

St Christopher School

GCSE Curriculum  
Information  
2018-20



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St Christopher School  
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

# St Christopher School

## GCSE Curriculum Information

2018-20

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## GCSEs – The Basics

In Years 7, 8 and 9 (I – III Group) all pupils study a wide range of subjects. In Years 10 and 11 (IV & V Group) most pupils follow a curriculum which leads to nine or ten GCSE awards.

The **core curriculum** is compulsory for all:

- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Sciences (2 or 3 GCSEs)

The remaining four subjects are chosen from a broad range of options.

Pupils are strongly advised to opt for those subjects that they enjoy and are good at. Higher Education and career aspirations should also be considered.

Wherever possible it is sensible to aim for a balanced programme of study. However, the School does not require a pupil to choose courses to include all the main curriculum areas (languages, humanities, creative subjects and technology). It is possible, therefore, to select a combination of subjects tailored to individual strengths and needs.

The process of choosing subjects may take some time. The School provides advice and consultation for pupils and parents to help them make appropriate choices.

This booklet provides the essential information about the GCSE courses provided at St Christopher and is a good starting point for discussion.

# GCSE Grading

## GCSE grading has changed

All GCSE grades awarded in summer 2020 will be graded on the new 9 to 1 scale – where 9 is the highest grade that can be achieved.



Grading new GCSEs from 2017

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	A*
8	A
7	B
6	C
5	D
4	E
3	F
2	G
1	U
U	U

# **GCSE Core Curriculum**

## **Subjects**

## **English Language & English Literature**

Examining Group

AQA

Syllabus titles

English Language (8700)  
English Literature (8702)

Grading

9 - 1 (9 is the highest grade)

GCSE English lessons at St Chris are split into two separate courses: English Language and English Literature. Both are compulsory for all students.

### **English Language**

The English Language course focuses largely on functional, real world English skills.

Students are assessed in two rigorous examinations after two years of study. Each exam paper is divided into two sections; Reading and Writing. The Reading section requires students to read and interpret a number of unseen text extracts from a variety of sources, genres and time periods, including 19<sup>th</sup> Century fiction and non-fiction. Understanding is then assessed through a series of questions which deal with the students' ability to comprehend, infer, evaluate, analyse and summarise the written word.

The Writing section asks students to produce their own original writing, both fiction and non-fiction, based on a set task. This is where students are also assessed for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **English Literature**

The English Literature course is text based and students will have studied a variety of literary works throughout Years 10 and 11 including a play by Shakespeare, a text from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century novel and a wide range of poetry. Students are assessed in two 'closed book' examinations which test the students' detailed understanding of the set texts and which take the form of a series of essay questions.

The English Department at St Christopher is committed to giving students the best possible preparation for what are likely to be exams with an increased level of challenge over the current English GCSEs. With this in mind we are already developing the skills needed and 'drip feeding' the specific GCSE assessment criteria to students in Key Stage 3 so that they are familiar and confident when they start Year 10.

# **Subject**                      **Mathematics**

Examining Group                      Edexcel (Pearson)

Syllabus titles                      Mathematics (1MA1)

Grading                      9 - 1 (9 is the highest grade)

This GCSE is assessed by examination only at the end of the V Group (Year 11).

The GCSE course comprises topics from the following main areas:

- Number: prime numbers; fraction arithmetic; percentages and interest calculation; standard form; surds; consequences of estimating
- Ratio: the fact that ratio is a relationship and can help solve many everyday problems
- Algebra: one of the key languages in maths and how to model situations in general and solve for particular known facts
- Graphs: how to present information visually and use graphs to help solve problems
- Geometry: to use properties of shape to solve problems; Pythagoras and Trigonometry
- Probability & statistics: outcomes of multiple events; 0 – 1 probability scale, Venn & tree diagrams; independent & dependent events; inference about populations from sampling; correlation etc

The new GCSE has been designed to give students a solid understanding of concepts, the opportunity to achieve fluency in mathematical processes and gain confidence in applying these to problem-solving in a wide variety of contexts.

