematics, two Sciences, a Language, and either History or Geography.

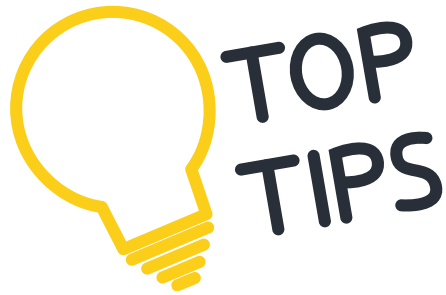
The options for KS4 are laid out in the next few pages with greater depth and detail on each subject provided separately to help you make your decision. Whatever choices you make, you will soon be starting exciting new courses. KS4 and GCSE will be a time of new opportunities for you. Central to these courses is the idea of positive achievement which is so important to us at St Mary's. The main aim is to allow you to show what you know, what you understand and what you can do. The students before you have done well at St Mary's, our progress data is strong, and your year group also has considerable talent and ability. We hope you will build on your past achievements so that you fulfil your potential and continue to excel as you enter the next stage of your secondary schooling.

Above all, partnerships between students, parents and teachers are the cornerstone for future successes. We will expect students to work hard. There will be times when you find the work challenging and difficult but always remember that your teachers are there to help and guide you. Listen to their advice. By working together, you will achieve the success that we all want for you.

Finally, remember that KS4 is not the final obstacle to be negotiated but a stepping stone on your future pathway. At St Mary's, we believe that all our students will benefit greatly from the seven-year journey from Y7 to Y13, and Sixth Form is where our students achieve best after GCSE. The expert teachers and pastoral care guide you on your path to University, apprenticeships or the working world. We have a huge range of courses to cater for all abilities and these GCSEs will, we hope, be the start of your next four years at St. Mary's and the next chapter in your education.

We wish you, the students, every success in your studies and are here to support you every step of the way.

