ST. MARY'S R.C. HIGH SCHOOL

Options Booklet
February 2026

EXAM BOARDS

OCR

1 Hills Road

Cambridge

CB1 2EU

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

AQA

Devas Street

Manchester

M15 6EX

Email: eos@aqa.org.uk

WJEC

Welsh Joint Education Committees incorporating Eduquas

245 Western Avenue

Cardiff

CF5 2YX

Email: info@wjec.co.uk

EDEXCEL

One90 High Holborn

London

WC1V 7BH

Email: students@pearson.com

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction – The Next Stage	4
Fine Art	7
Textile Design	10
Business Studies	12
Drama	14
English Language	16
English Literature	18
French	20
Geography	23
History	26
Computer Science	29
Mathematics	31
Music	33
Physical Education	36
Religious Education	38
Design Technology	39
Science	42
Vocational Course - Hospitality & Catering	45
Post 16 Options	47

INTRODUCTION

In September you will be moving to the next stage of your learning, which involves commencing your study for GCSE exams. You have some choice about which subjects to study during Years 10 and 11 and you are able to design your own programme of subjects. You will be asked to take more responsibility for your own learning and there will be considerable differences in your workload. You will still have homework, there will be many assessed tasks, and you will have to plan to meet deadlines and learn to prepare for exams.

Using the Booklet

This booklet has been prepared to enable you and your parents/carers to have an opportunity to study the type of courses and examinations you will be following during the next two years. It contains some information that I will present on Options Evening and information you can discuss with Heads of Department. You may want to examine some additional Careers information by contacting Mrs Pattison-Wake.

Courses

At St. Mary's the core curriculum involves studying the following subjects at GCSE:

- Religious Education
- Mathematics
- English
- Science

The most able scientists will be offered the opportunity to study the three separate Sciences to GCSE. The majority of students will follow a Combined Science course. This leads to a GCSE grade in Core Science and Additional Science.

Most students will have two Physical Education lessons each week. This is separate from GCSE Physical Education and is designed to allow students to pursue sports at competitive and recreational level. This should be fun and develop health and well-being.

Options Evening

This is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 11th March 2026. During this evening, I will speak about the options process, some information about different courses and some advice to make the right options choices. Following this introduction there will be the opportunity for you and your parents to speak to subject specialists about different courses we offer at St Marys.

You need to choose three subjects from the list below – 1 subject must be from 'Choice A' and 2 subjects from 'Choice B and C'. Any student who wants to discuss their options with a member of staff should arrange to speak with Mr Giampalma.

KS4 Option courses available at St Mary's

Choice A	Choice B and C
French	French
Geography	Geography
History	History
	Computer Science
	Art
	Business Studies
	Design and Technology
	Drama
	Music
	Physical Education
	Textiles
	*BTEC/Cambridge National:
	*Hospitality and Catering

Vocational subjects

We offer a vocational option in Hospitality and Catering for pupils who are interested in this industry and who may find traditional examinations more challenging. This course is designed with a strong emphasis on continuous assessment, allowing pupils to develop practical skills and demonstrate their learning throughout the year.

Response Form

Key Stage 4 Options Evening on Wednesday 11th March 2026

Following Options evening, the Options form will be accessible on Microsoft Forms. You need to choose 1 subject from 'Choice A' and 2 subjects from 'Choice B and C'. If you are unsure, please speak to your subject teachers, Mrs Avery or Mr Giampalma. Following Options Evening you will need to submit your completed form by **Thursday 19th March 2026.** If there are any problems about your course choices, I will discuss alternative option subjects with you.

A Giampalma
Assistant Headteacher

Fine Art

Why choose Fine Art?

- You enjoy Art and have found it challenging and rewarding
- You welcome the balance it gives you to other academic subjects
- You enjoy learning new techniques and working with a range of media & materials and are keen to develop your own interests and skills
- Your teacher will help and inspire you to experiment with a wide range of new materials and techniques and to explore the work of other artists and designers.
- Art is a practical subject which, will extend your knowledge and skills can give you a route into the 'creative industries.' There is no written exam however there is a large amount of self-driven, dedicated work required to achieve a good result.

