



KS4
Curriculum Preferences
2026



The Curriculum Preferences Process

As your child begins to consider their subject preferences for Key Stage 4 courses starting in September 2026, please be assured that we will support you and your child throughout the process.

This booklet is an excellent place to begin. Please take time to read through the information carefully with your son or daughter and contact us if you have any questions about the content or the process.

Our aim is to provide every student with a broad, varied and balanced curriculum that supports their strengths, interests and future ambitions. A wide range of subjects is often more beneficial than a narrow selection, and we encourage students to think carefully about how their choices will help them to keep future pathways open.

Students are asked to indicate **four preferences and a reserve subject** on the online Google Form by **Thursday 12 February**. Each preferences form will be reviewed carefully to ensure that the subjects chosen provide an ambitious and appropriate curriculum. Students must also select one additional reserve subject in case a course is unable to run or if adjustments are required to maintain a balanced programme of study.

If you or your child would like guidance at any point, support is available. Students may speak with their subject teachers, form tutors, Mrs Askew (Careers Adviser), or myself. I am very happy to discuss options with families, and I encourage you to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the preferences process.

Mr J Brady

Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum)

Art and Design



Principle Teacher	Mr J Colluney
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Art gives students the opportunity to express their ideas and develop their own creativity and personal style. Pupils explore the work of artists from the past and present, using this inspiration to develop their skills, confidence and imagination. Through practical lessons, students learn a wide range of artistic techniques and processes, helping them to refine their interests and produce exciting, high-quality artwork. They are encouraged to experiment, develop and record ideas, leading to a final creative piece that reflects their learning. Studying Art builds creativity, independence and problem-solving skills, which are highly valued in further education and a wide range of careers.

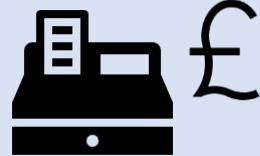
Assessment Information

- Unit 1: Portfolio – 60% Students develop a range of coursework projects, showing research, idea development, drawing skills and a personal final outcome.
- Unit 2: Externally Set Assignment – 40% Students respond to an AQA set theme, working independently to plan and create a final piece under timed conditions.

Career Opportunities

Studying Art at GCSE is essential for progression to A level Art and provides a strong foundation for a wide range of creative careers in the UK. It develops creativity, visual communication and problem-solving skills valued by employers. Art can lead to careers such as artist, art teacher, graphic designer, set designer for theatre, television or film, and fashion designer, helping students build confidence for further study and employment in the creative industries.

Business Studies



Subject Leader	Ms A Ashworth
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - OCR
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Business Studies helps students understand how organisations operate in the real world, from small start-ups to large national and international companies. Pupils learn what it means to be enterprising, how businesses are set up and managed, and how areas such as marketing, human resources and finance support success. The course suits students interested in how businesses in the news make decisions, as well as those who may one day want to run their own business or work within one. Students develop skills in research, ICT, numeracy and extended writing. They apply theory to real business situations, learning how to analyse information, make judgements and evaluate what makes businesses successful.

Assessment Information

- Paper 1 Investigating small businesses 50%
- Paper 2 Building a business 50%

Assessment is a combination of multiple choice, short answer, calculation and extended response questions. 2/3 of questions are based on real business scenarios.

Career Opportunities

Business Studies is an excellent foundation for A level Business or Economics, as well as vocational courses such as BTEC or Cambridge Technicals. It unlocks a wide range of future pathways, including degrees and careers in business, economics, law, management, accounting, marketing, human resources and international business. The subject helps students develop transferable skills that are valued in almost every workplace and industry.

Computer Science



Subject Lead	Ms A Ashworth
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - OCR
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

This GCSE Computer Science course encourages our students to develop the understanding of their technological world. Students will analyse problems in computational terms through practical experience of designing, writing, testing and debugging coded problems. They will also develop their understanding of the components that make up digital systems. Using real world case studies, they will investigate the impact that digital systems have had on society.

Computer Science is divided into two disciplines:

- Computer systems.
- Computational thinking, algorithms and programming.