There are three terminal papers of equal length (3 x 1 hour 30 minutes), one of which will be non-calculator.



## **Biology (8461), Chemistry (8462), Physics (8463)**

The separate Science GCSEs in **Biology**, **Chemistry** and **Physics** have an assessment structure as follows:

Students will take the following written terminal papers:

<b>Biology</b>	Biology 1, Biology 2
<b>Chemistry</b>	Chemistry 1, Chemistry 2
<b>Physics</b>	Physics 1, Physics 2

Each paper is 1 hour 45 minutes, 100 marks and worth 50%.

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

The qualification will be graded on a 9-point scale: 9 is the highest grade.

All the exams are in May/June at the end of the V Group (Year 11).

Full details of Science courses from AQA can be found here:  
<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/gcse>

# **GCSE Optional Choice Subjects**

Art & Design

Art & Design: 3D Design

Drama

French

Film Studies

Food Preparation & Nutrition

Geography

History

Music

Physical Education

Spanish

## **Subject                      Art & Design**

Examining Group	AQA
Syllabus title	Art & Design (8201, 8202, 8203, 8204, 8206)
Grading	9 - 1

### **Assessment**

Students are provided with a wide range of stimulating creative opportunities to explore their interest in Art and Design in ways that are personally relevant and developmental in nature. Students can choose any one of the following titles: Art, Craft and Design, Fine Art, Textile Design, Three-Dimensional Design, Graphic Communication and Photography.

### **Portfolio (60% of qualification)**

The content of the portfolio will be determined by the particular requirements of the course of study undertaken. There is no restriction on the scale of work produced. Students may submit in their portfolio a selection of thoughtfully-presented work that demonstrates the breadth and depth of the course of study. There should be more than one extended collection of work or project which demonstrate an ability to sustain work from initial starting-points or project briefs to the realisation of intentions. It will include evidence of research, the development of ideas and meaningful links with critical/contextual sources.

### **Externally Set Assignment (40% of qualification)**

Students are required to elicit a personal response from one starting-point or project brief within the paper for which they have been entered.

AQA will set a paper containing a selection of starting points. Papers are issued to students from 2 January in the year of the examination. There is unlimited preparation time followed by a ten-hour period of sustained focused study, in which students are expected to develop their own unaided work, informed by their preparatory studies. During the preparatory period, teachers may discuss starting-points with students and give them general guidance on the choice of materials, how to carry-out preparatory studies or how to begin research on their chosen starting-point.

## **Subject**

## **Art & Design (3D Design)**

Taught by Design Technology Staff in the DT workshop

Examining Group

AQA

Syllabus title

Art & Design (Three Dimensional Design, 8205)

Grading

9 - 1

## **Assessment**

### **Portfolio (60% of qualification)**

No time limit

- A portfolio of creative three dimensional work, including a sustained project evidencing the journey from initial engagement to the realisation of intentions. Also a selection of further 2D and 3D work undertaken during the course
- Undertaken during Year 10 and the autumn term of Year 11
- Emphasis on drawing and the keeping of sketchbooks to record creative ideas, inspirations, annotations, etc.
- Students are encouraged to visit galleries, exhibitions, etc.

### **Externally Set Assignment (40% of qualification)**

Preparatory Period + 10 hours supervised time.

- Students respond creatively to a chosen starting point, from a list of contexts set by the exam board in January of Year 11
- This is a supervised Practical Making Exam in the DT workshop

Pupils should consider Art & Design (3D Design) if they enjoy:

- Coming up with artistic creative ideas
- Freehand sketching and annotation
- Designing 2D and 3D shapes on the computer through CAD
- Making projects in the workshop in wood, metal and plastic
- Using and knowing about a range of materials, tools and machines
- Being self-motivated and organised with project work

The differences between Year 9 Design & Technology work and GCSE Art & Design (3D Design) are a greater focus on:

- Creative experimentation
- Smaller classes so more individual help in the workshop
- Freehand sketching and other forms of drawing
- Annotation / the keeping of creative sketchbooks
- The chance to use a wide variety of tools and machines

Extra-curricular opportunities include weekly 'shed' sessions after school. It is not required but expected that candidates will make use of some of these times to enhance their portfolio progress.