Course Content

Fine Art (AQA) is a course that allows students to develop their visual thinking and explore themes that they are interested and passionate in. The first term is spent exploring a teacher led project where students are shown a wide range of new, exciting processes and techniques that they may not have yet covered when in KS3. This project helps build the students skills and confidence by exploring a wide range of materials, helping them identify which medias they are most drawn to. From this project they will then create a new body of work where they take direction and ownership over themes they want to explore. This allows them to develop their style, individuality and explore areas in Art that they want to. As they do this, they will have 1:1 creative discussion in lessons to nurture their project and ideas, being stretched and challenged to accomplish personalised, unique and creative sketchbooks.

Unit 1 Portfolio of Work – 60%

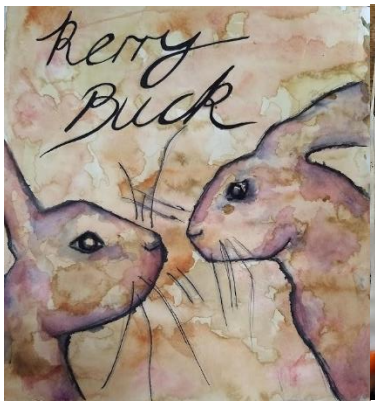
- Teacher led project at the start of year 10 through until early spring that explores and investigates a wide range of processes, skills and techniques allowing students to build confidence and skills, as well as know and recognise which ways of working they are drawn to and passionate about.
- Students will study in depth, one sustained project selected in response to a theme that will show development of an idea right through to a final piece. This project will start towards the end of year 10 and will continue into the first part of Year 11. Students will use their own primary research of artists, photography and drawings to develop ideas and designs.

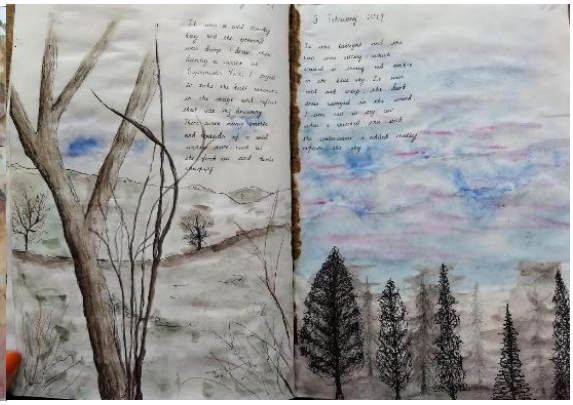
Unit 2 Externally Set Task - 40%

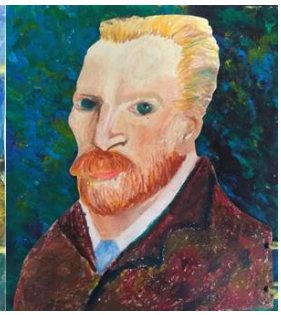
- In January of Year 11 students will be given an external paper from which they will choose a 'starting point' for their final project. The whole of the Spring Term is dedicated to preparing for the final project through research and development of ideas and techniques.
- Students will be given lots of help from their teacher to enable them to feel confident and fully prepared for the 10 hour exam practical exam, where they produce a final outcome for this project. This usually takes place over two days at the end of April.

Exhibition

All GCSE portfolio and exam work will be displayed in an exhibition at the end of the course to enable final moderation from the exam board. A private view held in the evening will give students the exciting opportunity to show all their textile work to family, friends, staff and students.







Visits

Trips to galleries and museums are an important part of the course for research and inspiration; we aim to take students on visits in both Years 10 and 11. Trips in the past have included London, Bristol, Oxford & Barcelona.

Equipment

Some investment in art equipment will be required in order for students to work at home. Art packs, at cost price are available for approx. £30, which include good quality materials, equipment and a sketchbook.

AQA TEXTILE DESIGN GCSE

Why choose Textiles?

- You enjoy being creative and making things using fabrics and textiles.
- You like the balance textiles gives to the other academic subjects in school.
- You have enjoyed learning new textile techniques, and processes working with fabrics, printing and stitching and you are keen to develop your own interests and skills.
- You are interested to explore the work of other artists and designers to help inspire and develop your own style leading to making your own designs.
- Textiles Design is an exciting practical subject, which requires lots of work to achieve good results. It is a rewarding subject, which will extend your knowledge, skills and interests and can give you a route into the 'creative industries'. There is no formal written exam; students provide written annotation to support their own artwork as it progresses.