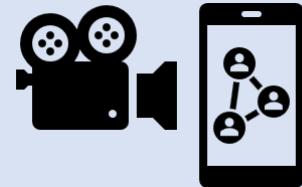
Assessment Information

- Paper 1: Computer Systems written examination (50%)
- Paper 2: Computational thinking, algorithms and programming Written examination (50%)

Career Opportunities

Studying GCSE Computer Science provides a strong foundation for further study and a wide range of future careers. Pupils can progress to A-level Computer Science or related Sixth Form courses, as well as specialist college programmes in areas such as IT, software development, gaming, and digital technologies. From there, they can move into university study or training routes that lead to roles including app and web development, software engineering, cyber security, artificial intelligence, and IT project management.

Creative iMedia



Subject Leader	Ms A Ashworth
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	OCR Cambridge National, equivalent to one GCSE.
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Creative iMedia introduces students to the digital media industry and the powerful influence it has on modern life. Pupils explore how media is created and used, while developing the confidence to design and produce their own digital work. The course blends theory with hands-on projects, giving students experience of planning, researching and developing ideas before producing final outcomes. Along the way, they may create graphics, websites, animations, video, photography or game concepts, building both technical ability and creative thinking. It is an excellent choice for students who enjoy practical, imaginative work.

Assessment Information

- Exam 40%
- Coursework, internally marked moderated by OCR 25%
- Optional unit, internally marked and moderated by OCR 35%.

Career Opportunities

Creative iMedia can lead on to further study in digital media, IT, graphics or creative subjects at college and beyond. The skills developed are useful for careers such as graphic designer, web designer, games designer, animator, social media content creator, film or video editor, photographer and digital marketing. Employers value the problem-solving, creativity and technical understanding gained through this course, as they are increasingly important across many modern industries.

Child Development



Subject Leader	Mrs Langley, Mrs Fielden : Principal Teacher
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	OCR Level 2 Cambridge National Certificate
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Educating and nurturing young children plays a vital role in society. This course helps students develop an understanding of how children grow from conception to adulthood, including how to keep them safe, support healthy development, and recognise key milestones. The syllabus explores three main areas: how children develop, the equipment and resources needed to support them as they grow, and the importance of play in learning and development. Through this, students build knowledge, empathy, and confidence when working with young children, gaining valuable insight into childcare and child development.

Assessment Information

- Health and well-being for child development - Examination (40%)
- Create a safe environment and understand the nutritional needs of children from birth to five years - Coursework (30%)
- Understanding the development of a child from one to five years - Coursework (30%)

Career Opportunities

This course provides a strong foundation for further study in Child Development and Child Care. It is particularly useful for students interested in careers such as nursing, medicine, teaching, early years practitioner, nursery nurse, or social work. It develops the knowledge, empathy, and understanding needed for working with children, families, and care settings.

Drama



Principle Teacher	TBC
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Drama encourages students to explore ideas, emotions and different perspectives, helping them to understand the world and the people within it. The subject develops valuable skills such as confidence, communication, teamwork, leadership and creativity. Pupils experience a range of roles, including performance, design and technical work, allowing everyone to find an area that suits their strengths and interests. GCSE Drama treats drama as a practical art form. Students create, rehearse and perform pieces for an audience, supported by an understanding of theatre styles and techniques. For practical work, pupils can choose to develop as performers or as designers.

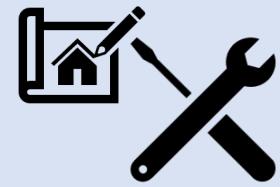
Assessment Information

- Component 1 - Understanding Drama (external exam 40%)
- Component 2 - Devising Drama (practical component 40%)
- Component 3 - Texts in practice (external exam 20%)

Career Opportunities

Drama opens doors to a wide range of creative and people-focused careers. It builds confidence, communication, teamwork and presentation skills. Students may go on to roles such as actor, director, broadcaster, theatre manager, community arts worker or arts administrator. Drama also supports pathways such as teaching, law, public speaking, and work in media or events. Technical routes, including lighting, sound and design, are equally important options. Skills developed through Drama help students perform confidently, think creatively and work effectively with others, whatever career they choose.

Design & Technology



Subject Leader	Mrs K Langley
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - Edexcel
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Design and Technology brings together many different disciplines within the creative sphere. Maths, Science, Engineering, Art, graphics, design and creativity all come together to design and make products. If you are creative and enjoy practical ways of learning, then this subject is for you. Sketching, drawing, using wood, metals and plastics and other materials available will allow you to take control of your own creativity and design. The way in which we learn in design is by trying out our ideas and making them work. It's not always easy, but the challenge is satisfying and different to the challenges found in other subjects. It is hands on and practical, supported with theoretical concepts to underpin the knowledge and understanding.

