

Herschel Grammar School



KEY STAGE 4 STUDIES

2026 to 2028

***CORE SUBJECTS &
GCSE OPTIONS INFORMATION***

Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Contents

Letter from the Headteacher	3
Letter from the Head of Year - Year 9	4
Curriculum Summary	5
Compulsory Subjects	7
English	7
English Literature	8
Mathematics	9
Biology	10
Chemistry	11
Physics	12
Religious Studies	13
Cross-Curricular Computing & Online learning	14
Physical Education	15
Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education	15
Careers Learning	16
Removal of Ebacc & Reformed GCSEs	17
Your Choices in Year 9	18-19
Optional GCSE Subjects	
Art & Design	20
Business	21
Computer Science	22
Design & Technology	23
Drama	24
Food Preparation and Nutrition	25
Geography	26
History	27
Media Studies	28
Modern Foreign Languages (French or Spanish)	29
Music	30
GCSE Physical Education	31
GCSE Religious Studies	32
Year 10 Preferred Choices Form example	33



Herschel Grammar School

Responsibility • Success • Care

Headteacher: Ms Joanne Rockall BA (Hons) PGCE

January 2026

Dear Parent,

From September, your son/daughter will begin Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) of the National Curriculum. This is a two-year programme leading to qualifications in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Between now and February, decisions must be made about individual preferences for specific courses. This information booklet is designed to help you understand and discuss these preferences with your son/daughter.

You will find a summary of the Key Stage 4 programme of study on Page 5.

Pupils can choose subjects in the business and creative fields such as Art, Music, Drama, Media, Physical Education, Design & Technology, Business, a Humanities subject, a Language or Computer Science.

All pupils will start the study of Triple Award Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. However, some may, after careful consideration, take Combined Science in Year 11.

You may be aware, the Government recently announced changes to the **EBacc performance measure**. We have therefore revised the number and structure of option choices available to pupils. For the first time in many years, pupils will have more flexibility to choose the courses they truly want to study. This is an exciting opportunity to shape a curriculum that reflects individual talents and passions

It will be important for you and your son/daughter to have as much advice as possible. Subject teachers, Form Tutors, Mr McCormack (Head of Year 9) and the school Careers Advisor all have an important role to play in guiding pupils towards successful decisions. Plans for Sixth Form or college courses, where known, should also be considered.

In common with most schools, we can only run courses with appropriate group sizes, and some pupils may not be able to study certain subject combinations. Therefore, there may need to be some adjustments to your son/daughter's preferences. If this is the case, you will be contacted.

We hope you and your son/daughter will be able to attend the Subject Evening on **Wednesday 11 February 2026**.

Please note the deadline for the return of the option choice form on page 33 of this booklet is **Friday 27th February 2026**.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Rockall (Ms)
Headteacher



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Herschel Grammar School

Responsibility • Success • Care

Headteacher: Ms Joanne Rockall BA (Hons) PGCE

January 2026

Dear Pupil,

KEY STAGE 4 STUDIES 2026 – 2028

You will soon be entering a very important and challenging part of your school life. When you move up into Key Stage 4, you will be beginning a range of courses, most of which will lead to public examinations. Some of these courses will be familiar, but others will offer you new opportunities. You will be able to extend the interests you have developed in Key Stage 3 and will be able to explore some new ones.

For the first time, you have real choice about which subjects you learn and because Key Stage 4 should provide you with good preparation for further study or the world of work, it is very important that you make the choices which are best for **you**. These choices should give you a stimulating, balanced and relevant programme.

This Options Information Booklet is to help you make these choices and to let you know more about Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). We hope you will refer to it when discussing your options with your parents. We look forward to seeing you and your parents at the Parents Evening on Wednesday 11 February 2026. If you feel you would benefit from an appointment with the careers advisor, please contact our careers coordinator, Mr Abdar.

Years 10 & 11 are important years as some subjects will have non-exam assessments. I would like to stress the importance of keeping your electronically produced work safe and secure. Using one-drive and Office 365 are the safest ways to store work and I cannot stress the importance of uploading your work to one of these secure areas on a regular basis. Teams and OneDrive will be the main place to find learning resources and revision material. If you have any further questions about this, please contact our online-learning coordinator, Mr Noel.

Once all the option choices have been collated, checked and pupils' subjects decided, you will be written to in April/May to confirm the choices.

Yours sincerely,

Mr McCormack
Head of Year - Year 9



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SUMMARY OF THE CURRICULUM AT KEY STAGE 4

The Year 10 and 11 curriculum at Key Stage 4 consists of three elements:

1. Compulsory core subjects to GCSE level;
2. Compulsory subjects which are not examined;
3. Optional subjects taken to GCSE level.

1. Compulsory core subjects to GCSE level

ENGLISH; ENGLISH LITERATURE; MATHEMATICS; SCIENCES (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS)

2. Compulsory element which are not examined

RELIGIOUS STUDIES; PHYSICAL EDUCATION; ONLINE-LEARNING; CITIZENSHIP; PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH & CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION; WORK RELATED LEARNING, BUSINESS & ENTERPRISE

3. Optional subjects taken to GCSE level or higher

You will study 4 additional subjects from the following list:

GCSE	Art
GCSE	Business
GCSE	Computer Science
GCSE	Design & Technology*
GCSE	Drama
GCSE	Food Preparation and Nutrition*
GCSE	French**
GCSE	Geography
GCSE	History
GCSE	Media Studies
GCSE	Music
GCSE	Physical Education
GCSE	Religious Studies
GCSE	Spanish**.

Courses will be run subject to demand and staffing resources.

At Herschel Grammar School, all pupils in Key Stage 4 begin a programme of study, which leads to the award of 10 GCSEs

***Pupils can only choose the technology subject that they currently study.**

**** Pupils can only choose the language they are currently studying.**

CHOOSING A GCSE COURSE

CORE SUBJECTS (studied by all pupils)

English Language (1 GCSE)

English Literature (1 GCSE)

Mathematics (1 GCSE)

Sciences (3 or 2 GCSEs)

Religious Studies (not examined)

Physical Education (not examined)

Computing and Online-Learning (not examined)

Citizenship (not examined)

PSHCE (not examined)

Work related learning, Business & Enterprise (not examined)



CHOICE OF 4 subjects from the following:

GCSE	Art
GCSE	Business
GCSE	Computer Science
GCSE	Design and Technology*
GCSE	Drama
GCSE	Food Preparation and Nutrition*
GCSE	French**
GCSE	Geography
GCSE	History
GCSE	Media Studies
GCSE	Music
GCSE	Physical Education
GCSE	Religious Studies
GCSE	Spanish**

*** Pupils can only choose the technology subject that they currently study.**

**** Pupils can only choose the language they are currently studying.**

GCSE ENGLISH

All pupils study the **AQA GCSE** courses in English and English Literature. The two courses will be closely related. Each course is assessed separately and two GCSE certificates will be awarded upon successful completion. In addition to this, a separate certificate will be awarded for Speaking and Listening.