**Portfolio Project Costs:** Parents and candidates should be aware that there will be a charge made for project materials.

# Subject                      Drama

Examining Group              AQA

Syllabus title                      Drama (8261)

Grading                              9 - 1

## **The course aims to develop:**

1. Understanding drama
2. Devising drama
3. Texts in practice

## **Component 1: Understanding Drama**

- Knowledge and understanding of drama and theatre
- Study of one set play from a choice of six
- Analysis and evaluation of the work of live theatre makers

**How it is assessed:** Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes; Open book; 40%. Multiple choice (4 marks); four questions on a given extract from the set play chosen (46 marks); one two part question (from a choice) on the work of theatre makers in a single live theatre production (30 marks)

## **Component 2: Devising Drama (practical)**

- Process of creating devised drama
- Performance of devised drama (students may contribute as performer or designer)
- Analysis and evaluation of own work

**How it is assessed:** Devising log (60 marks); Devised performance (20 marks); 40%. This component is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.

## **Component 3: Texts in Practice (practical)**

Performance of two extracts from one play (students may contribute as performer or designer). Free choice of play but to contrast with the set play chosen for Component 1.

**How it is assessed:** Performance of Extract 1 (25 marks) **and** Extract 2 (25 marks); 20% of GCSE. This component is marked by AQA.

**Theatre Trips:** Students can expect to see at least one production a year with the School.

# **Subject**                      **Film Studies**

Examining Group	WJEC Eduqas
Syllabus title	Film Studies (4810)
Grading	9 - 1

## **What is Film Studies?**

Film is one of the main cultural innovations of the 20th century and a major art form of the last hundred years. The Film Studies GCSE allows students to study a diverse range of films; learn to analyse the key elements of film form; explore the significance of film in a social, cultural and historical context; and put all of this into practice in the production of their own short film.

## **How is it assessed?**

GCSE Film Studies is assessed through examination and practical coursework. Exams are worth 35% each and are as follows:

### **Component 1: Key Developments in US Film**

Students are required to answer a range of questions; both short form questions that assess their knowledge and understanding of key developments in film and film technology and longer essay-style questions which require them to write about the films they will have studied in class.

### **Component 2: Global Film: Narrative, Representation and Film Style**

Students are required to answer a range of questions; both short form questions that assess their knowledge and understanding of the way films use narrative techniques, and longer essay-style questions which require them to write about the films they will have studied in class.

**Component 3:** Assessed internally and moderated externally and requires students to produce either a short film or a screenplay responding to a brief set by the exam board. This must be accompanied by an evaluation of their work.

## **Who should take it?**

Pupils should consider Film Studies as an option if they already enjoy:

- Film! An interest in film is essential
- Applying skills of analysis to a range of different texts
- Being creative
- Investigating the world around them
- Film production and post-production

# **Subject                      Food Preparation & Nutrition**

Examining Group            AQA

Syllabus title                Food Preparation and Nutrition (8585)

Grading                        9 - 1

GCSE Food Preparation & Nutrition offers a focus on practical cooking skills and the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of nutrition, the origin of foods and a working knowledge of the characteristics of ingredients.

**Exciting and contemporary** – It's designed to motivate students to develop the high level of knowledge, understanding and skills to cook and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating.

**Keeps the subject meaningful** – Students learn about improving lives through better knowledge of food, where it comes from and how it affects our bodies.

**Inspiration from around the world** – Explore a range of ingredients and processes from different culinary traditions (traditional British and international) to inspire new ideas or modify existing recipes.