Assessment Information

- A substantial design and make task to include investigate, design, make and evaluate a product 50% of the GCSE.
- External exam Sections A and B. Section A is core principles and Section B is materials specific 50% of the GCSE.

Career Opportunities

This course provides a strong foundation for A level Product Design and further study in design, engineering, and technical subjects. It supports progression into areas such as aeronautical, mechanical, electrical, agricultural, electronic and computer engineering, as well as Art and Design, T Level and BTEC courses. It is also valuable preparation for apprenticeships in Engineering and Manufacturing, trades such as plumbing, construction and joinery, and careers including graphic, jewellery, fashion and interior design, along with garden and landscape design.

French



Subject leader	Mrs S Grix
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Learning French offers both personal and professional benefits, helping students develop confidence, communication skills and a broader understanding of the world. Research shows that studying a language supports brain development and improves future employment opportunities, often leading to higher earning potential. A GCSE in French is highly valued by colleges, universities and employers, as it demonstrates commitment, resilience and strong communication skills. Students develop listening, reading, speaking and writing skills while gaining cultural awareness of life and work in French-speaking countries.

Assessment Information

Paper 1: Listening 25%

Paper 2: Speaking 25%

Paper 3: Reading 25%

Paper 4: Writing 25%

Career Opportunities

French is ideal for students who enjoy the challenge of learning a language and want to develop valuable communication and thinking skills. Studying a foreign language supports a wide range of future pathways and keeps career options open. A GCSE in French is essential for A level French and useful for many careers, including travel and tourism, business, education, fashion, journalism and international relations. Language skills are also highly valued in law, politics, medicine, sport, engineering and global communications.

Geography



Subject Lead	Mr T Millat
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Geography helps students make sense of the world around them and inspires curiosity about places, people and environments. Pupils learn how the Earth's landscapes, climates and societies are shaped, connected and change over time. Through fieldwork, investigations and working with real data, students develop strong problem-solving, numeracy and decision-making skills. They learn to use maps, images and digital tools to explore the world in practical and engaging ways. Geography encourages students to think critically about global issues such as climate change, development and sustainability, helping them to become informed, confident young people ready for the future.

Assessment Information

- Paper 1 Living with the Physical Environment 35%
- Paper 2 Challenges in the Human Environment 35%
- Paper 3 Geographical Applications: 15% is based on fieldwork, 15% is the interpretation of unseen materials.

Career Opportunities

Geography is a highly versatile qualification, prized by employers for the broad perspective and critical reasoning skills it develops. It provides a unique foundation for understanding global events and developing well-reasoned arguments. Future pathways are diverse, with students progressing into sectors such as Engineering, Architecture, and Meteorology, as well as International Relations, Agriculture, and Computer Science (GIS). It also offers an excellent grounding for careers in Business, Education, and Geology.

History



Subject Leader	Mr S Farquarson
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Studying History enables students to understand the past and how it has shaped the world we live in today. It encourages pupils to explore how people, events and ideas have influenced societies, helping them to understand themselves and the choices made by past generations. Through studying History, students develop the ability to question evidence, analyse sources and interpretations, and avoid accepting information at face value, skills vital in modern society. The curriculum develops a broad understanding of the past, with a focus on British history, Britain's relationship with the wider world, and key international events, including the inter-war period and Germany. Students build strong analytical and evaluative skills through the study of historical sources and interpretations.

Assessment Information

- Paper 1 Germany 1900-1945: Democracy and Dictatorship
Conflict and Tension: Inter war years 1918-1939 (2 hours) 50%
- Paper 2 Norman England: 1066-1100 Britain, Migration and Empire
790-Present day (2 hours) 50%

Career Opportunities

Studying History is essential for progression to A level History and provides a strong foundation for a wide range of careers. It develops research, analysis and communication skills valued across many professions. A History qualification can lead to roles such as archaeologist, genealogist, or professional researcher. It also supports creative and communication-based careers including author, journalist, lawyer, librarian and teacher, with skills that are highly transferable and respected by employers.