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Aims of the Course:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write effectively and coherently using Standard English appropriately
- use grammar correctly, punctuate and spell accurately
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology, and linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.

In addition, students must:

- listen to and understand spoken language, and use spoken Standard English effectively.

The Spoken Language endorsement will be reported on as part of the qualification, but it will not form part of the final mark and grade.

Overview of the Course

Students will draw upon a range of texts as reading stimulus and engage with creative as well as real and relevant contexts. Students will have opportunities to develop higher-order reading and critical thinking skills that encourage genuine enquiry into different topics and themes. They will be able to demonstrate a confident control of Standard English and write grammatically correct sentences, deploying figurative language and analysing texts.

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

English Language and Literature will be taught across four lessons per week. Students will read critically and use the knowledge gained from this to enhance their own writing.

Examinations

Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

A written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes (50% of GCSE)

Section A: Reading and answering four questions based on one literature fiction text

Section B: Writing - one extended writing question on descriptive or narrative writing

Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives

A written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes (50% of GCSE)

Section A: Reading –answering four questions based on one non-fiction text and one literary non-fiction text

Section B: Writing—one extended writing question to present a viewpoint

GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

Aims of the Course:

- read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding and make connections across their reading
- read in depth, critically and evaluatively so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- develop the habit of reading widely and often
- appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage
- write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read.

Overview of the Course

Students will study a Shakespeare play of choice and will be required to write in detail about an extract from the play and then to write about the play as a whole. Students will study a 19th-century novel and will study extracts from the novel and the whole text. Modern texts, including prose and drama will be studied, as well as a range of poetry from an anthology and some unseen poetry.

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

Pupils will read and study a variety of texts; poetry, drama and prose. The course is taught in conjunction with the language part of the course over two years of study. The necessary analytical skills will be taught alongside essay practice and revision.

Examinations:

Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th-century novel (1 hour 45 minutes) 40% of GCSE

Section A: Shakespeare: to answer one question on a chosen Shakespeare play.

Section B: The 19th-century novel- to answer one question on a 19th century novel.

Paper 2: Modern texts and poetry (2 hours 15 minutes) 60%

Section A: Modern texts - one question

Section B: Poetry - one question from a pre-seen anthology of poems

Section C: Unseen Poetry - two questions on two unseen poems.

Future Pathways:

English is a vital subject. Not only does it have a significant effect on other subjects in terms of the way pupils present their ideas, but without a good GCSE grade, pupils will find most courses in Higher and Further Education closed to them. Most employers require this minimum as a standard entry requirement. English immediately opens up the potential of 'A' level study and then degree possibilities. It combines well with History, Geography, Sociology, Government and Politics, and Languages and can also provide a balance to the Sciences and Mathematics. After degree course completion, the opportunities are numerous and include journalism, media, law, marketing, advertising, publishing, creative industries, public relations and teaching.

Contact for further information

Ms L Evans - Head of Faculty

lev@herschel.slough.sch.uk

Also visit the AQA website

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/resource-zone/english/overview.php>

GCSE MATHEMATICS

GCSE COURSE TO BE TAKEN Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in Mathematics. All pupils will take this qualification at the **Higher Tier** of Entry.

Aims of the Course:

- develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
- acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
- reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences, and draw conclusions
- comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.

Overview of the Course:

The weighting between the broad areas of the subject in the examinations will be approximately as follows:

Topic Area	Weighting
Number	12 – 18%
Algebra	27 – 33%
Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	17 – 23%
Geometry and Measures	17 – 23%
Statistics and Probability	12 – 18%

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

Pupils will continue to develop and extend their knowledge across a range of mathematical topics.

Examinations

There are three one and a half hour examinations at the end of the course, but any topic can come up in any exam. In one of the exams you are not allowed to use a calculator.

If you want to find out more about the course, we will be using the **Pearson/Edexcel Examination Board** and their information about this course can be found at:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/mathematics/2015/specification-and-sample-assesment/gcse-maths-2015-specification.pdf>

Future Pathways

To study A Level Mathematics at Herschel Grammar School you will need to achieve at least a grade 7 in GCSE Mathematics. A Level Mathematics is an essential requirement for many courses in higher education and shows that you have a high standard of numeracy and are able to learn and apply difficult new skills in a range of contexts. Many top universities require A Level Further Mathematics for entry into courses with a significant mathematical content. To study A Level Further Mathematics, we will expect you to achieve at least a grade 8 at GCSE.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

www.mymaths.co.uk

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/maths/>

<https://www.mathswatch.co.uk/>

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Mr R Goodman - Head of Mathematics Faculty

rgo@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE BIOLOGY

Aims of the Course

To develop a critical approach to scientific evidence and methods used in Biology, as well as acquiring knowledge and understanding necessary for progression to further learning at A level.

Overview of the Course

Pupils will study for the **AQA specification**. The faculty begins teaching the GCSE specification in Year 9. Practical work will be undertaken during the course and will be assessed with the student's subject knowledge by examination at the end of the course.

Content covered in Year 9/10

The topics taught in year 9 and 10 will build a solid framework to enable students to deal with the greater challenges of recall and the higher demand of examination questions with linear exams.

Topics covered:

- Cell biology and organisation of systems
- Infection and response
- Bioenergetics
- Plant biology and ecology

Content covered in Year 11

Topics covered:

- Homeostasis and response
- Inheritance, variation and evolution

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Students will understand how scientific methods and theories develop over time; develop the concept of the scientific model and develop higher level skills such as the ability to evaluate scientific data. Students will study eight practicals for Biology and will be assessed on their practical skills in their exams with at least 15% of the marks coming from questions relating to practicals.

Examinations for each separate Science.

Two 1 hour 45-minute exams (100 marks) will make up the Biology GCSE. Each will contribute 50% of the total grade. Pupils with low progress will be moved from the individual ('triple') science pathway to Combined Science at the end of year 10. This has reduced content to the triple course but a similar demand and challenge. Combined Science pupils will still take two Biology papers but only 1 hour 15 minutes in length (70 marks each).

Future Pathways

Grade 7 is required for entry to the popular A level Biology course. More people are alive on the planet now than ever before. Only through science and technology can they be supported, and the natural environment protected. There are excellent career opportunities for those with Biology GCSE. Many careers require science: marine biologists, forensic scientists, pharmacologists, geologist, vets, research scientists, medicine, and health workers. Science qualifications also facilitate entry onto other courses such as Law and Accounting as the scientific methodology is valued by universities.

Pupils wishing to study the popular A level Biology course at Herschel will need to gain at least grade 7 at GCSE (and must have a grade 6 in maths).