Miss Deirdre McHugh
Headteacher

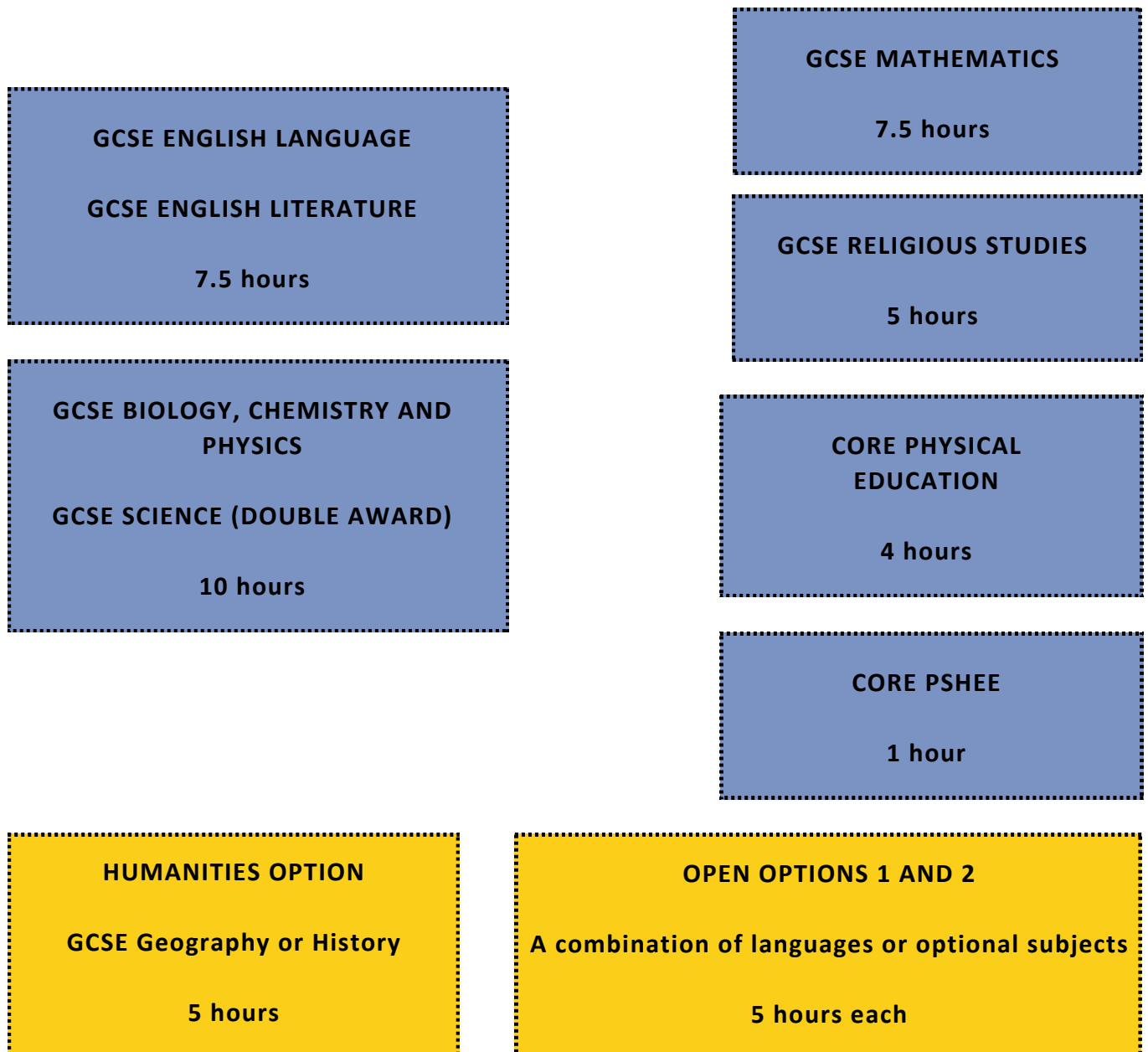


- **DO** talk to as many adults in your family as you can – ask their advice – ask how they ended up in the career they are in today – ask what they would do in your position.
- **DO** ask you teachers their thoughts when you have Year 9 Parents Evening.
- **DO** choose subjects that you ENJOY and not just the ones you are good at – enjoyment can often be a better long-term motivator than success.
- **DO NOT** choose subjects just because your friends are choosing it - there is no guarantee that you will be in the same class.
- **DO NOT** choose a subject based on a teacher you like - there is no guarantee that you will get the teacher you want.
- **DO** consider what courses you might like to follow in Sixth Form and take the necessary GCSEs (for example: to study A Level French, you need to have studied GCSE French)
- **DO** look ahead long term – what you choose should provide the balance of subjects for the career you would like. If you do not know what career you want, then select subjects that will keep your options open until the time you do have a better idea of what you want to do.
- **DO** make sure you know what you are signing up for – read the subject descriptions in detail and ask questions of the teachers so there are no unexpected surprises in September.
- **DO** remember – school is not the only place you can learn a skill or subject. If you cannot study all the subjects you want to in school, there are ways you can study them in your own time – you can join a sports team, get music lessons, build a website, learn how to cook, learn a language, fix a car engine, join a theatre group.
- **DO** make contact with your form tutor, teachers and Subject Leaders if you have any further enquiries about the options process.

WHAT WILL YOU BE STUDYING IN YEARS 10 AND 11?

At St Mary's Catholic School, students study a combination of compulsory/core subjects (subjects that everyone studies) and optional subjects (subjects that students choose).

The diagram below outlines what the curriculum looks like for a 'typical' student.



What is 'core PE'?

Students in Years 10 and 11 take part in two hours of core Physical Education lessons per week. During Year 10 and 11 the PE department's focus is to improve the students' physical and mental health, and to instil a love of sport. Our approach is to give students as many different sporting experiences as possible. Students will have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sports, including some they have not studied before such as badminton, table tennis, handball, volleyball and CrossFit. Outside of lessons, students will have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs after school and compete in a range of inter-house competitions.

WHAT WILL YOU STUDY IN THE CORE SUBJECT AREAS?

SUBJECT	PAPER	SECTIONS / TOPICS
English Language (AQA)	Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing - 1hr 45m (50%)	Section A: Reading Section B: Writing
	Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives - 1hr 45m (50%)	Section A: Reading Section B: Writing
English* Literature (AQA)	Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th- century novel - 1hr 45m (40%)	Section A: Shakespeare Section B: The 19th-century novel
	Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry - 2hr 15m (60%)	Section A: Modern texts Section B and C: Poetry
Maths** (Edexcel)	Paper 1: Non-Calculator 1hr 30m (33.3%)	1. Number 2. Algebra 3. Ratio, proportions and rates of change 4. Geometry and measures 5. Probability 6. Statistics
	Paper 2: Calculator 1 1hr 30m (33.3%)	
	Paper 3: Calculator 2 1hr 30m (33.3%)	
Science*** (AQA)	Students study either: Double Science - also known as Combined or Trilogy OR Triple Science - also known as Separate Sciences	Biology: 2 papers of 1hr 15mins Chemistry: 2 papers of 1hr 15mins Physics: 2 papers of 1hr 15mins All Triple exams are 1hr 45mins 6 Papers in total (both Double and Triple)
Religious Studies (AQA B)	Paper 1: Catholicism 1hr 45m (50%)	1. Creation 2. Incarnation 3. Triune God 4. Redemption 5. Church and the Kingdom of God 6. Eschatology
	Paper 2: Judaism and Ethical Themes 1hr 45m (50%)	Judaism: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices Theme 1: Social Justice and Human Rights Theme 2: Relationships and Family Life

*Does everyone study both English GCSEs?