Course Content

The Textile Design GCSE (AQA) is a broad art-based textiles course providing students with a wide range of creative and stimulating opportunities to explore their individual interests and to develop their textile design knowledge, understanding and skills.

Unit 1 Portfolio of Work – 60%

- Students will study in depth, one sustained project selected in response to a subject or theme that will show development of an idea right through to a final piece. This project will start towards the end of Year 10 and will continue into the first part of Year 11.
- A selection of further work resulting from activities and workshops in the classroom: such as experimentation, developing new skills, responses to other artist work as well as some 'mini' projects to support the main project.
- Students can choose what to do for the sustained project from a list of starting points developed in conjunction with the teacher. Areas of Textile Design may include: fashion, costume, dyeing, printing, domestic textiles, constructed textiles, stitching and embellishment.

Unit 2 Externally Set Task - 40%

- In January of Year 11 students will be given an external paper from which they will choose a 'starting point' for their final project. The whole of the Spring Term is dedicated to preparing for the final project through research and development of ideas and techniques. Students will be given lots of help from their teacher to enable them to feel confident and fully prepared for the 10-hour exam, which takes place over two days around Easter, in which they will complete their final piece of work.

Exhibition

All GCSE portfolio and exam work will be displayed in an exhibition at the end of the course to enable final moderation from the exam board. A private view held in the evening will give students the exciting opportunity to show all their textile work to family, friends, staff and students.

Visits

Trips to galleries and museums are an important part of the course for research and inspiration. We aim to take students on visits in both Years 10 and 11.

Equipment

Some investment in art equipment will be required in order for students to work at home. Art packs, at cost price are available for approx. £30, which include good quality materials, equipment and a sketchbook.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Being Enterprising is widely recognised as a key skill in modern life. It encourages us to be independent, creative and enables us to make effective decisions. GCSE Business equips students with the skills and confidence to explore how different business situations affect decision-making. They develop their understanding of concepts, objectives and terminology, and the impact of contemporary issues on business operations. This GCSE will enable students to develop life skills by making them financially and commercially aware. It is an excellent introduction to a wide range of further study opportunities, as well as being very useful for those pursuing apprenticeships when they leave school.

OCR GCSE Business J204

What you will study in OCR GCSE (9–1) Business:

- Marketing, including advertising, development of products, setting the best price.
- Recruitment, including how businesses get the right staff and keep them working well.
- Business structures, including the different ways to set up a business.
- Finance, including how businesses get the money to set up and operate and how they make a profit.
- Business operations, including how businesses produce the things we buy.
- Influences on businesses, including the environment and how many businesses are operating around the world.

So why should you choose OCR GCSE (9–1) Business as an option?

- You will be able to understand the business world which you will enter after finishing school/college/university.
- You will be able to make informed decisions and put forward arguments to persuade others.
- You will have the knowledge to help you set up a business of your own.
- The skills you learn such as evaluation and problem solving will be useful in a number of other subjects.
- Business can lead on to many vocational qualifications and is a good stepping stone for you in A Level subjects, especially economics, accountancy and of course A Level Business.

Successful businesses are those that understand and respond to the markets that they operate in. To ensure that students can relate to this we deliver a broad and balanced curriculum which makes regular use of the business news and other issues such as environmental concerns. We also regularly use local business stories to help pupils gain a deeper understanding of the community in which they live, and may go on to work in.

This wider focus helps build our decision making and analytical skills by considering how we would deal with a variety of situations both local and national. This gives students a starting point for further discovery on the impact that business makes on all of our lives.
In order to give pupils realistic opportunities to experience business decisions, when possible we give them the opportunity to visit businesses and we enter enterprise competitions.

Assessment

We test our knowledge through the use of past examination questions and end of module tests. The skill of writing well developed business arguments is built over the course by tackling increasingly complex scenarios.
The GCSE is examined via two external exams. The papers are of equal weight and both comprise a mixture of multiple choice, short and long answer questions. The first paper assesses the pupil's knowledge of the unit one topics whilst the second paper assesses the unit two topics whilst also including at least one longer question which requires pupils to consider the impacts on a whole business rather than just specific areas.