Contact for further information

Mrs L Lightfoot - Head of Biology lli@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE CHEMISTRY

Aims of the Course

To develop a critical approach to scientific evidence and methods used in Chemistry, as well as acquiring knowledge and understanding necessary for progression to further learning at A level. Students will gain the skills to enable them to explore scientific ideas and ask questions to find out about how the particles in everything interact to produce diversity in materials. They will develop a detailed understanding of how Chemistry underpins all matter and its role in sustainability and the development of new materials. Students are encouraged to use what they learn to not take things at face value; they can use what they know to hypothesize, test and conclude.

Overview of the Course

Pupils will study for the GCSE qualification in Chemistry following the AQA 8462 specification. The faculty begins teaching the GCSE specification in Year 9. Students will study eight practicals for Chemistry and will be assessed on their practical skills in their exams with at least 15% of the marks coming from questions relating to practicals.

Content covered

Starting with fundamental concepts in Chemistry that will support pupil understanding for the rest of the course going on to develop a deep understanding of Chemistry through explanations, practise and practical work as well as talking, reading and writing about science. Students will learn the knowledge and skills needed and concepts will be explained through models and mathematically as required.

Topics 1–5: Atomic structure and the periodic table, Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter, Quantitative chemistry, Chemical changes, Energy changes.

Topics 6–10: The rate and extent of chemical change, Organic chemistry, Chemical analysis, Chemistry of the atmosphere, Using resources.

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on investigative, scientific literacy and communication skills. Pupils will be expected to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas in chemistry, techniques and procedures and to be able to analyse data and make relevant conclusions. They will also learn to interpret and evaluate information and ideas and make judgements on this. Practical tasks will enable pupils to develop and improve this aspect of scientific enquiry as well as promoting an interest in Science. These skills are transferable to many everyday situations and to other subjects.

Examinations for each separate Science

Two 1 hour 45-minute papers, each 100 marks and 50% of the GCSE.

Questions will be a mix of multiple choice, structured, closed short answer and open response.

Pupils with low progress will be moved from the individual ('triple') science pathway to Combined Science at the end of year 10. This has reduced content to the triple course but a similar demand and challenge. Combined Science pupils will still take two Chemistry papers but only 1 hour 15 minutes (70 marks each).

Future Pathways

More people are alive on the planet now than ever before. Only through science and technology can they be supported, and the natural environment protected. There are excellent career opportunities for those with all three Sciences taken as individual GCSEs. Many careers require science: marine biologists, forensic scientists, pharmacologists, geologists, vets, research scientists, medicine, health workers, engineers, architects. Science qualifications also facilitate entry onto other courses such as Law and Accounting as the scientific methodology is valued by universities. Pupils wishing to study the popular A level Chemistry course at Herschel will need to gain at least grade 7 at GCSE.

Contact for further information Mr G Soldi - Head of Science Faculty

gso@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE PHYSICS

Aims of the Course

To develop a critical approach to scientific evidence and methods used in Physics, as well as acquiring knowledge and understanding necessary for progression to further learning at A level.

Overview of the Course

Pupils will study for the GCSE Physics qualification following the **AQA specification**. The faculty begins teaching the GCSE specification in Year 9. Students will do eight practicals for Physics and will be assessed on their practical skills in the written exams with at least 15% of the marks coming from questions relating to practicals.

Content covered

Forces, Energy, Waves, Electricity, Magnetism, Electromagnetism, The Particle Model of Matter, Atomic Structure and Space

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on investigative, scientific literacy and communication skills. Pupils will be expected to demonstrate and apply their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas, techniques and procedures and to be able to analyse data and make relevant conclusions. They will also learn to interpret and evaluate information and ideas and make judgements on this. Practical tasks will enable pupils to develop and improve this aspect of scientific enquiry as well as promoting an interest in science. These skills are transferable to many everyday situations and also to other subjects.

Examinations for each separate Science.

Two written papers 1 hour 45 minutes of 100 marks and each 50% of the GCSE

Questions will be mixed – a few multiple choice, many will be structured or closed short answer and some open response.

Pupils with low progress will be moved from the individual ('triple') science pathway to Combined Science at the end of year 10. This has reduced content to the triple course but a similar demand and challenge. Combined Science pupils will still take two Physics papers but of 1 hour 15 minutes (70 marks each).

Future Pathways

More people are alive on the planet now than ever before. Only through science and technology can they be supported, and the natural environment protected. There are excellent career opportunities for those with Triple Science. Many careers require science: marine biologists, forensic scientists, pharmacologists, geologist, vets, research scientists, medicine, health workers, engineers and architects. Science qualifications also facilitate entry onto other courses such as Law and Accounting as the scientific methodology is valued by Universities.

Pupils wishing to study A level Physics at Herschel will need to gain at least a grade 7 at GCSE and also a grade 7 in Maths.

Contact for further information

Mr Pritesh Fatania – Head of Physics.

pfa@herschel.slough.sch.uk

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

One recent change to our curriculum offer is making GCSE RS optional. Pupils who have a real interest in religion will have the option of choosing GCSE Religious Studies as one of their optional GCSEs.

For those who choose not to study the GCSE course, they will continue to be exposed to key elements of Religious Studies through, PSHCE, school assemblies, tutor time and drop-down days.

It is an expectation from the Department for Education that pupils continue to develop knowledge, skills and understanding by exploring the significance and impact of beliefs, teachings, sources, practices, ways of life and forms of expressing meaning.

Pupils will be encouraged to express their personal responses and informed insights on fundamental ethical questions and issues that will affect them in their lives as pupils, adults and members of society.

See page 32 for GCSE Religious Studies subject information.

CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPUTING / ONLINE LEARNING

At Herschel Grammar School, all pupils are expected to continue to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT, computing and online safety throughout KS4, whether or not they are studying Computer Science as an optional subject. This is achieved by providing all pupils with a range of opportunities to use IT and to solve problems within each of the core subjects, as well as in their chosen optional subjects.

The national curriculum (which is optional for academies) has an expectation that pupils are equipped to use information technology to create programs, systems and a range of content to help solve problems. At Herschel, we believe there is a place for elements of this to be taught to all pupils through the existing curriculum.

However, we also believe that pupils need to know how to use the latest computer software and fundamentally know all the principles of online safety and be safe, smart and sensible when using all forms of technology.

A wide range of tools are available to pupils at Herschel including standard MS Office 365 software, creative media applications, web-based tools, computer-aided design, computer-aided manufacturing, data-logging and control applications as well as interactive and revision tools to enhance their learning. Pupils will also use computer rooms or laptops across a range of subjects during lesson time, thus developing specialist skills and using a variety of apps and programs.

All pupils have access to learning resources placed on either Microsoft Teams or OneDrive, which can be accessed anytime and anywhere with an internet connection.

Pupils can also download the Microsoft Office suite to five home devices, registered through their Herschel login, free of charge. This information has been given out to pupils, but please contact Mr Noel if you require the instructions again.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Core P.E.)

In the core curriculum, P.E. is not an examination subject. The curriculum consists of a wide range of activities with options in Fitness, Athletics, Dance, Gymnastics, Invasion Games, Striking and Fielding Games & Net Games. The concept of breadth and balance allows some flexibility in the curriculum in Year 10 and a degree of personal choice in terms of the activities followed in Year 11, where pupils opt for a range of sports via pathway options.