Hospitality & Catering



Subject Leader	Mrs K Langley
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	A level 1/2 technical award Equivalent to a GCSE. Eduqas
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Hospitality and Catering gives students an engaging insight into the food and hospitality sector. The course develops practical cooking skills, creativity, independence and confidence, while building an essential life skill. Students learn about the hospitality industry, health and safety, and food safety, as well as the importance of nutrition and how to plan balanced menus. They will prepare, cook and present dishes, and learn how to evaluate and improve their work. The course combines practical and written elements, encouraging students to think imaginatively, take responsibility, and achieve their best, while building a strong foundation of knowledge that supports continued study and a wide range of future career opportunities..

Assessment Information

- Unit 1 The Hospitality and Catering Industry - Exam 40%
- Unit 2 Hospitality and Catering in action - Coursework 60%

Career Opportunities

This course opens pathways into a wide range of roles linked to food, health, and the hospitality industry. Students may go on to careers such as chef, environmental health officer, food journalist, sports scientist, catering or events manager, hotel manager, front of house manager, food technologist, dietitian, teacher, or food stylist and photographer. The combination of practical skills, organisation, problem solving, and understanding of nutrition provides an excellent platform for further study and future careers.

Music



Principle Teacher	Miss G Winder
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - Eduqas
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

GCSE Music invites students to think, create and perform in ways that deepen their appreciation of sound and expression. The course develops musical confidence while encouraging pupils to explore styles from classical to film music, rock and beyond. Students learn how musicians structure ideas, and they apply this knowledge when performing on their chosen instrument or voice and when composing their own pieces. Alongside practical music-making, pupils listen critically, discuss what they hear and refine their musical understanding. Music nurtures discipline, teamwork and creativity, while giving students the chance to develop their individual musical identity.

Assessment Information

- Component 1 : Performing solo and ensemble pieces recorded for assessment 30%
- Component 2 : Compose two pieces using taught techniques and briefs 30%
- Component 3 : Appraising Listen, study and evaluate music for the final exam 40%

Career Opportunities

Music can lead to a wide range of creative and technical careers. It supports roles such as performer, music teacher, theatre or arts manager, and sound engineer. The subject also develops confidence, teamwork and discipline, which are highly valued across many industries, whether students continue with music or choose another pathway.

Physical Education



Subject Leader	Mrs K Rainbow
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - Edexcel
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

This course is ideal for students with a keen interest in sport who take part competitively both in and outside school. It develops knowledge of key sporting principles, the benefits of exercise, and how to improve personal performance. Pupils study how the body moves and functions, explore psychological factors in sport, and examine contemporary issues affecting participation. The course also considers sociological influences on sport. Alongside theory, students develop practical skills to enhance their performance in three chosen sports, combining scientific understanding with hands-on application to improve ability and confidence.

Assessment Information

- Component 1: Fitness and Body Systems examination 36%
- Component 2: Health and Performance examination 24%
- Component 3: Practical Performance internally marked and externally moderated 30%
- Component 4: Personal Exercise Programme (PEP) internally marked and externally moderated 10% of the qualification

Career Opportunities

A GCSE in PE can lead to careers in healthcare, sports psychology, helping athletes improve performance and wellbeing, or sports coaching, guiding teams and individuals. It supports pathways into physiotherapy and PE teaching, as well as roles in the fitness industry, officiating, public services, and the Army, all requiring teamwork, discipline, and physical skills.

Religious Education



Subject Leader	Miss N Hockey
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

Religious Education helps pupils understand the world and themselves through the study of religion, beliefs, and ethical ideas that have shaped society. This GCSE covers Christianity, Islam, and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism and atheism, alongside contemporary themes like conflict, peace, and crime and punishment. Students explore questions about belief, values, meaning, purpose, and truth, developing their own perspectives. The course also builds analytical and critical thinking, research, and leadership skills, offering a strong foundation for further study, while helping pupils appreciate how religion, philosophy, and ethics influence culture, behaviour, and national life.

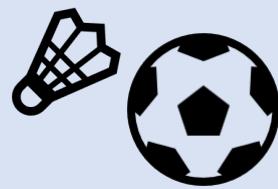
Assessment Information

- Component 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices
- Component 2: Thematic studies two religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes and two textual studies themes.

Career Opportunities

Religious Education develops empathy, critical thinking, communication, and the ability to understand different perspectives, all of which are highly valued by employers. Students can progress into a wide range of careers, including politics, the Civil Service, journalism, media, the charity sector, law, and nursing. It provides an excellent foundation for any role that involves working with people, ethical decision-making, and understanding society.