In some circumstances, it will be more appropriate for students to be entered for the 'Step Up to English' qualification, which helps students build basic and relevant literacy skills. It offers two 'Steps': Silver Step (Entry level 1 and 2) and Gold Step (Entry level 3)

**Will I study 'Higher' or 'Foundation' Maths?

Students are regularly assessed during their GCSE Maths course and this information is used to inform the decision on which tier to enter a student. The decision will be made by the Maths Department, using assessment results up to and including their Mock examinations in Year 11. In an academic school such as St Mary's, about two thirds of the year group could take the Higher Tier.

***Will I study Double or Triple Science?

The Triple Science course (where students study for three separate science GCSEs rather than a combined double award) is only for the most-able students as the course content is larger than a Double Science qualification. A decision as to whether your child will be studying the Double or Triple award is made by the department at the start of Year 10 based on achievement and progress made throughout Year 9.

WHAT PATHWAYS ARE ON OFFER?

In addition to the 'core' curriculum (English, Maths, Science, RS and PE) every student is offered the opportunity to study up to THREE additional subjects. However, since every student is unique, there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to what options are offered to students.

We offer three pathways which help guide students towards choices that suit their academic profile, and will equip them with the knowledge, skills and qualifications which will best serve their plans for their post-16 education and employment.

The table below sets out the THREE pathways that we offer:

PATHWAY	WHO IS THIS FOR?	PROGRESSION
A	Students on pathway A must study a humanities subject, a Modern Foreign Language and one other subject.	All pathways are designed for progression to sixth form study or a programme at a 16+ college. From here students can also all progress to University, a degree apprenticeship or apprenticeship. The quality of the grades achieved by students will be a determining factor, when considering their progression from Year 11 to Sixth Form.
B	Students on pathway B must study a humanities subject, and pick two additional subjects	
C	Students on pathway C will pick three additional subjects.	

WHAT SUBJECTS CAN YOU CHOOSE FROM?

Students will be asked to choose up to three subjects from the following lists. They are split into two categories: 'EBACC' and 'Options'. The number of subjects you have to choose from each column or list will depend on the pathway you have been allocated.

HUMANITIES	LANGUAGES	OPTIONS
Geography History	French Italian Spanish	Art Business Studies Computing DT – Product Design DT - Textiles Drama Food & Nutrition Music Physical Education Geography History French Italian Spanish

GCSE GEOGRAPHY (EDEXCEL 'A' SPECIFICATION)

“The truth is: the natural world is changing, and we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have and we need to defend it.” David Attenborough

Geography is the study of Earth’s landscapes, people, places and environments. If you are interested in the world in which we live, then Geography GCSE is for you. You will learn about things you see in the news every day: how the world is changing and how it will affect your future.

You will look at the geography of the UK and of the wider world. Many of the topics will be familiar to you and by studying GCSE Geography you will gain a deeper understanding of them.

Fieldwork is an important element of GCSE Geography and as well as attending two geography fieldwork investigation days you will be given the opportunity to take part in a residential overseas study tour.

Assessment

This is a single-tier examination. All students sit the same three examination papers.

The examinations include a range of multiple-choice questions, short open, open response, and extended writing questions. Some questions will also include additional sources of information such as maps, graphs, photographs or diagrams. There will also be questions that test geographical skills such as using maps to calculate distance, directions, height etc., or numerical calculations such as mean, mode, median, range or percentages.

There is no coursework / controlled assessment for the Edexcel A Geography specification.

EXAM	CONTENT	DETAILS
Paper 1: The Physical Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Changing Landscapes of the UK2. Weather hazards and climate change3. Ecosystems, biodiversity and management	Written exam: 1 hr 30 mins 94 marks (37.5%)
Paper 2: The Human Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Changing cities5. Global development6. Resource management	Written exam: 1 hr 30 mins 94 marks (37.5%)
Paper 3: Geographical Investigations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Fieldwork – two geographical investigations involving fieldwork and research.8. UK challenges – students investigate a contemporary challenge facing the UK drawing upon their knowledge from components 1 and 2.	Written exam: 1 hr 30 mins 64 marks (25%)

GCSE HISTORY (EDEXCEL)

Studying GCSE History is thought-provoking, active and engaging. It gives you a deeper understanding of the world in which you live and helps to develop your skills of research, analysis and evaluation. Studying the past provides opportunities to utilise ICT, analyse sources, collaborate on group presentations, and perform dramatic interpretations, all of which enhance effective learning.