Aims of the Course

- Promote a positive approach towards physical activity in order to foster lifelong participation and wellbeing
- To develop knowledge and understanding of the health benefits physical education and sport offers everyone
- To develop skills which apply to the wider world of work; creativity, teamwork, communication, challenge, resilience, problem solving, leadership & critical thinking
- Provide opportunities to enable pupils to develop self-confidence & leadership through adopting different roles when working with each other.

Contact for further information:

Mrs H Embery

Head of PE

Hem@herschel.slough.sch.uk

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH & CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (PSHCE)

The Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education programme is a stimulating programme carefully planned to be relevant to each pupil. They will be involved in drama, role-play, debates, discussion groups, games and exercises - sometimes with pupils from other tutor groups. The programme will include experts, local community groups and theatre groups coming into school.

Pupils will be involved in a module-based course looking at such topics as:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • Careers and work-related learning | • Post-16 preparation |
| • Media and digital literacy | • Relationships |
| • Responsible health choices | • Knife crime |
| • Religious studies | • Drug awareness |
| • Sustainability | • Study skills and revision techniques |

Within these topics, and during lessons with form tutors, they will be investigating important issues on mental health and wellbeing, careers, homelessness, online safety, domestic violence, bullying, time management, revision techniques, conflict resolution, consent and sexual exploitation.

Contact for further information:

Mrs S Ruddy, PSHCE Coordinator

Sru@herschel.slough.sch.uk

CAREERS LEARNING

All pupils study careers and careers development across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, in addition to the more personal careers guidance that is offered. The careers programme is designed to help prepare them for the world of work or for further study by developing the knowledge, skills and understanding that they will need, over and above their regular academic work in school.

It will help them to become more employable and to be more flexible in the way that they work. They will develop teamwork skills, the ability to work to a tight deadline and under pressure, to think outside the box and come up with new ideas.

Enterprise and softer careers skills form a key part of our careers work. It helps them to develop their business and financial understanding and also to become more independent.

The careers programme will be delivered:

- Through the PSHCE programme in three dedicated careers modules, including CV design, careers research, interview practice
- Across a range of subjects
- Through block work experience – they will spend time working in a real business through a placement somewhere in the local area. Pupils will complete related activities before, during and afterwards to help get the most out of their experience.
- Through local company work experience schemes – we work regularly with British Airways, Cisco, GSK and others.
- Through a series of enterprise events.
- Through Careers Insight – a major annual event where they will hear presentations from a wide variety of local business people and professionals
- Through a business interview day
- Through exciting competitions such as the ‘Tenner’ challenge and business challenges hosted by O₂ Telefonica.

The full careers programme can be found in the pupil planner and on the school careers website.

Contact for further information:

Mr A Abdar, Careers Leader

aab@herschel.slough.sch.uk

THE REMOVAL OF THE ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE – A NEW ERA OF CHOICE AND CREATIVITY

You may have seen recent news about the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). Following the latest Curriculum and Assessment Review, the Department for Education has announced that the EBacc will no longer be used as a key measure of school performance.

What does this mean for pupils?

- Pupils will no longer be required to take a fixed set of subjects such as languages and humanities.
- A new measure is being developed to encourage a **broad range of GCSE choices**, giving pupils the freedom to follow their interests — including creative subjects like art, music, drama, and design. However, this will not affect current year 9 pupils.

For the first time in many years, pupils will have **complete flexibility** to choose the courses they truly want to study. There will be no pathways or restrictions on subject combinations. This is an exciting opportunity to shape a curriculum that reflects individual talents and passions — but choices should still be made thoughtfully.

Are languages and humanities still important?

Absolutely. These subjects remain valuable and useful. However, the government believes that education should not be limited to a narrow set of subjects. The aim now is to ensure pupils have genuine choice and access to a **broad, balanced, and creative curriculum**.

REFORMED GCSE

Over the past three years, the Department for Education has introduced significant changes to GCSEs. These include:

- **Updated and expanded content**
- **More demanding examinations**
- **Reduction or removal of controlled assessments**

In addition, a **new grading system** is now in place:

- Grades are awarded **1 to 9**, with **9 being the highest**.
- These subjects are often referred to as **‘reformed’ GCSEs** or **‘1–9 GCSEs’**.

You may have seen in the news that the recent Curriculum and Assessment Review has called for **further reforms to GCSEs**. However, **these changes will not affect current Year 9 pupils**, as they are not expected to begin until **September 2029/30**.

This means pupils choosing their options now will continue with the current GCSE content, structure and grading system.

YOUR CHOICES IN YEAR 9 – INFORMATION FOR PUPILS

The subjects and qualifications you study over Years 10 and 11 will shape how you spend your time during your next two years at school. It could also help set you up for a career or further and higher education courses.

This year, you have more choices than in previous years, due to the removal of the Ebacc progress measures. (see page 17)

Choosing subjects to study in Years 10 and 11 can seem daunting. Don't panic! There's lots of information and advice on hand to help you choose what's right for you.

Information contained in this booklet is there to help you make the best choice. You will have completed a Careers module in PSHCE to help you make good choices.

SOME KEY QUESTIONS:

What sort of person are you?

To help you decide what to study in Years 10 and 11, start by asking yourself what you enjoy doing and what you're good at.

Think about:

- What you're interested in: it could be other cultures, writing projects, helping people, being outdoors or designing things.
- What types of activity do you enjoy most? - working things out and thinking them through, practical activities or artistic options like painting, drawing or performing music?
- What you're like at home, as well as in school - what skills have you developed following outside interests?

There are several factors to be considered when making subject choices,

How will you be assessed?

Chances are you'll have to do at least one exam for most of your subjects, some subjects aren't all about written work, and give you the chance to do practical assessments as well. If you struggle with project work or managing deadlines, think carefully about subjects that have a high percentage of overall marks for Non-Examined Assessments (NEA). As GCSEs have been reformed, subjects have less non-examined assessment or controlled Assessments.

Controlled Assessment allows you to demonstrate time management and organisational skills too, but it offers some degree of flexibility. Find out when you would be doing these assessments or practical elements, as studying 4 subjects with NEA work **could** be difficult to manage.

If you find exams stressful, it would be sensible to have a balance between subjects, with a focus on NEA and a focus on final exams. Check with the subject staff about the controlled assessment requirements, as they vary enormously between the subjects.

Would that suit you?

If the right choice of subjects is not made at this stage, it may be difficult to put things right later when specific subjects will become necessary. Find out if you need to study a subject at GCSE level to continue it at A Level or Vocational Level 3. Have a look at sixth form websites, course booklets and prospectuses.

Choose subjects you like and are good at

Nearly everyone performs better when they are doing something they enjoy and are good at. You should consider recent assessments and short report grades.