Post GCSE

Every pupil will engage in the business world when they leave education as either a consumer, employee or entrepreneur. The provision of effective business and enterprise education will give pupils a foundation of well-rounded knowledge and skills, with which to transition to their future. This GCSE is an ideal introduction to careers in many aspects of business including marketing, banking, accountancy, media, HR, law, production management and politics as well as of course becoming an entrepreneur.

DRAMA Exam Board AQA

In order to gain the most out of GCSE Drama students must enjoy performing, be willing to work as part of a team and understand the merits and necessity of rehearsal outside timetabled lesson time.

Students who enjoy performing learn to collaborate with others, think analytically and evaluate effectively. They gain the confidence to pursue their own ideas, reflect and refine their efforts. Whatever the future holds, students of GCSE Drama emerge with a toolkit of transferable skills, applicable both in further studies and in the workplace.

- All assessment is linear, with written exams taking place at the end of the course.
- 60% of the GCSE will be assessed through non-exam assessment, 40% through a written exam.
- To ensure papers are accessible to all students, the written exam starts with multiple-choice questions before moving on to extended questions.
- Practical work will be assessed by the teacher or by a visiting examiner, depending on the component.

GCSE specification at a glance

Component 1: Understanding Drama

What's assessed?

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

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour and 45 minutes
- Open book
- 80 marks
- **40% of GCSE**

Questions

- Section A: multiple choice (4 marks)
- Section B: four questions on a given extract from the set play (44 marks)
- Section C: one two part question (from a choice) on the work of theatre makers in a single live theatre production (32 marks)

Component 2: Devising Drama (practical)

What is assessed?

- Process of creating devised drama
- Performance of devised drama
- Analysis and evaluation of own work

How it's assessed

- Devising log (60 marks)
- Devised performance (20 marks)
- 80 marks in total
- **40% of GCSE**

This component is marked by teachers and moderated by AQA.

Component 3: Texts in practice (practical)

What is assessed?

- Performance of two extracts from one play
- Free choice of play but it must contrast with the set play chosen for Component 1

How it's assessed

- Performance of Extract 1 (25 marks) and Extract 2 (25 marks)
- 50 marks in total
- **20% of GCSE**

This component is marked by a visiting examiner.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

All students will follow Edexcel's Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9–1) in English Language. It is a linear course consisting of two externally examined components and one endorsement for Spoken Language.

Component 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing

Overview of content

- Study selections from a range of prose fiction.
- Develop skills to analyse and evaluate 19th-century fiction extracts.
- Develop imaginative writing skills to engage the reader.
- Use spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately.

Overview of assessment

- 40% of the GCSE.
- Section A – Reading: questions on an unseen 19th-century fiction extract.
- Section B – Writing: a choice of two writing tasks. The tasks are linked by a theme to the reading extract.
- Assessment duration 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Component 2: Non-fiction and Transactional Writing

Overview of content

- Study a range of 20th and 21st-century non-fiction texts (including literary non-fiction).
- Develop skills to analyse evaluate and compare non-fiction extracts.
- Develop transactional writing skills for a variety of forms, purposes and audiences.
- Use spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately.

Overview of assessment

- 60% of the GCSE.
- Section A
    - Reading: questions on two thematically linked, unseen non-fiction extracts.
- Section B
    - Writing: a choice of two writing tasks. The tasks are linked by a theme to the reading extracts.
- Assessment duration: 2 hours and 5 minutes

Assessment of Spoken Language

The preparation and assessment of spoken language is a compulsory requirement of the course of study. It will appear on all students' certificates as a separately reported grade, alongside the overall grade issued: Pass, Merit or distinction. The criteria will address the following assessment objectives:

- Demonstrate presentation skills in a formal setting.
- Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations.
- Use spoken Standard English effectively in speeches and presentations.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

All students also study English Literature will follow Edexcel's GCSE (9–1) in English Literature. It is a linear course consisting of two externally examined components.

Component 1: Shakespeare and Post-1914 Literature:

Overview of content

- Study a Shakespeare play and a post-1914 British play or novel.
- Develop skills to analyse how the language, form, structure and context of texts can create meanings and effects.
- Develop skills to maintain a critical style and informed personal response.