There is no controlled assessment which gives the Department more time to focus upon revision and exam technique. The topics we study sets up students who are already considering taking their interest further to A Level.

Assessment

Assessment is by written examinations. There is no coursework

EXAM	CONTENT	DETAILS
Paper 1: British Thematic Study with Historic Environment	Medicine in Britain c.1250AD- to present, with British Sector of the Western Front	Written exam: 1hr 15m, 52 marks (30%)
Paper 2: Period Study and British Depth Study	Superpower Relations and the Cold War 1941-1991 Early Elizabethan England 1558-1588	Written exam: 1hr 45m, 64 marks (40%)
Paper 3: Modern Depth Study	Weimar and Nazi Germany 1918- 1939	Written exam: 1hr 20m, 52 marks (30%)

GCSE ITALIAN (AQA)

A Modern Foreign language at GCSE will be a great asset to you in the future. Languages complement many subjects. The skills learnt and developed through learning languages are easily transferable to other subjects and further study. Knowing a foreign language will help to improve your cultural awareness, increase your adaptability and make you a more confident and effective communicator. A GCSE will give you a deeper understanding of both the language and the culture of the countries of the language you are studying.

Students who are fortunate to speak languages other than those on offer at St Mary's can also be given the opportunity to sit a GCSE, and the MFL department will help them achieve this.

GCSE course in Italian covers the following topic areas:

- Identity and culture
- Local, national, international and global areas of interest
- Current and future study and employment

Assessment

There are 4 examinations for GCSE.

Each examination is worth 25% of your final grade.

The examinations can be taken at Higher or Foundation Level. All examinations must be taken at the same tier of entry.

EXAM	FOUNDATION	HIGHER
Listening	Section A answers in English Section B answers in Language 40 minutes (25%)	Section A answers in English Section B answers in Language 50 minutes (25%)
Speaking	Role play card Photo card General conversation 3-5 minutes (25%)	Role play card Photo card General conversation 5-7 minutes (25%)
Reading	Section A answers in English Section B answers in Language 45 minutes (25%)	Section A answers in English Section B answers in Language 1 hr (25%)
Writing	Q1 photo description Q2 40 words Q3 5 sentences translation Q4 90 words 1 hr (25%)	Q1 90 words Q2 150 words Q3 paragraph translation 1 hr 15 mins (25%)

GCSE FRENCH/SPANISH (AQA)

A Modern Foreign language at GCSE will be a great asset to you in the future. Languages complement many subjects. The skills learnt and developed through learning languages are easily transferable to other subjects and further study. Knowing a foreign language will help to improve your cultural awareness, increase your adaptability and make you a more confident and effective communicator. A GCSE will give you a deeper understanding of both the language and the culture of the countries of the language you are studying.

Students who are fortunate to speak languages other than those on offer at St Mary's can also be given the opportunity to sit a GCSE, and the MFL department will help them achieve this.

GCSE courses in French and Spanish cover the following topic areas:

- People and lifestyle
- Popular culture
- Communication and the world around us

Assessment

There are 4 examinations for GCSE.

Each examination is worth 25% of your final grade.

The examinations can be taken at Higher or Foundation Level. All examinations must be taken at the same tier of entry.

EXAM	FOUNDATION	HIGHER
Listening	Section A answers in English Section B Dictation in language 40 minutes (25%)	Section A answers in English Section B Dictation in language 50 minutes (25%)
Speaking	Role play card Read aloud task Photo card General conversation 3-5 minutes (25%)	Role play card Read aloud task Photo card General conversation 5-7 minutes (25%)
Reading	Section A answers in English Section B Translation into English 45 minutes (25%)	Section A answers in English Section B Translation into English 1 hr (25%)
Writing	Q1 photo description Q2 50 words Q3 5 sentences - fill in missing word Q4 35 word translation into language Q5 90 words 1 hr 10 mins (25%)	Q1 50 word translation into language Q2 90 words Q3 150 words 1 hr 15 mins (25%)

GCSE ART & DESIGN (OCR)

Learn to draw anything you desire! Be involved in creative workshops and learn new skills! Go on fabulous trips to interesting places! Art is one of the most inspiring and self-developing subjects you could take. Join us to find out...

"I chose art because I am very passionate about it and it is an amazing way to express yourself. I am so glad that I chose it. As a class, we have done so many different pieces that I love and wouldn't have ever thought to do if I didn't choose art. I love this subject, and I always look forward to going to this class."

Gabrielle, Year 10.