**Theory content** (50% of qualification)

This content is covered throughout five components:

Food, Nutrition & Health; Food Science; Food Safety; Food Choice; Food Provenance

100 marks (1 hour 45mins written paper)

**Practical Content** (50% of qualification)

Food Preparation Task: Students' understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

Food Investigation Task: Students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the planning, preparation, cooking, presentation of food and application of nutrition related to the chosen task.

Students will prepare, cook and present a final menu of three dishes within a single period of no more than three hours, planning in advance how this will be achieved.

Teacher assessed and moderated by the exam board.

## **Subject**                      **French**

Examining Group              AQA

Syllabus title                 French (8658)

Grading                        9 - 1

### **Listening paper** (25% of qualification)

- Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B: Questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally

### **Reading paper** (25% of qualification)

Understanding and responding to different types of written language.

- Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B: Questions in French, to be answered in French or non-verbally
- Section C: Translation from French into English

### **Writing paper** (25% of qualification)

Structured writing task (90 words); Open-ended writing task (student responds to two compulsory detailed bullet points, 150 words in total); Translation from English into French (50 words).

### **Speaking test** (25% of qualification)

Externally set, internally conducted, externally assessed.

Communicating and interacting effectively in speech: Role-play – 15 marks (2 minutes); Photo card – 15 marks (3 minutes); General conversation – 30 marks (5–7 minutes)

The emphasis at GCSE on communication and an exchange programme with a French school gives added relevance to this course. Our objective is to enable students of all abilities to develop their French language skills to their full potential, equipping them with the knowledge to communicate in a variety of contexts with confidence.

The course covers three distinct themes that apply to all four question papers:

- Theme 1: Identity and culture
- Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest
- Theme 3: Current and future study and employment

Students are expected to understand and provide information and opinions about these themes relating to their own experiences and those of other people, including people in countries/communities where French is spoken.

The opportunity of a stay with a French family early in Year 10 will greatly enhance pupils' knowledge of the language and of French culture.

## **Subject**                      **Geography**

Examining Group              Edexcel (Pearson)

Syllabus title                      Geography B (1GB0)

Grading                              9 - 1

### **Assessment:**

#### **Global Geographical Issues**

Written examination 1 hour 30 minutes

Students are examined on three topics – Hazardous Earth; Development Dynamics; Challenges of an Urbanising World

This is to enable students to develop and extend their knowledge of locations, places, environments and processes, and of different scales, including global, and of social, political and cultural contexts.

The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response and extended writing questions

#### **UK Geographical Issues**

Written examination 1 Hour 30 minutes

Students are examined on three topics in the context of the UK – The UK's Evolving Physical Landscape; The UK's Evolving Human Landscape; Geographical Investigations.

This allows students to gain an understanding of the interactions between people and environments, the change in places and processes over space and time, and the inter-relationship between geographical phenomena at different scales and in different contexts.

Students carry out **field work** and apply it to contemporary situations and issues.

#### **People and Environment Issues – Making Geographical Decisions**

Written examination 1 hour 30 minutes

Four sections: People and the Biosphere; Forests Under Threat; Consuming Energy resources; Making a Geographical Decision.

Students are expected to apply geographical knowledge, understanding, skills and approaches appropriately and creatively to real-world contexts.

The exam includes multiple-choice questions, short open, open response and extended writing questions.

All students are subject to SPAG marks (marks that can be lost or gained based on spelling, punctuation and grammar.)

## **Subject**                      **History**

Examining Group	OCR
Syllabus title	History A (Explaining the Modern World) (J410)
Grading	9 - 1

This is an exciting and highly challenging GCSE History course. There are five components all of which are assessed through written examination.

### **International Relations: The Changing International Order 1918–2001** (30% of qualification)

The struggle between different types of government: The rise and fall of Communism as a political, ideological and economic model, human rights, the idea of powers and super-powers, nations and Nationalism, how ideology can impact politics.