Interests and Aptitude

You may already know what you hope to do after completing your GCSEs. Whilst it may be too early to make final career decisions, you may have an idea of the broad area which interests you e.g. administrative, financial, active, social, practical, scientific or artistic. Some subjects will be more relevant to each area. For instance, those wanting to study English or History at University may want to study a language at GCSE. Our careers advisor can help you with this.

Routes after Year 11

Even at this early stage, it is helpful to have thought about the options available after your GCSEs. You may decide to remain in education either in school or in a college of further and higher education. Many young people, after the age of sixteen, choose to follow GCE A levels. It is worth considering the A levels you might wish to take, which may then help decide on a particular GCSE option choice. The Sixth Form prospectus is available on the Sixth Form section of the school website.

The subjects you do well in at GCSE or other courses will influence your choice of advanced study. While it is possible to undertake new subjects, in some instances it may be difficult to cope with the advanced study in a particular subject or area if you have not studied the subject for GCSE e.g. Languages or Music.

So, when choosing your GCSEs think about the A levels or equivalent Level 3 qualifications and the degree you might want to study. If you think you might be interested in other routes, such as apprenticeships or college courses, check out the entry requirements. Remember, if in doubt, ask...

SOURCES OF HELP AND INFORMATION

There are many information sources available to help you make the right choice. Within the school you can access the following people for help and advice:

- Older pupils
- Subject teachers
- Form Tutors
- The School Careers Advisor
- Head of Year 9
- Mr Abdar (Careers Leader)
- Mr Devereux (Deputy Headteacher – Curriculum)
- Mrs Gumbs (Sixth Form Study Support)

The school website contains a dedicated careers section. The careers page has very useful decision-making software such as Unifrog, Career Pilot and the Year 9 Options page contains lots of useful help and advice.

Your Head of Year will be sharing with you links to videos for Option Choice subjects. These videos have been made by Herschel Grammar School sixth-form students who studied the subject and will give an honest overview from a student perspective.

Some other excellent websites also offer advice. These include:

<https://successatschool.org/advisedetails/508/What-are-my-GCSE-Options%3F>

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/gcse-choices-university/how-important-are-gcse-choices-when-it-comes-to-university>

You will also see the Careers Advisor, in a small group, hopefully visit the Slough Careers Event and will have worked through a four-lesson Careers module in PSHCE!

GCSE ART & DESIGN

Aims of the Course

Studying Art and Design at Herschel Grammar School is exciting, inspiring and challenging. Students are taught that there is more to Art than just drawing pretty pictures. Art helps us to be open-minded, resilient, creative and develops our ability to empathise. It gives us a creative edge which employers are impressed by and allows us to develop our visual literacy.

Pupils will get the opportunities to develop their creative mind as well as developing skill through a variety of 2D and 3D media. Pupils will take a more independent approach to their work, where they will explore work by artists and designers, take part in workshops, visit museums and galleries in London and around the UK to help them create a project tailored to their chosen theme.

Course Outline – Year 10

Unit 1 *Portfolio of Work* 60% of the final GCSE grade.

Following the assessment objective guidelines, pupils will start the course by completing a Key Skills unit whereby pupils will build on or learn new techniques, materials and art styles.

Pupils will independently create a portfolio of work based on a given theme. There will be two projects during the course of the year in which pupils will respond to the chosen theme in appropriate ways, review and refine ideas to then produce a final outcome. Past projects have included '*Natural Forms*', '*My Identity*', '*The World Around Us*' and '*Dream World*'. Pupils will explore mixed media and forms of Art including print, sculpture, painting, digital art and installation. During this period, Year 10 students will sit a mock exam in preparation for the final exam the following year.

Year 11

Unit 2 *Externally Assessed Assignment* 40% of the final GCSE grade.

Pupils will be presented with a range of themes to explore, set externally by AQA. On choosing one to focus on pupils will create a sustained project that explores ideas through detailed observations, experimentation of media and links to relevant artists, designers and craftspeople. Pupils will then develop and refine ideas to produce a body of work that explores their chosen theme in detail, leading to a final outcome in the materials relevant to their intentions. The externally assessed assignment concludes with a 10-hour practical exam after which point all work, including Unit 1 must be submitted. No new material can be submitted after this point.

Future Pathways

Art and Design is not just a great option for anyone opting for an Art or Design-based career but also for those who want to expand their creative ability. Past pupils have gone on to study A Level Art and Design. Careers in architecture, fashion design, set design, computer animation and photography are just some of the possible fields of study at degree level.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Miss F Shafique, Head of Art & Design

fsh@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE BUSINESS

Aims of the Course

It is unlikely you will have formally studied Business before. However, this popular and highly relevant course will help you apply what you have learnt in enterprise activities in school, equipping you with an active theoretical and practical understanding of how the real world of business works. You explore how businesses operate, the ways in which they influence, and are influenced, by the world around them. You also develop and improve critical thinking, analytical reasoning, written, quantitative, oracy, and decision-making skills, which are useful whatever career path you plan to pursue.

Overview of the Course

Students follow the **Pearson/Edexcel Business (9-1)** specification. **In Year 10**, you will study **Theme 1: Investigating Small Business**, which explores core concepts through the lens of an entrepreneur setting up a business, for example the issues faced, and skills needed to succeed. **In Year 11**, you will study **Theme 2: Building a Business**, which looks beyond the start-up phase, and focuses on the key concepts, issues and decisions used to grow a business, with emphasis on aspects of marketing, operations, finance and human resources, and the impact of the wider world on the decisions a business makes as it grows.

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

YEAR 10 - Theme 1: Investigating Small Business

- *Enterprise and Entrepreneurship*
- *Spotting a Business Opportunity*
- *Putting a Business Idea into Practice*
- *Making the Business Effective*
- *Understanding External Influences on Business*

YEAR 11 - Theme 2: Building a Business

- *Growing the Business*
- *Making Marketing Decisions*
- *Making Operational Decisions*
- *Making Financial Decisions*
- *Making Human Resource Decisions*

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

You need to be good at communicating and explaining your ideas, and not afraid of learning new things and working with numbers to solve business problems. You will learn how to be a creative thinker and how to make decisions. What's more, you will also learn about the world of business through research and investigation, and through practical business tasks.

Examinations (both taken at the end of Year 11)

Theme 1: Investigating Small Business - Written Examination = (50% of the qualification)

Theme 2: Building a Business - Written Examination = (50% of the qualification)

Future Pathways

All business courses can help you prepare for further and higher education. They prepare you for AS/AL Levels in many different subjects, or for the world of employment or work-based learning schemes, for example apprenticeships.

Contact for further information: Mr B Noel – Head of Business BNO@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE COMPUTER SCIENCE

Aims of the Course

Take a look at the world around you. How close to a computer are you? When was the last time you used one? Life without computers is almost unimaginable. The power of computers is utilised in all areas of life, from medicine to space exploration. Computer Science goes way beyond just writing code. Steve Jobs (Apple Co-Founder) once remarked...