Overview of assessment

- 50% of the GCSE.
- Section A
    - 'Macbeth': a two-part question, with the first task focused on an extract of approximately 30 lines. The second task is focused on how a theme reflected in the extract is explored elsewhere in the play.
- Section B
    - 'Journey's End' - ONE essay question.
- Assessment duration: 1 hour and 45 minutes.
- Closed book (texts are not allowed in the examination).

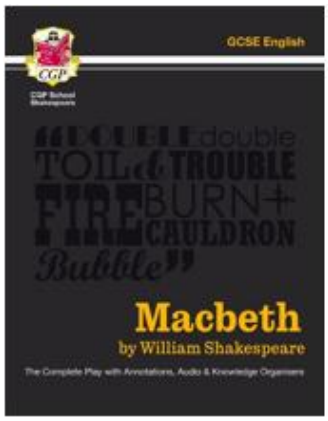
Component 2: 19th-century Novel and Poetry since 1789

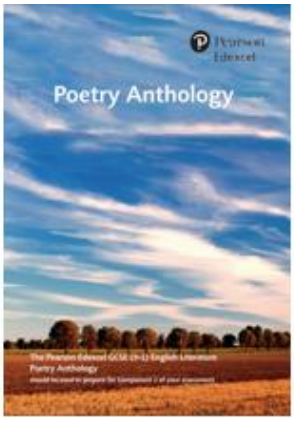
Overview of content

- Study a 19th-century novel and a poetry collection from the *Pearson Poetry Anthology*.
- Develop skills to analyse how the language, form, structure and context of texts can create meanings and effects.
- Develop skills to maintain a critical style and informed personal response.
- Develop comparison skills.

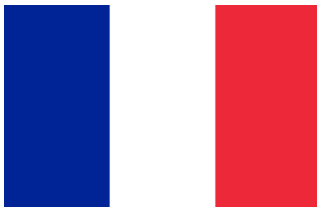
Overview of assessment

- 50% of the GCSE.
- Section A
    - ‘A Christmas Carol’: ONE extract question and ONE essay question, exploring the whole text. The extract is approximately 400 words.
- Section B
    - Part 1: ONE question comparing a named poem from the *Pearson Poetry Anthology* collection to another poem from the anthology. The named poem will be shown in the question paper. Part 2: ONE question comparing two unseen contemporary poems.
- Assessment duration: 2 hours and 15 minutes.
- Closed book (texts are not allowed in the examination).





French



Why wouldn't you consider French GCSE? French is fun to learn and exceptionally useful! There is no doubt that language skills are in great demand and students at St Mary's are fortunate to have the opportunity to study a language at GCSE level. Some of our best Universities may request the study of a language at GCSE as an entrance requirement for certain degrees. A number of degrees are offered with the study of a foreign language alongside, and all degrees with a language element offer the opportunity to spend a year studying abroad .

Benefits of further study

Here are our top 10 reasons why languages are great:

- English is not enough! Not everyone speaks or wants to speak English.
- A language will always be useful, no matter what you do.
- In class, you get to study a wide range of topics all about different people and cultures, not just how to speak.
- You can read books, watch films and listen to songs in their native language - and understand them too!
- Language mean business - being able to speak another language will make you really stand out.
    - Businesses are looking for people who speak and understand other cultures.
- They are good for you! Speaking more than one language increases your brain capacity and improves your memory.
- It is really impressive to be able to speak a foreign language. It is a real achievement that your friends will envy and employers will love!
- Opportunities for travel will open for you as you can talk to many more people when you go abroad.
- Using a language at work could raise your salary by 8-20%.
- Learning a language really improves your communication skills.

What makes a successful MFL pupil?

- Someone who is prepared to have a go.
- Someone who likes a challenge.
- Someone who can work independently.
- Someone who can figure out patterns.
- Someone who likes talking.
- Someone who appreciates other ways of life.
- Someone who is not afraid of hard work.

GCSE MFL - What do you study?