- **Conflict and Co-operation 1918–1939**  
Successes and failures of internationalist approaches in the 1920s and the retreat to Nationalism in the 1930s
- **The Cold War 1945–c.1989**  
The changing international order after 1945, up to the Soviet war in Afghanistan
- **From the End of the Cold War to 2001**  
The ending of the Cold War and the emergence of new challenges to the international order
- **Historical Controversy**  
Changing interpretations of Appeasement, the Second World War, the Cold War; new sources of evidence c.1990 onwards

### **The USA 1945–1974: The People and the State** (20% of qualification)

Students are required to study some of the following issues: the policies of the state; the reasons for support/opposition to the state from different groups throughout the period; the ways in which source material from the time can be used to investigate the issues above, and the challenges presented by the use of primary source material.

- **Post-War Challenges in the USA 1945–1954**  
The concerns of the US government about the influence of Communism in the USA and responses.
- **Civil Rights in the USA 1954–1964**  
The development and achievements of the civil rights movement, including the leadership of Martin Luther King in civil rights campaigns.
- **Government and Dissent c.1964–1974**  
African American radical movements and leaders; the civil rights campaigns for Native Americans and Chicanos; feminist movements; gay liberation; anti-Vietnam War protests.

## **Power: Monarchy and Democracy in Britain c.1000 to 2014**

(25% of qualification)

This British thematic study focuses on patterns of change and continuity in Power: Monarchy and Democracy in Britain over a long period of British history, c.1000 to 2014.

Anglo-Saxon kingship c.1000–1066; the Norman invasion, including the establishment of the Norman monarchy and the transfer of power from Saxons to Normans at all levels of society; John and Magna Carta; emergence of Parliament in the reigns of Henry III and Edward I, Wars of the Roses, Tudor government, the Civil Wars and the abolition of the monarchy; the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the reasons for the 1688 'Glorious Revolution'; the legacy of the Glorious Revolution including the Bill of Rights; the rise and effectiveness of Trade Unions and the Labour Party 1880s–1914; the women's suffrage campaign; government control in the world wars; the increased role of the state from 1945 to c.1980, and challenges to Parliament c.1980 to early 2000s: the Miners' Strike; 1984–1985; Prime Ministerial power under Thatcher and Blair; the devolution of power to regions of the UK; the challenges of coalition government.

## **The English Reformation c.1520–c.1550**

(15% of qualification)

Religious, social and economic perspectives as well as the psychological impact of religious change on the ordinary people of England.

Key topics include the English Church and the nature of religious practice before and during the Reformation; the impact of the Reformation; the role and importance (including wealth) of the church in England c.1520; Dissolution of the Monasteries c.1534–c.1540; Thomas Cromwell; immediate reactions to Dissolution; the impact of the Reformation in English parishes.

## **Castles: Form and Function c.1000–1750**

(10% of qualification)

The essence of this study is for learners to practise and develop their ability to use evidence effectively, specifically the site of a castle. The aim is that learners should be able to explain how historians and archaeologists can use the physical fabric of the site and accompanying relevant documents and other source material to understand the purpose of a castle site at specific points in time. The site specified for this study in 2018 will be Framlingham Castle.

## **Subject                      Music**

Examining Group	OCR
Syllabus title	Music (J356)
Grading	9 - 1

GCSE Music is based on five Areas of Study providing performance, composition and appraisal opportunities. Pupils will study music from the past and present, from the western tradition and other world cultures. There will also be opportunities for pupils to further their understanding of musical styles of their own choosing.

### **Area of Study 1: My Music** (spotlight on my instrument)

Pupils learn about their instrument (or voice), its capabilities, limitations, and repertoire. They will practice, rehearse, perform, and compose a piece in any style they wish.

### **Area of Study 2: The Concerto Through Time**

Pupils study the Concerto and its development from 1650 to 1910

### **Area of Study 3: Rhythms of the World**

Pupils study the traditional rhythmic roots from four geographical regions of the world: India and the Punjab; Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East; Africa; Central and South America.