“Everybody in this country should learn how to program a computer... because it teaches you how to think”. Steve Jobs (Apple Co-founder)

By studying this highly valued subject you will develop the skills and knowledge to give you that competitive advantage in any future career. You will develop computational thinking skills such as analysis, decomposition, logic and algorithmic thinking.

“Computational thinking will be a fundamental skill used by everyone by the middle of the 21st Century. Just like reading, writing and arithmetic”. Wing (2011)

Overview of the Course

Computer Science is an intellectually challenging yet very practical and rewarding subject. It is an intensely creative subject where you can apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom in exciting and inventive ways.

You will learn to:

- Think creatively, innovatively, analytically, logically and critically
- Apply the principles of computer science, including abstraction, decomposition, logic and data representation.
- Analyse problems in computational terms and solve them by designing, writing and debugging programs.
- Apply mathematical skills relevant to computation

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

The course will be split into the two main components of theory and practice. Students will learn to code using Python. GCSE students will be following AQA examination specification.

Future Pathways - Is this GCSE for you?

Computer Science is at the centre of a STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Maths) education. Studying this subject will give you a real advantage in today's technology driven world. You will make the leap from using other people's software to being able to design and create your own. Maybe you could invent the next Facebook or Snapchat? GCSE Computer Science will give you the skills to become a Technology Entrepreneur...but even more than this, it will give you the skills you need for any career because ***Computer Science teaches you how to think logically.***

Contact for further information

Mrs S Rao - Head of Computer Science SRA@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

Students of GCSE Design and Technology can look forward to **exciting careers that improve peoples' lives**. Everything you encounter has been designed and manufactured by someone. We need designers and engineers who **consider our planet and its resources**, as well as the needs of a growing and diverse population. You will learn skills that enable you to **be part of designing our future in an innovative, sustainable and inclusive way**.

Aims of the Course

- To enable students to identify real needs in society and design and engineer solutions that solve real problems.
- To develop resilience and foster innovation through the iterative design process of continuous testing and evaluating, to generate high quality 3D product outcomes.
- To encourage students to make connections between learning and life beyond school, in preparation for future pathways detailed below.

Overview

D&T GCSE builds on foundations laid in years 7,8 and 9. Students will be able to develop and increase their range of skills in year 10, allowing them to focus on their own designs and manufacture in materials of their choice in Year 11. Staffing enables students a high degree of flexibility and an element of tailoring to their chosen course.

Year 10

- To develop pupils' knowledge of and ability to work with an **extensive and ever-increasing range of materials and manufacturing techniques**.
- Introduction to casting techniques, generating moulds using both laser cutting and 3D printing.
- Packaging production and design.
- Team 'game manufacturing' project to enable you to use a wide variety of materials, the whole workshop and design studio independently and with confidence.
- Further experience of Computer Aided Design, including industry standard software i.e. Adobe Photoshop and Solidworks.

Year 11

- Non-Examined Assessment (NEA)*. Design and make task based on a context given to us by AQA.
- Students generate a 20-page electronic portfolio of work and make a high-quality working prototype.

Skills that will be gained:

- Risk taking, resilience, planning, organisation, analytical, problem solving, project management and team work.
- ICT skills, through using CAD and CAM extensively, as well as electronic portfolio submission.
- Developing a responsibility to society by designing for and meeting the needs of others.
- Understanding the importance of sustainability and care of the global environment.

Assessment & Examination

- 50% NEA* (Started at the end of year 10 and completed in Year 11)
- 50% Written Examination (2 hours exam at the end of Year 11)

Future Pathways

- Engineering, architecture, sustainable design, manufacturing, interior design, graphic design
- Emerging medical industries (manual dexterity is vital), designing for disabilities / inclusion, user centred design
- Marketing, advertising, branding, gaming industry
- A level Product Design. This course complements many other A level courses, in particular maths and physics. Portfolios of work generated demonstrate clear practical applications which employers and further education courses value.

Contact for further information

Mrs B Smith, Head of Design & Technology bst@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE DRAMA

Creativity is the ability to have original ideas that add value. The majority of students at Herschel Grammar choose this exciting and creative course because they understand how valuable the skills developed in this subject can be. Specifically, the understanding of human behaviour, required in the medical profession as well as the practical and analytical skills required for a career in Law. This subject will help you to develop your employability skills and help you to stand out from the rest!

Aims of the Course

- To inspire students to develop a personal interest in drama and work imaginatively and creatively in a group, generating, developing and communicating ideas.
- To consider and explore the impact of social, historical and cultural influences on plays and stimuli utilised.
- To reflect on and evaluate own work and work of others.
- To develop and demonstrate competence in a range of practical, design and performance skills.

Overview of the Course Pupils follow the OCR specification.

Component 1 Devising Drama 60 marks Non-exam assessment – 30%	Learners will research and explore a stimulus, working collaboratively and creating their own devised drama. They will also create a portfolio of their work which will include research, creation and development and evaluations.
Component 2 Presenting and Performing Texts 60 marks Visiting examination – 30%	Learners develop and apply theatrical skills in acting or design by presenting a showcase of two extracts from a performance text. This could be through a monologue, duologue or group performance.
Component 3 Drama: Performance & Response 80 marks 1 hour 30-minute exam – 40%	Learners will explore practically a performance text to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of drama and will analyse and evaluate a live theatre performance.

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Students develop confidence and excellent spoken and written communication skills. They also develop their social skills, leadership skills, analytical skills and evaluative skills.

Examinations:

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Devising Drama 60 marks Non-exam assessment 30%	Presenting and Performing Texts 60 marks Visiting examination 30%	Drama: Performance & Response 80 marks 1 hour 30-minute exam 40%

Future Pathways

GCSE Drama is good preparation for careers in the theatre, law, advertising, the media and various professions requiring independent and creative thinkers. It is also useful for those who will be required to analyse human behaviour such as in medicine, psychology and sociology.

Contact for further information

Mrs E Callender –Head of Drama ECE@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition

Course Content

GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition is an exciting and creative course which gives students the opportunity to demonstrate practical skills and make connections between theory and practice. It helps to develop a robust understanding of nutrition, food provenance and the working characteristics of food materials.

"It looks very strong and well thought out. Quite demanding but in a good way. It raises issues of provenance and flavour as well as health and nutrition. It's anchored in the world of real food and real cooking."

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall (chef, food writer and campaigner)

Skills that will be gained

- Safe and effective practical cooking skills
- A knowledge of scientific principles and the nutritional content of food and drinks
- An understanding of the connection between diet, nutrition and health

Food Preparation and Nutrition can also make you better at:

- Time management
- Organising tasks and yourself
- Teamwork
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving

Trips and Visits

Demonstrations and 'hands on' student practical led by professional food experts.

Assessment & Examination

50% Non-exam assessment (NEA)

Both tasks are attempted in Year 11 and follow themes and topics set by AQA

Food Investigation (15%)

Students show through scientific investigation an understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients. They produce a report of 1,500-2000 words, including photographic evidence.