Theme One: People and lifestyle	**Theme Two: Popular culture**	**Theme Three: Communication and the world around us**
This theme covers the following three topics: • Topic 1: Identity and relationships with others • Topic 2: Healthy living and lifestyle • Topic 3: Education and work	This theme covers the following three topics: • Topic 1: Free-time activities • Topic 2: Customs, festivals and celebrations • Topic 3: Celebrity culture	This theme 3 covers the following three topics: • Topic 1: Travel and tourism, including places of interest • Topic 2: Media and technology • Topic 3: The environment and where people live

Examinations

Listening

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to spoken extracts comprising the defined vocabulary and grammar for each tier

Dictation of short, spoken extracts

How it's assessed

Written exam: 35 minutes (Foundation tier), 45 minutes (Higher tier)

40 marks (Foundation tier), 50 marks (Higher tier)

25% of GCSE

Reading

What's assessed

Understanding and responding to written texts which focus predominantly on the vocabulary and grammar at each tier

Inferring plausible meanings of single words when they're embedded in written sentences

Translating from French into English

How it's assessed

Written exam: 45 minutes (Foundation tier), 1 hour (Higher tier)

50 marks (for each of Foundation tier and Higher tier)

25% of GCSE

Speaking

What's assessed

Speaking using clear and comprehensible language to undertake a role-play

Carry out a reading aloud task

Talk about visual stimuli

How it's assessed

7–9 minutes (Foundation tier) + 15 minutes' supervised preparation time

10–12 minutes (Higher tier) + 15 minutes' supervised preparation time

50 marks (for each of Foundation tier and Higher tier)

25% of GCSE

Writing

What's assessed

Writing text in the language in a lexically and grammatically accurate way in response to simple and familiar stimuli

Translating from English into French.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 10 minutes (Foundation tier), 1 hour 15 minutes (Higher tier)

50 marks (for each of Foundation tier and Higher tier)

25% of GCSE

All exams can be sat at Foundation or Higher Tier. Pupils must sit the same tier across all skills.

Foundation tier grades 1-5. Higher tier grades 4-9

GEOGRAPHY

The subject is all about the 'what, where, why there and why care?'

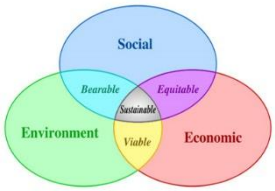
Geography is not only up-to-date and relevant, it is one of the most exciting, adventurous and valuable subjects to study today. So many of the world's current problems boil down to geography, and geographers of the future are needed to help us understand them.

Can you answer any of these questions?

Why do people live in areas at risk from tectonic hazards?

Is weather in the UK becoming more extreme?

What can people do about climate change?



What sustainable strategies can be used in the tropical rainforest?

Where is the process of desertification happening and why?

How can rivers be managed sustainably?

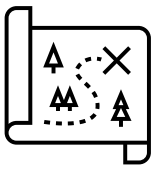
How can we benefit from glaciers that existed 10,000 years ago?

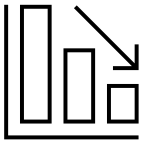
Why is the global urban population growing?

How can the development gap be reduced?

Why is demand for energy growing and where will supply come from?

Do you already have some of these skills?





1. Cartographic skills eg: using grid references, scale and direction
2. Graphical skills eg: drawing compound line graphs and pie charts
3. Numerical skills eg: using units of measurement and collecting data
4. Statistical skills eg: calculating averages and percentages
5. Data skills eg: understanding quantitative and qualitative data

How will you be assessed?

GCSE Geography awarded by AQA

Paper 1:

Living with the Physical Environment:
1hr 30mins,
35% of GCSE.

1A: Natural Hazards:
- Tectonics,
- Weather,
- Climate Change.

1B: The Living World:
- Ecosystems,
- Tropical Rainforests,
- Hot Deserts.

1C: Physical Landscapes in the UK:
- Coasts,
- Rivers or Glaciers.

Paper 2:

Challenges in the Human Environment:
1hr 30mins,
35% of GCSE.

2A: Urban Issues & Challenges:
- Urbanisation,
- Rio de Janeiro,
- Bristol,
- Freiburg.

2B: Changing Economic World:
- Uneven Development,
- Nigeria's economy,
- UK's economy.

2C: Resource Management:
- Resources in the UK,
- Food, Water or Energy.