"When I started Art at the beginning of September I fell in love with it straight away. It wasn't like other subject. It's a lot more relaxing and enjoyable. If you're a more creative person then I would 100% recommend taking Art, even if you think you aren't the best artist, there are so many different styles of art to discover that I'm sure along the way you will find what you exceed in and reach your full potential. I can already see major improvements in all of my work. The classes are also smaller allowing you to get to know your class better and get as much support from your teacher needed."

Francesca, Year 10.

What is the aim of the course?

- Actively engage in the process of art and design in order to develop as effective and independent students, and as critical and reflective thinkers with enquiring minds.
- Develop creative skills, through learning to use imagination and intuition when exploring and creating images and artefacts.
- Develop competence, with increasing independence, in refining and developing ideas, proposals, personal outcomes or solutions. Learning to actively engage with the experience of working with a broad range of media.
- Develop cultural knowledge, understanding and application of art, craft, design, media and technologies in historical and contemporary contexts, societies and cultures.
- Develop critical understanding through investigative, analytical, experimental, interpretive, practical, technical and expressive skills.
- Develop personal attributes including self-confidence, resilience, perseverance, self-discipline and commitment.
- It is vital that students are self-motivated as they are expected to complete a minimum of 1 hour per week on homework in addition to their class work.

Assessment

COMPONENT	CONTENT	DETAILS
Unit 1	Candidates produce a portfolio of work developed from a teacher-led starting point. The focus is on work that shows exploration, research and acquisition of techniques and skills.	Coursework portfolio 60%
Unit 2	Candidates select one theme from an examination paper to which they prepare and produce a personal response.	Set Task 40%

GCSE BUSINESS STUDIES (EDEXCEL)

GCSE Business Studies is the right choice for you if you enjoy communicating and explaining your ideas, thinking creatively, making decisions, and working with numbers to solve business problems, whilst learning about the world of business through local and international brands.

You will start by exploring the world of small businesses through the lens of an entrepreneur. How and why do business ideas come about? What makes a business successful? You will learn how to develop an idea, spot an opportunity and turn it into a successful business. You will understand how to make a business effective, manage money and see how the world around us affects small businesses and all the people involved.

You will then investigate business growth. How does a business develop beyond the start-up phase? You will learn about key concepts and issues, and the decisions that need to be made when growing a business and working in a global set-up. You will learn about meeting customer needs as well as how to make marketing, operational, financial and human resourcing decisions, while exploring how the wider world affects the business as it grows.

Assessment

Assessment is by two equally weighted examination papers. There is no coursework.

EXAM	CONTENT	DETAILS
Paper 1: Investigating small business	<p>There are three sections in the paper. Each section is ramped, starting with multiple choice questions, moving to short answer questions and ending with extended writing.</p> <p>Sections B and C are based on real life, relevant business contexts and examples.</p>	Written exam: 90 minutes, 90 marks (50%)
Paper 2: Building a business	<p>There are three sections in the paper. Each section is ramped, starting with multiple choice questions, moving to short answer questions and ending with extended writing.</p> <p>Sections B and C are based on real life, relevant business contexts and examples.</p>	Written exam: 90 minutes, 90 marks (50%)

GCSE COMPUTING (OCR)

Skills taught in GCSE Computing, such as programming and other technical computer skills, will open up many career opportunities for students across a wide variety of industries. As more people depend on their smart devices and systems on a daily basis, creating algorithms and apps for these devices is an ever-growing area, requiring the skills offered by this qualification.

This is both an academic and practical qualification, where learners can apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real-world problems. It is an intensely creative subject that involves invention, innovation and excitement.

Assessment

EXAM	CONTENT	DETAILS
Paper 1: Computer Systems	<p>This component is an exam focused on computer systems covering the physical elements of computer science and the associated theory. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• System Architecture• Memory and Storage• Computer networks, connections and Protocols• Network security• System Software• Ethical, legal, cultural and environmental impacts of digital technologies.	Written exam: 1hr 30 min (50%)
Paper 2: Computational Thinking, Algorithms and Programming	<p>This component is focused on the core theory of computer science and the application of computer science principles. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Algorithms• Programming fundamentals• Producing robust programs• Boolean logic• Programming languages and Integrated development environments	Written exam: 1hr 30 min (50%)

GCSE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY (EDUQAS)

Are you looking for a course that combines creativity, problem-solving, and practical skills? Our GCSE Design and Technology course offers an exciting opportunity to explore two engaging specialisms: **Product Design** and **Textiles Design**. Whether you're interested in designing innovative everyday products or creating stylish and functional textile solutions, this course will help you develop your ideas and turn them into reality.

Through this course you'll explore a range of materials such as wood, plastics, metals, fabrics and smart materials, understanding their properties and how they can be used to create high-quality products. You'll also develop essential skills, including sketching, CAD (computer-aided design), and practical techniques like prototyping and construction. Alongside this, you'll learn about key design principles such as sustainability, user-centred design, and emerging technologies, which are increasingly important in today's world.