Food Preparation Assessment (35%)

Following research of a special diet, culture or life-stage, students will prepare and present a selection of suitable dishes to showcase skills and techniques learnt throughout the course.

Final assessment will consist of a 3-hour final practical where students will plan, prepare, cook and present a selection of 3 dishes. This task will be supported by a concise portfolio.

50% Written Examination (1hr 45mins)

Future Pathways

This course provides an excellent basis for progression to related courses in Higher Education including Food Science, Food Technology and Food Microbiology as well as Nutrition related degrees such as Dietetics. It also provides a platform for a wide range of more practical based careers in the food industry.

Contact for further information

Mrs E Pether - Head of Food Preparation & Nutrition EPE@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE GEOGRAPHY

Aims of the Course

To help you understand and investigate our ever-changing world by increasing awareness of the way in which people and the environment interact. Relevant topical content such as climate change and migration are included.

Overview of the Course

Pupils follow AQA specification

Human Geography topics to include:

- Urban issues and challenges
- Changing economic world
- Resource management – including water management

Physical Geography topics to include:

- Natural hazards
- The living world
- Physical landscapes in the UK

Geographical investigations to include:

- Physical environments – One day of fieldwork to study a river
- Human environments – One day of fieldwork to study an urban area
- Issue evaluation

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

GCSE builds on previous geographical skills to give you a deeper understanding of the world. It will help you to think like a geographer. Skills relevant to the world of work include GIS, ICT and enquiry-based learning.

Trips and Visits

There will be at least two-day trips during the course. These will allow for the data collection preparation for the examination on fieldwork. Both human and physical themes will be covered.

Examinations

Three 90-minute exams, which will cover human geography, physical geography and fieldwork. There is no coursework, but fieldwork techniques, results, conclusions and evaluations may be tested in the geographical investigations paper 3.

Future Pathways

The enquiry-based nature of the course means the qualification is highly regarded by universities and employers alike. The course develops a number of general skills, including researching information, computing skills, statistical analysis, making deductions, formulating conclusions and communicating findings. It therefore provides a good basis for further study, particularly for A Level Geography taught in the Sixth Form. Geography qualifications are especially relevant for future careers connected with the environment, business, planning, recreation and tourism.

Contact for further information

Mrs M Raheel, Head of Geography MRA@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE HISTORY

Aims of the Course

GCSE History is not for the faint-hearted – it is challenging, intriguing and can be great fun! You will become an expert problem-solver, able to argue a reasoned case and to look beyond the obvious.

Overview of the Course

Pupils follow the AQA specification which consists of the following:

Paper One. Understanding the Modern World.

Paper Two. Shaping the Nation.

Paper One topics will be Russia 1894-1945 and Conflict and Tension in Asia 1950-1975.

Paper Two topics will be a thematic study on Britain: Migration, empires and the people and a study of the Norman Conquest including an historical environment.

Examinations

Two written examinations at the end of Year 11, each worth 50% of the GCSE.

Future Pathways

GCSE History is a highly respected qualification which is used as a passport to any combination of 'A' levels or other post-16 qualifications. As part of a package of GCSEs, History is well regarded by colleges and employers, because of the useful skills it develops: information handling, research, independent analysis, evaluating sources. GCSE History is normally expected for pupils wishing to study 'A' level History.

Contact for further information

Miss T Clark, Head of History

TCL@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE MEDIA STUDIES

Aims of the Course

Contemporary society is media-saturated, with multi-national media institutions shaping our perceptions of ourselves and the world around us. In this context, a variety of literacy skills are needed to fully explore and enjoy the range of media texts now in circulation. To this end, the **OCR Media Studies GCSE** course equips pupils both with the language necessary to analyse media texts, and the technical skills needed to create their own, as well as ensuring creative development.

Overview of the Course

The course allows students to critically understand the role of the media in their daily lives, including the use of new digital technology and social media.

GCSE Media Studies uses four major concepts which form the basis of the subject content:

- Media Language: forms and conventions
- Media Representations
- Media Industries
- Media Audiences

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

In covering the requirements of the examination and non-exam assessment, pupils will study a range of media which will include:

1. Introduction to media concepts, ideology and technical language
2. Study of industry areas such as film, television and music (depending on annually released topic)
3. Exploration of audiences; how products target them and why they consume media
4. Advertising and Marketing

Examinations

Pupils will produce one coursework assignment which allow them to apply their learning from the course content.

Non-exam assessment = 30%

There are two exam papers to be taken in the summer of Year 11. Paper 1 will focus on Television and Promotion & Marketing, whilst Paper 2 will focus on Music Media and the News. Each paper is worth 35% of the course.

Extra-Curricular

There is ample opportunity for extra-curricular visits, to name a few:

- Warner Bros. Harry Potter Studios
- INTO Film Festival
- The British Film Institute Study days
- The Guardian newspaper HQ visit

The subject is an excellent preparation for the demands of 'A' level subjects such as English, Media Studies, Sociology, Psychology and Business.

Contact for further information

Mrs Jandu - Head of Media

jia@herschel.slough.sch.uk

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (French and Spanish)

Aims of the Course

A GCSE in French or Spanish aims to develop the ability to understand and use the language effectively, in an imaginative and creative way, for the purposes of practical communication, and to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of countries where the languages are spoken. It will form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study leading directly into 'A' level for work or for leisure.

Overview of the Course

At Herschel, we will be following the **Pearson Edexcel GCSE** course for **French** and **Spanish** (First certification 2026), which follows on from and builds on language learnt during KS3. Much of the teaching will continue to be in the target language.

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Pupils will have needed to have studied the language at KS3. This is especially important as these studies set the foundations that we will be building on at KS4. Throughout the GCSE course pupils will develop confidence in speaking and understanding the target language and develop their research and ICT skills.

Examinations

The 4 skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing will be equally weighted so each skill makes up 25% of the GCSE.

Pupils will be entered for all four skills at **either** Foundation **or** Higher level with the tier for entry being agreed on towards the middle of Year 11.

Listening, reading and writing will be assessed during a final exam in the summer of Year 11 and speaking via an assessment which will take place in April or May in year 11.

Grades

These will range from grade 1 to grade 9 with grade 9 being the top grade.

Entry at Foundation tier will enable grades 1 to 5 to be awarded and entry at Higher tier grades 4 to 9. A pupil who just fails to achieve grade 4 will be allowed a grade 3.

Future Pathways

Pupils may wish to continue to study the language at A level where they will have the opportunity to do work experience abroad. All universities have high regard for a GCSE qualification in a Modern Foreign Language and some now insist on it for entry into English and History course. As well as having the option to pursue a language degree many universities now offer a wide range of courses which incorporate languages, e.g. physics with French language.

Contact for further information

Mrs J Keenan - Head of Modern Foreign Languages.

