



**St Mary's Catholic High School,  
Leyland.**

**Year 9 Options Booklet  
Your Pathway to Success**

2026

*"Let your light shine"*



### Year 9 Options for Key Stage 4

Dear Parent / Carer,

There is a section on the school website for all parents and carers of Year 9 pupils and for pupils in Year 9 regarding the curriculum options available at Key Stage 4, starting in September 2026.

A detailed booklet containing advice and guidance and an outline of the curriculum will be available. The selection of Key Stage 4 options is a very important decision for all pupils. The choices they make will affect their Post 16 and career opportunities. Along with information provided by subject teachers in lessons, pupils will be offered a variety of opportunities to gain information which will help them to make this decision in an informed way and with confidence.

### Year 9 Options Schedule

The aim is to meet the St Mary's Year 9 Options Schedule as follows:

1. The Year 9 Options Information Presentation.
2. The Year 9 Parents' Evening.
3. The options form must be completed no later than Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March.
4. It is not a first come basis, to allow time to consider the options with due care, however pupils who miss the deadline are put at risk of not getting their first choice.
5. Pupils will be advised of their option allocations after the Easter Holidays.

I appreciate that this is a difficult time for pupils and families, asking pupils to make decisions about their future time at St Mary's that may impact on their wider progression into college and career opportunities. We have put together comprehensive information for you to make use of, and there will be further opportunities for discussion after the parents evening for any parent / carer that may wish, and we will set up meetings as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Mr C Meldrum

Deputy Headteacher



LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

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## Helping your Child with their Options and Career Decisions

Young people today have more choices to make about their future than ever before but there are a number of factors that affect them. An increasingly competitive job market, high youth unemployment, and rising fees for higher education all impact on a young person's plans, making it even more important for them to make the right choices for their education, training and employment.

To help with making the right decisions, we endeavour to ensure that every young person should receive information, advice and guidance about their future. While for many young people a career may seem a distant prospect, decisions they make about education and training now may affect their options later on. As they make choices and plans for the future, young people need support from the people who know them best, their families. There are many ways that parents and carers can offer support with these choices and this options booklet is intended to help you with this process. However, it is important to **include your son/daughter as, ultimately, it is their future**. With the right information, advice and guidance young people can make informed decisions about their future and successfully negotiate the tricky transition to adult status.

Here are a few ideas for parents/carers:

- Talk to your daughter/son about careers they are interested in. Find out what they know already and encourage them to research to find out more. Encourage your child to talk to you about your own career and the decisions you had to face. They could also talk with the rest of the family, friends and neighbours, and even with their teachers.
- Carry out research yourself there are many internet sites that offer excellent impartial information a good place to start is the Careers Advice for Parents website: <http://www.careersadviceforparents.org> this site also contains links to many other useful sites that will provide you and your child with valuable information, advice and guidance. <http://icould.com> is another site that is well worth a visit.
- Read the information in this booklet carefully and ensure that your child does the same and understands it. Do not be afraid to contact the school if there is anything you or your child is unsure about.
- In England, to supplement the advice provided by schools, the **National Careers Service offers** online support for young people aged 11-19 via text/email, telephone services, web chat and online. <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
- Make sure your child meets all the deadlines.

If after researching your child still finds it difficult to select a possible career route then please encourage them to choose a broad curriculum that will give them the most options post 16.

Your child will get a free choice and will be asked to choose **5** preferences, of these they will be awarded **3** and whilst we will make every effort to ensure the first three choices are given this cannot be guaranteed.

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## How to Succeed

There are several ways in which you can improve your chances of succeeding over the next two years and beyond. Some are obvious such as making the right choices for you, your abilities and your future dreams. However, there are other things that are as important that are often overlooked and include: attendance and your Attitude to Learning (ATL). Both these areas seriously affect your chances of success.

### Raise your Attendance – Raise your Attainment!

#### Every minute matters

A good attendance and punctuality record shows commitment, attentiveness and a determination to succeed. Whatever career pathway you choose, an employer will keep a check on your attendance and timekeeping just as we do in school so start as you mean to continue. Be present, on time and maximise your chances throughout your life!

In school there is a clear link between attendance and success. Our best results correspond with our highest attendance levels. This is why maximum attendance is so important.

Your attendance is **90%**, is this good?

**NO!**

90% attendance = 1/2 day missed every week. This is 4 weeks over a year.

In the world of work you would be classed as Part time!

Research suggests that **17** missed school days a year = GCSE **grade DROP** in achievement. (DFE)

The greater the attendance the greater the chance of achievement.

So 90% is NOT as good as it first seemed.

Make the right choice when choosing your options and make the right choice to be present at school every day!

### Attitude to Learning (ATL)

Your attitude is key to your success both at school and in life. If you want to learn and succeed you **can!** History is full of people who have achieved what others thought impossible. Each year we have students who are expected to get Grade **“3”**s at GCSE who get grade **“7”**s but we sadly also get a few students who should get grade **“7”**s GCSE who get grade **“3”**s. The difference is their attitude to learning.

Employers and colleges not only request your grades but also ask for references. It might be useful for you to write a reference you would like to receive in two years and then plan how you will get that reference. The sooner you start the easier it is to succeed.



## Key Stage 4 (Year 10 & 11) Curriculum

In Key Stage 4 pupils must follow a **Core** of compulsory subjects which are complemented by **Option** subjects. The purpose of the curriculum is to offer an education that is relevant to each individual pupil and helps them to progress to the next stage of their education or training and future employment.

### What is the Core?

Certain subjects have to be studied by all and these are known as the core subjects. The core subjects are:

**ENGLISH**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**MATHEMATICS**

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

**SCIENCE (Dual Award)**

During KS4 you will also study Personal Development: Citizenship, Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHCEE) and Careers.