This combination of theory and hands-on experience will not only help you develop your creative potential but also equip you with valuable skills for a wide range of future careers, from engineering and architecture to fashion and product development. Design and Technology is your chance to shape the world around you and bring your creative ideas to life!

Assessment

The course is assessed through two components. The written examination tests your understanding of design theory, materials, and problem-solving, with a focus on your chosen specialism. The Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) allows you to showcase your creativity and practical skills by designing and making a finished product or textile piece, supported by a portfolio of research and development work.

EXAM/COURSEWORK	CONTENT	DETAILS
Component 1: Design and Technology in the 21st Century. Written Examination	Core principles of design covering design theory, materials, and problem-solving skills. Specialist knowledge questions focused on Product Design or Textiles Design, depending on your chosen specialism.	Written exam: 2 hr (50%)
Component 2: Design and make task. Non-Exam Assessment (NEA)	A design project based on a context provided by the exam board that requires students to demonstrate their ability to research, design, make and evaluate.	NEA: approx. 35 hours completed in lesson time. (50%)

GCSE DRAMA (EDUQAS)

Do I get to do coursework?

Yes, more than half the course is assessed by coursework, so if you're not a big fan of exams, then this may be a good positive!

Do I get to do performances?

Yes, performance is an essential part of drama. You will do two main pieces of assessed performance.

Firstly, you will do a piece called "Devising a piece of theatre"

- You will work in a team to improvise a piece of theatre.
- There will be 2 – 4 actors in each team
- You will rehearse your play with your friends in lessons and then perform it in year 10.
- You will also write about what you did.
- The play can be about anything you choose!

Secondly, you will do a piece called the "Scripted piece of theatre"

- You will work to rehearse and perform a scene from a play written by someone else.
- There will 2 – 4 actors in your team
- You will need to Learn all your lines for the scene.
- You do get to choose a style that suits you, e.g. comedy, physical theatre or a realistic play.

What other things do we get to do?

- Go to the theatre on trips organised by your teacher, for example 'Of Mice and Men'. Write a review of what you saw.
- You also get to study a play and write about what you think the actors, director or designers might do if they were putting on this play.

COMPONENT	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Component 1: Devising Theatre	Learners devise a piece of theatre in response to the stimulus, which demonstrates either the techniques of a theatre practitioner or the dramatic characteristics of a specific genre of the learner's choice.	40%
Component 2: Scripted Performance	Learners are required to participate in a performance from a text. Learners will gain a deeper understanding of how to interpret a text for performance and realise artistic intentions.	20%
Component 3: Written Exam	This component requires learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed through the study of a performance text, and through responding to live theatre.	1 hr 30 mins (40%)

GCSE FOOD & NUTRITION (EDUQAS)

Do you enjoy cooking, experimenting with ingredients, and learning about food? Our GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition course is the perfect opportunity to develop practical skills and a deeper understanding of the science behind what we eat. This exciting course focuses on cooking techniques, nutrition, and the relationship between food, health, and the environment. Whether you love creating new dishes or want to understand the role food plays in our daily lives, this course will give you the knowledge and confidence to thrive in the kitchen and beyond.

You'll explore a variety of topics, including food safety, the nutritional needs of different people, and how ingredients are affected by preparation and cooking methods. You'll also learn about food provenance and sustainability, discovering how our food choices impact the world around us. Practical sessions will help you master essential cooking techniques, from knife skills to baking, and give you the confidence to prepare a wide range of delicious and nutritious dishes.

By studying Food Preparation and Nutrition, you'll develop valuable life skills and knowledge that can lead to careers in catering, dietetics, food science or hospitality. This course is your chance to explore your passion for food, build practical expertise, and learn how to make informed and healthy food choices.

Assessment

The course is assessed through two components. The written examination tests your understanding of food science, nutrition, and dietary needs, as well as your ability to plan and evaluate recipes.

The Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) consists of two tasks: the first involves investigating the science behind food preparation, while the second requires you to plan, prepare, and present a selection of dishes in response to a set brief.