Sports Studies



Subject Leader	Mrs K Rainbow
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	OCR Cambridge National
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

This course is ideal for students with a genuine interest in Sport and Physical Activity who are active outside of school. While it is not a GCSE, it offers a practical, engaging approach to learning, allowing students to develop leadership, communication, strategic thinking, and planning skills. It also increases their knowledge of sport, physical activity, and leisure. The course provides a strong foundation for further education and helps build skills that are highly valued in the workplace, offering an alternative pathway for students who thrive in a more hands-on, less exam-focused environment..

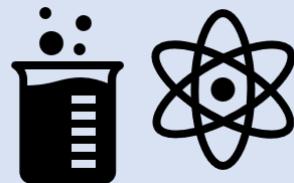
Assessment Information

- Contemporary issues in sport examination (40%)
- Performance & Leadership in sports activities coursework (40%)
- Outdoor & Adventurous activities awareness coursework (20%)

Career Opportunities

An OCR Cambridge National in Sports studies can lead to careers in healthcare, sports psychology, helping athletes improve performance and wellbeing, or sports coaching, guiding teams and individuals. It supports pathways into physiotherapy and PE teaching, as well as roles in the fitness industry, officiating, public services, and the Army, all requiring teamwork, discipline, and physical skills.

Triple Science



Subject Lead	Mrs R Hoy
Qualification Type and Exam Board:	GCSE - AQA
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

GCSE Triple Science is an academically rigorous and rewarding pathway that awards students three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. This course is aimed at the students with the highest ability in science.

Biology covers the mechanics of life, from cell biology and infection to inheritance and ecology. Chemistry investigates the building blocks of matter, including organic chemistry, chemical changes, and the Earth's resources. Physics examines the fundamental laws of nature, spanning energy, forces, and space physics. This rigorous pathway offers the ideal foundation for students pursuing A-Levels and careers in medicine, engineering, or research.

Assessment Information

Each exam is 1 hour 45 minutes. You will take two Biology, two Chemistry and two Physics exams. Each exam is 100 marks and approximately 20 % of the marks will be obtained by assessing your mathematical skills in a science context.

Career Opportunities

Biotechnologist, microbiologist, marine biologist, pharmacologist, research scientist, specialised healthcare professional, doctor, paramedic, conservation officer. Analytical Chemist, chemical engineer, research scientist, nanotechnologist, pharmacologist, environmental consultant, science writer, clinical biochemist. Acoustics, aeronautical engineer, astronomer, electrical engineer, medical physicist, radioautographic, research scientist, space and remote sensing, pilot.

Compass Curriculum



Qualification Type and Exam Board:	Various technical awards and L2 qualifications
Course Hours per week	2.5 hours (over 2 years)

Course Outline

As part of the FCAT Compass curriculum, students may have the opportunity to apply for a range of vocational courses delivered by partner providers such as Myerscough College, Blackpool Sixth Form College, and Blackpool & The Fylde College. Final course details for next year have not yet been confirmed.

These courses are organised and taught by the colleges, not by GCA. Students will be expected to travel, and the courses will extend beyond the normal school day. Transport is provided. Our students will learn alongside peers from across the trust and they will require a strong level of commitment and independence and maturity.

When completing the Year 9 Preferences Form, we ask that families make their main choices from our internal curriculum offer. This ensures students have access to a broad, balanced programme taught and supported by staff at GCA. If parents would like to explore the FCAT Compass vocational courses, there is an opportunity on the form to indicate interest. When more information is released by FCAT, we will discuss these options further with students and families who have expressed an interest to ensure the courses are right for the individual, providing both the appropriate challenge and that the level of commitment required is fully understood.

Compass courses are managed by FCAT and external providers and may change beyond the school's control; places are allocated by the provider, not by GCA.

Compass Curriculum



Vocational Qualifications

The colleges offer Level 1 courses, equivalent to GCSE grades 1–3, which are designed to support students' progression to higher-level study. Additionally, Level 2 courses are available and are equivalent to GCSEs at grades 4 and above.

Mrs Askew our careers advisor will have more information about these pathways, and she encourages any students interested in Compass to make an appointment with her.

The Compass curriculum offer will be available only to students who consistently demonstrate high standards of behaviour and can be relied upon to act as trusted ambassadors for GCA when traveling to and learning in alternative settings.