### **Area of Study 4: Film Music**

Pupils study a range of music used for films including: music composed for a film; music from the Western Classical tradition used within a film; music that has been composed as a soundtrack for a video game.

### **Area of Study 5: Conventions of Pop**

This involves the study of a range of popular music from the 1950s to the present day, focussing on: Rock 'n' Roll of the 1950s and 1960s; Rock Anthems of the 1970s and 1980s; Pop Ballads of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s; Solo Artists from 1990 to the present day.

How Music GCSE is assessed:

**Integrated Portfolio:** One performance and one composition, to a self-determined brief, for their own instrument. (30% of qualification)

**Practical Component:** Pupils record one performance in an ensemble and produce one composition in response to a brief set by OCR. (30% of qualification)

**Listening and Appraising:** The Listening Exam assesses aural perception and understanding of the content of the Areas of Study 2-5. Pupils listen to extracts of music and answer questions about them. The exam lasts about 1 hour 30 minutes. (40% of qualification).

# **Subject                      Physical Education**

Examining Group            WJEC Eduqas

Syllabus title                Physical Education

Grading                        9 - 1

The GCSE in Physical Education requires students to:

- Develop theoretical knowledge and understanding of the factors that underpin physical activity and sport and use this knowledge to improve performance
- Understand how the physiological and psychological state affects performance in physical activity and sport
- Perform effectively in different physical activities by developing skills and techniques and selecting and using tactics, strategies and/or compositional ideas
- Develop their ability to analyse and evaluate to improve performance in physical activity and sport
- Understand the contribution which physical activity and sport make to health, fitness and well-being
- Understand key socio-cultural influences which can affect people's involvement in physical activity and sport

## **Component 1: Introduction to physical education**

Written examination: 2 hours, 120 marks (60% of qualification)

A range of short and extended answers. The questions will be based on stimuli/sources.

## **Component 2: The active participant in physical education**

Non-exam assessment: 80 marks (40% of qualification)

Learners will be assessed in **three different activities** in the role of player/performer in at least one individual and one team sport (30%). Learners will be assessed through an analysis and evaluation of their performance in one of their chosen activities (10%).

### **Analysis and evaluation**

Learners must design a personal training programme with the aim of providing recommendations to improve performance in one of the practical activities in which they were assessed, including theoretical content. Learners must collect, present, analyse and evaluate appropriate data for the personal performance analysis.

## **Subject**                      **Spanish**

Examining Group              AQA

Syllabus title                      Spanish (8698)

Grading                              9 - 1

### **Listening paper** (25% of qualification)

- Section A: Questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B: Questions in Spanish, to be answered in Spanish or non-verbally

### **Reading paper** (25% of qualification)

Understanding and responding to different types of written language.

- Section A – questions in English, to be answered in English or non-verbally
- Section B – questions in Spanish, to be answered in Spanish or non-verbally
- Section C – translation from Spanish into English

### **Writing paper** (25% of qualification)

Structured writing task (90 words); Open-ended writing task (student responds to two compulsory detailed bullet points, 150 words in total); Translation from English into Spanish (50 words).

### **Speaking test** (25% of qualification)

Externally set, internally conducted, externally assessed.

Communicating and interacting effectively in speech: Role-play – 15 marks (2 minutes); Photo card – 15 marks (3 minutes); General conversation – 30 marks (5–7 minutes.)

The emphasis at GCSE on communication and an exchange programme with a Spanish school gives added relevance to this course. Our objective is to enable students of all abilities to develop their Spanish language skills to their full potential, equipping them with the knowledge to communicate in a variety of contexts with confidence.

The course covers three distinct themes that apply to all four question papers:

- Theme 1: Identity and culture
- Theme 2: Local, national, international and global areas of interest
- Theme 3: Current and future study and employment

Students are expected to understand and provide information and opinions about these themes relating to their own experiences and those of other people, including people in countries/communities where Spanish is spoken.

The opportunity of a stay with a Spanish family early in Year 10 will greatly enhance pupils' knowledge of the language and of Spanish culture.