Jke@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE MUSIC

Music is a subject highly valued by employers and academic admissions staff in any field, as musicians are justifiably considered creative, self-disciplined, meticulous, persevering, good team players and sociable. So, choose Music and give yourself the "edge" at any interview!

Aims of the Course

- To be inspired, moved and changed by the study of music.
- To develop as effective and independent learners with enquiring minds.
- To develop broader life skills and attributes.
- To engage actively in the study of music.
- To develop musical skills and interests.
- To understand and appreciate a range of different kinds of music.

Overview of the Course

Pupils follow the **Pearson/Edexcel specification**. There is continuity from KS3 Music in that Performance, Composition and Listening and Appraising are still the focus.

Content covered in Years 10 and 11

- Practicing/rehearsing for solo and ensemble performances under supervision of, and with help from, Music teacher.
- Time spent in class devising and refining compositions under supervision of, and with help from, Music teacher. The first composition will be completed in Year 10, while the second will be done early in Year 11.
- At least one set work from each of the "Areas of Study" will be studied in depth in Year 10. The remaining set works from will be studied in Year 11. Pupils will build up their file of resources to learn and revise from. "Mock" tests and practice exams will be undertaken throughout Year 11.

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

- **Pupils should start the course with approximately Grade 3**, or equivalent, on their chosen instrument or in singing and will then benefit from guidance on performing with style and confidence.
- They will also gain skills and learn techniques in composition.

Examinations

- Performance coursework (30%): recorded spring term in Year 11.
- Composition coursework (30%): one composition recorded summer term of Year 10; other composition recorded in the autumn term of Year 11.
- Written exam (40%): one hour and forty-five minutes. The questions relate to both set works and some unfamiliar pieces: part one, pupil's respond to extracts played on a CD; part two, one question requiring extended writing. Exam summer term in Year 11.

Future Pathways

- AS/A2 Level Music
- "BMus": degree in Music at various universities or performance or composition diplomas at various Music conservatories.
- Various music-related careers, including: teaching, composing, performing, publishing, editing, music therapy, media and many more.

Contact for further information

Mr A Piggott- Head of Music api@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE PHYSICAL EDUCATION (AQA)

Aims of the Course

Develop knowledge and understanding of:

- The factors contributing to a healthy lifestyle
- Decision making in order to respond to constantly changing situations in physical activity
- Body systems and how they are affected by exercise
- Leadership and creativity through practical experience

Overview of the Course

- Pupils follow the AQA specification.
- In practical lessons, pupils will study a number of sporting activities. All pupils must count 1 team sport, 1 individual activity and a third from either group.
- In theory lessons, pupils study sports science, training and health in relation to exercise as well as the use of data in measuring and analysing performance

Subject content

Applied anatomy and physiology, Movement analysis, Physical training, Use of data, Sports Psychology, Socio-cultural Influences, Health, Fitness and Wellbeing

Skills needed:

- Strong & enthusiastic participation in Key Stage 3 PE lessons in both team and individual activities
- Ideally you will have reached at least level 6+ in PE by the end of Year 9
- A good level of individual fitness and the motivation to work on improving it
- Participation in extra-curricular sport or willingness to join.

Skills developed throughout the course:

- Skills, fitness, teamwork, leadership, decision-making under pressure, resilience, sportsmanship, organisation, planning and developing strategies for success

Assessments:

Paper 1: The human body and movement in physical activity and sport - 30% of GCSE

Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes 78 marks

Paper 2: Socio-cultural influences & well-being in activity and sport - 30% of GCSE

Written exam: 1 hour 15 minutes 78 marks

Practical Assessment - 40% of GCSE

Practical performance in three different physical activities in the role of player/performer

Analysis and evaluation of performance to bring about improvement in one activity.

Assessed by teachers and Moderated by AQA 100 marks

Future Pathways

- Higher Education courses in Sports Science, Leisure & Recreation, Education, Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, Sports Medicine, uniformed services.
- Careers in management, medical professions, education, leisure industry, armed forces, uniformed services

Contact for further information

Mrs H Embury Head of Physical Education – hem@herschel.slough.sch.uk

GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Aims of the Course

To develop knowledge, skills and understanding of religion by exploring the significance and impact of beliefs, teachings, sources, practices, ways of life and forms of expressing meaning. Pupils are encouraged to express their personal responses and informed insights on fundamental ethical questions and issues that will affect them in their lives as students, adults and members of society.

The course allows for an in-depth study of Christianity and Buddhism and a close examination of the beliefs, teachings and practices of these religions. (50 % of GCSE). On the religious, philosophical and ethical side of the course (50% of GCSE), the student is encouraged to develop their own views on a variety of issues and to view them through the standpoint of any of the six major world religions.

Overview of the Course

We study the **AQA Religious Studies Route A**.

Content covered

Years 10 and 11 Christianity (Beliefs and Teachings) Buddhism (Beliefs and Teachings) Religion and Animal Rights, Planet Earth, Prejudice, War & Peace, Religion & Early Life, the Elderly, Matters of Life, Crime and Punishment, Social Justice.

Skills needed and skills that will be gained

Pupils will need to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion. By the end of the course, they will have enhanced their spiritual and moral development, enhanced their interpersonal skills, improved their understanding of different cultures locally, nationally and in the wider world and developed their own values, opinions and attitudes which are vital in the current global climate.

Examinations

There is no coursework.

Christianity and Buddhism	50%
Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Themes	50%

Future Pathways

Any career that involves communication and an understanding other people, a logical or critical mind and problem solving. Politics, Law, Medicine, Teaching, Business, Emergency services, are all potential career paths for pupils.

Contact for further information

Mr I Sharpe - Head of RS isharpe@herschel.slough.sch.uk

Year 10 GCSE Option Choices 2026 to 2028

NAME: _____ TUTOR GROUP: _____

Selecting Optional Subjects

You will study 4 additional subjects, although you will need to specify a fifth subject as a reserve. Your reserve choice should be a subject you are happy to study if you are not allocated one of your other preferences.

GCSE Art
GCSE Business
GCSE Computer Science
GCSE Design & Technology*
GCSE Drama
GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition*
GCSE French
GCSE Geography
GCSE History
GCSE Media Studies
GCSE Music
GCSE Physical Education
GCSE Religious Studies
GCSE Spanish

**IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE, PLEASE INDICATE YOUR 4
SUBJECT PREFERENCES BELOW:**

	INSERT YOUR CHOICE
Preference 1	
Preference 2	
Preference 3	
Preference 4	
Reserve Choice	

Please note:

- *You can only choose the technology subject you are currently studying
- **You can only choose the Language you are currently studying
- Courses will only be run subject to pupil demand and staffing resources.
- You are advised to ensure your choices give you a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Every effort will be made to allow you to study the subjects of your choice within the constraints of curriculum and staffing available.

Pupil Signature: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent/carer) Date: _____

**Please complete this form online
a link we will be shared via Teams
Deadline - Friday 27 FEBRUARY 2026.**

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[illegible]

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