EXAM/COURSEWORK	CONTENT	DETAILS
Component 1: Principles of Food Preparation and Nutrition. Written Examination.	This component assesses your understanding of the theoretical aspects of food preparation and nutrition, including food commodities, principles of nutrition, diet and good health, the science of food, where food comes from, and cooking and food preparation.	Written exam: 1 hr 45 min (50%)
Component 2: Food Preparation and Nutrition in Action. Non-Exam Assessment (NEA).	This component involves two practical tasks: Task 1: An investigation into the scientific principles underlying the preparation and cooking of food. Task 2: A practical assessment where you plan, prepare, cook, and present a menu of dishes within a single session	Non-Exam Assessment (50%)

GCSE MUSIC (EDUQAS)

Are you passionate about performing, composing and exploring different styles of music? GCSE Music offers the perfect opportunity to develop your skills, express your creativity, and deepen your love for music. You would be expected to already play an instrument or sing, and ideally be having regular instrumental lessons. There is a possibility you could start these now and still reach the required standard at the end of Year 11. A basic understanding of note reading will be very useful, but you will learn more of this as part of the course.

Instrumental Tuition at St Mary's

Instrumental tuition is offered to GCSE and A level students in school, at a subsidised rate with the expectation of participation in extra-curricular music activities. We offer tuition on a wide range of instruments and if we do not have a teacher for your particular instrument, we will endeavour to obtain one. It is expected that all GCSE music pupils take part in at least one whole school music club a week.

Assessment

EXAM	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Unit 1: Performing	One solo and one ensemble performance	Internally assessed/ externally moderated: 30%
Unit 2: Composing	Two compositions : one set to a brief and one free composition	Internally assessed/ externally moderated: 30%
Unit 3: Listening and Appraising	Six short questions on unprepared musical extracts and two questions on the set works studied over the 2 years, which will be 'Africa' by Toto and 'Badinerie' by Bach	Written Paper: 1 hr 15m 40%

GCSE PHYSICAL EDUCATION (OCR)

GCSE Physical Education is an excellent course for students who currently enjoy Physical Education at school and regularly participate in competitive sports. The course is ideal for students who achieve highly in science, as there is a strong scientific element, including applied anatomy and physiology, physical training, and sports psychology.

40% of the overall grade is based on practical sport and written coursework, providing an excellent opportunity to secure marks outside of exams and ease exam-related pressure. The practical assessment involves performing in three sports of the student's choosing, making it perfect for those who excel in multiple disciplines. This course is especially beneficial for students interested in careers in sports science, coaching physiotherapy, or other related fields.

For a full course description, please visit: [OCR GCSE Physical Education](#)

Assessment

The assessment is divided into three components: two written papers and a non-exam assessment (NEA). The NEA includes both written coursework and a practical assessment.

EXAM/COURSEWORK	CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Paper 1: Physical factors affecting performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applied anatomy and physiology• Physical training	Written exam: 1 hr, 60 marks (30%)
Paper 2: Socio-cultural issues and sports psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Socio-cultural influences• Sports psychology	Written exam: 1 hr, 60 marks (30%)
Non-Exam Assessment: Performance in physical education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practical activity assessment• Analysing and Evaluating Performance (AEP)	Non-Exam Assessment: 80 marks (40%) (comprising written coursework and a practical assessment where students perform in three sports of their choosing)

SIXTH FORM STUDY AT ST MARY'S

Entry to St. Mary's Sixth Form requires students to have achieved certain grades in order to continue their studies in those subjects. The 'entry requirements' provided below are based on the most recent Sixth form brochure (Sept 2026). However, they may vary slightly from year to year.

SUBJECT	QUALIFICATION	ENTRANCE CRITERIA
Art (Fine Art)	A-Level	Grade 5 in GCSE Art
Fine Art (Photography)	A-Level	Grade 5 in GCSE Art or portfolio
Biology	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths AND Grade 6 in GCSE Biology OR Grades 6-6 in GCSE Double Science AND Grade 6 in GCSE Maths
Business	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Business OR Grade 6 in GCSE Maths (if Business has not previously been studied).
Cambridge Technical in Information Technology	CTEC	5 GCSE grades 9-4 (must include grade 4 in GCSE Maths)
Chemistry	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths AND Grade 6 in GCSE Chemistry OR Grades 6-6 in GCSE Double Science AND Grade 6 in GCSE Maths
Computer Science	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Computing Science OR Grade 6 GCSE Maths (if Computer Science has not previously been studied)
Creative Media Production	BTEC Level 3	5 GCSE grades at 4-9 (must include GCSE English)
DT: Three Dimensional Design	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE DT OR Art
DT: Textile Design	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE DT
DT: Graphic Communication	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE DT OR Art
Economics	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths AND Grade 6 in GCSE English
English Language	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE English Language or Literature
English Literature	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE English Language or Literature
Film Studies	A-Level	5 GCSE grades at 4-9 (must include GCSE English)
Financial Studies	Level 3 Diploma	5 GCSE grades at 4-9 (must include GCSE Maths)
French	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE French
Geography	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Geography
Health and Social Care	AAQ BTEC National	5 GCSE grades 4-9 (must include English and Science)
History	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE History
Italian	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Italian
Mathematics	A-Level	Grade 7 in GCSE Mathematics
Mathematical Studies	Level 3 qualification	Grade 4 in GCSE Maths. (This is not a full course and is studied <u>in addition</u> to your 3 main courses. It cannot be taken alongside A-Level Maths)
Further Mathematics	A-Level	Grade 8 in Maths (This subject must be taken alongside A-Level Maths)
Performing Arts	B-TEC Level 3	Grade 5 in GCSE Drama OR English
Physical Education	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE PE
Physics	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Maths AND Grade 6 in GCSE Physics OR Grades 6-6 in GCSE Double Science AND Grade 6 in GCSE Maths
Politics	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE English, History, Geography OR Religious Studies
Psychology	A-Level	Grade 5 in GCSE Science or Maths AND Grade 6 in GCSE English
Religious Studies	A-Level	Grade 5 in GCSE English AND GCSE Religious Studies
Sociology	A-Level	Grade 5 in GCSE English OR GCSE History, Geography or Religious Studies
Spanish	A-Level	Grade 6 in GCSE Spanish
Sport	BTEC	5 GCSE grades at 4-9 (including PE, Science and English)