### What are the Options?

In addition to the Core you can select additional subjects which form your "Options".

The subjects that are available are listed on the preference sheet at the back of this booklet.

### How do I make these decisions?

#### *Consider*

- Which of the available subjects do you like?
- Which of these subjects are you good at?
- Which of these subjects will help me post 16?

#### *Remember*

- Don't choose a subject because of your like or dislike for a particular teacher – they may not teach you next year.
- Don't choose a subject simply because your friend has, you will probably be in a different group anyway.
- Do listen to and consider any advice offered to you.
- Choose areas where you have interest and ability.

#### *Discuss*

- At home
  - With your Form Tutor
  - With your Head of Year
  - With the Subject Teachers
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## What courses and qualifications are available?

The range of qualifications available this year should allow all pupils to select a package of courses that suits their own needs as well as their preferred learning style.

### What is a GCSE?

GCSEs (General Certificates of Secondary Education) are academic qualifications in a particular subject area such as English or Maths. They are graded upwards from 1 to 9. Grades 9-5 are the most highly regarded levels. If you wish to study at Advanced Level after you leave St Mary's you would generally be expected to have attained these higher levels in FIVE subjects, preferably at Grades 5 or above and at Grade 6 in subjects to be studied at A Level.

### What is a Cambridge National?

The Cambridge Nationals are designed to be taught alongside GCSEs, giving your students a glimpse into a professional sector whilst teaching them transferable skills for life:

- specifically designed for 14-16 year olds in schools
- graded across Level 1 and Level 2 to recognise the achievements of all students
- assessed using assignments and practical tasks to suit vocational students

### The English Baccalaureate.

The government has recently introduced a new measure of pupil performance known as the English Baccalaureate. This is not a qualification in itself but rather is a recognition of pupils who achieve a particular combination of subjects at GCSE. The Baccalaureate combination includes;

1. English
2. Mathematics
3. Two Science grades
4. History or Geography
5. A Modern or Ancient Language (French / Spanish at St Mary's)

Pupils who wish to achieve the Baccalaureate combination will need to ensure that all five of the above subject areas are chosen on their options form.

At present, none of the local colleges are making the English Baccalaureate a condition of entry for any of their courses. However, those pupils wishing to study at one of the prestigious "Russell Group" universities should consider their GCSE choices carefully as this will have a bearing on the choice of A level courses available. In this sense, the Baccalaureate ensures a broad and balanced curriculum that is highly regarded by such universities.

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## Key Questions

### Will I have a free choice of subjects?

In the main YES. However, some subjects are only suitable for particular students.

### Can I change subjects at a later date?

It is so important to **make the right decisions now**. Once you have started a course it is very difficult to change because you will have missed important aspects of the subject you wish to change to. Changes are very rare and subject to alternative class sizes, curriculum time lost prior to change and after consultations with parents and Curriculum Deputy Headteacher.

### If I can't decide which subjects to choose what happens?

The teachers, after talking with you, will make the decision based on their professional judgement of your ability in the subject.

### Do I have to study a language?

The compulsory study of a Modern Foreign Language ends in Key Stage 3. However, students are encouraged to continue with a language for a broad and balanced curriculum and leading universities will require pupils to have studied a language at GCSE level. Those wishing to achieve the new "English Baccalaureate" must study a language to achieve this award.

### Can I be refused my choice of subject?

If a particular subject is over-subscribed and an additional group cannot be created then there will have to be some selection.

If a particular subject is under-subscribed it will be withdrawn and you will have to choose another subject.

If your previous performance and your ability to cope with the subject are of concern, then you may be guided to a more suitable course.

### When do I have to decide?

There is a timetable at the back of this booklet which you must follow but you should be thinking and listening to advice from now on.

### Do I have to plan for a job or 'A' Levels now?

The subjects you will follow should give you a balanced education and should prepare you for your future. A Level or job considerations are only important at this stage if you are certain about what you want to do in your future. However, if you wish to study for a particular subject at A Level then it is wise to take the relevant GCSE where this is available. e.g. if you wish to study A Level Geography you should take GCSE Geography whereas if you are considering A Level Psychology there is no corresponding course. If you are unsure about a particular career path or anything else **don't be afraid to ask for explanations or help**.

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## Extra-Curricular

As well as the subjects you choose, getting involved with the life of the school and events both in and out of school can give you an advantage when it comes to the next steps in your career. Employers and Colleges want people who are well balanced and have interests and hobbies and this is often asked for in a C.V. and at interviews. You can also build and demonstrate a wide range of skills, such as commitment, teamwork, being organised and self-management.

### **“Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him” (Lk 24:31)**

Experience means learning through direct personal contact with people and things, and new experiences or information can challenge people to think again. The course that you are venturing on is a learning journey that will enable you to reach your full potential. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were forced by their new experience of the death of Jesus not only to reassess Jesus but also to reassess themselves.

Our expectations are always modified in the light of our experience. If expectations about others or situations mostly grow out of our experience, our experience tends to have the final say. Expectations are deepened, modified or cancelled in the light of what we learn over time.

As you venture through your academic studies, remember that Christ will travel with you, just as He did with His disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are all called by Christ to share our gifts and talents with others. In supporting each other, we are empowered to spread the love and joy of Christ to everyone that we meet.

Lord Jesus,  
Open our eyes, Lord.  
Without the gift of your revelation,  
our eyes are kept from recognizing you.  
Appear before us, suddenly, unexpectedly, in all your glory.  
So that we, too, may proclaim to a world in despair,  
that we have seen the risen Lord.  
Amen.

let your  
**LIGHT**  
*SHINE*

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