TIMELINE - WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

DATE	EVENT
January 2026	Head of Year delivers assemblies to year 9 students.
Wednesday 28th January 2026	Year 9 Options Evening
Thursday 5th February 2026	Year 9 Parents Evening, 4.30pm - 7.30pm
Friday 13th February 2026	Options Choice Deadline
June 2026	Confirmation of choices sent home
September 2026	Students begin courses
Friday 18th September 2026	Deadline for course change requests

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. When do I have to complete my options form by?

The options form must be completed by **Friday 13th February 2026**.

Q. Why do I have to submit my choices so early?

If demand for a particular subject increases it may mean we need to recruit a new teacher. The earlier we have this information the better chance we have of a successful recruitment.

Q. Do I have to make any reserve choices?

Yes. Due to the practicalities of creating a timetable, it is not always possible to enable every student to get all of their first choices. While we will try to maximise the number of students who get their first preferences, there will inevitably be some students who are allocated one of their reserve choices. Furthermore, for courses to be viable there usually has to be a minimum number of students electing to take the course. In the unlikely event that demand for a course is low, we may not be able to run the course. In this event, reserve choices would come into effect.

Q. What if I change my mind before the summer?

The sooner you realise that you want to change one of your options, the better. You should send an email to info@stmarys.net and put 'FAO Timetabler'. However, the longer you wait to inform us, the higher the possibility that we may not be able to accommodate your change.

Q. What if I want to change subjects after I start the course?

Although we hope that you will think carefully about your choices and therefore not have any nasty surprises when you start the course in September, there are occasionally situations where students request to change their subject after the course has started. In the vast majority of cases, these requests will only be considered if they are received before the end of the 3rd week of September. The decision whether to approve the request remains with the school. A request to change after this deadline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Q. Can I choose to study additional subjects and sit exams?

Yes – students can ask to be entered for exams in subjects they are not studying at school. This happens most commonly where students speak a second language at home and wish to enter the GCSE exams in this language. Any such requests are at the discretion of the school.

Q. If I am not on the pathway A can I still choose a language?

Yes, students on the pathway B can choose to study a language as one of their options. Students on the pathway C can also make a request, however, this would be considered in consultation with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to ensure that this choice would have a reasonable chance of leading to a successful outcome.

Q. Who decides the pathways for each student? How is this decision made?

This decision is made by the school, in consultation with the Head of Year, SENCO and member of staff with responsibility for assessment and data. The primary criteria used to allocate students to pathways is the wide range of attainment data collected over the course of the student's time at St Mary's Catholic School.

Q. What is EBACC?

EBACC is short for English Baccalaureate. The EBACC is a measure created by the Department of Education which is taken as the ideal broad curriculum offer, and recognises students who achieve good grades across a range of subjects, including English, Maths, Science, Humanities and Languages. Students in the EBACC pathway will complete a curriculum that meets this standard.

Q. Who pays for the exam fees?

Examination boards charge fees when students are entered for public examinations. Students will normally be entered for all the public examination courses they are following and the fees will be paid by the school. Students are expected to have followed the course to the best of their ability and to have completed all coursework assignments. If a pupil has a record of incomplete assignments or poor attendance without good reason, the school may decide not to enter the pupil for a subject. Parents would be consulted well in advance and the pupil urged to improve his/her performance before this decision was taken.

The school's policy for charging states that the school may recover wasted fees where a student fails to complete coursework or sit final examinations, unless a good reason exists for such failure.