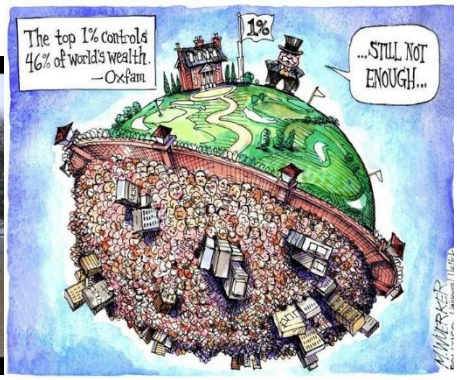
Paper 3:

Geographical applications:
1hr 30mins,
30% of GCSE.

3A: A synoptic decision-making exercise based on pre-release material.

3B: Geographical skills questions including maps, graphs and statistics etc.

3B: Fieldwork questions based on one human and one physical enquiry in the UK.



Will you be going on a fieldtrip?

Students need to complete two enquiries, one human and one physical. Each enquiry will involve a day trip from school, one to Bristol and another to Cold Knap Beach. Enquiries include writing hypotheses, selecting methods, collecting, presenting and analysing data, as well as drawing conclusions and evaluating both processes.

A further extra-curricular opportunity will be offered to students taking GCSE Geography. The trip to Marrakech in Morocco takes place in June of Year 10 and places are limited to around 40 per year.

HISTORY

History Highlights

- A mix of time periods is studied which caters to all interests.
- Enthusiastic and engaging teachers with outstanding subject knowledge.
- History GCSE can form part of your EBACC requirements.
- Extra-curricular trip opportunity to First World War battlefields in Year 11.

GCSE History is taught by Mr Williams, Mrs Thomas and Mrs Hunter-Miller.

Course overview

The History GCSE at St Mary's follows the AQA GCSE History specification made up of 2 papers taught in four components (units). The GCSE provides for every historian with something that caters to the interests of all. It is a balanced course that offers modern historians the opportunity to study war and twentieth century political change, whilst also providing for those who have a love of the medieval and early modern world.

Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World

Paper 1 delves into the themes of Conflict and Tension, focusing on The First World War and its causes (1894-1918) and the transformative period of Germany: Democracy to Dictatorship (1890-1945).

Paper 2: Shaping the Nation

Paper 2 broadens the scope of the GCSE with a thematic exploration of Health and the People (c.1000 to the present day), along with a comprehensive British depth study of Elizabethan England (c.1568-1603).

Paper 1		**Paper 2**	
Wider World Depth Study Conflict and Tension, the First World War (1894-1918).	*Period Study* Germany, democracy to dictatorship (1890-1945).	*Thematic Study* Britain: Health and the People (c.1000 – present day).	*British Depth Study* Elizabethan England (1568-1601).

How it's assessed

The History GCSE is assessed solely through two written examinations that are both two hours in duration (details below).

Paper 1	Paper 2
▪ Written exam: 2 hours ▪ 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar) ▪ 50% of GCSE	▪ Written exam: 2 hours ▪ 84 marks (including 4 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar) ▪ 50% of GCSE
▪ Total exam time: 4 hours ▪ 168 marks (including 8 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar) ▪ 100% of GCSE is written exam.	

Extra-curricular opportunity: Battlefields Tour

ST MARY'S RC HIGH SCHOOL
BATTLEFIELDS TOUR

The annual St Mary's Battlefields Tour holds significant educational value for our GCSE students. This educational visit is explicitly linked to the 'Conflict and Tension: The First World War (1894-1918)' unit. St Mary's students are uniquely lucky in that each trip is meticulously planned in close collaboration with Mr Fitzgerald of Trench Tours Ltd. This allows us to offer a bespoke tour where sites visited are carefully planned.

Through exploring the sites where significant events took place, the trip provides a unique and immersive learning experience, allowing you to revisit key information about named battles and tactical developments during the war. This hands-on approach reinforces classroom learning and helps you gain a deeper understanding of the historical events surrounding the First World War.

The St Mary's Battlefields Tour usually takes place in the Summer term of Year 10 when students near the end of the Conflict and Tension unit. Places are limited to around 50 students each year.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Course: OCR GCSE Computer Science (9-1) – J277

We shall be running Computer Science for those interested in writing computer software code and learning how computers and computer networks operate.

Computer Science is a suitable qualification for students who enjoy programming and often practice programming in their spare time.

Computer Science is relevant to the modern, changing world of computing and this course is designed to boost computing skills essential for the 21st century.

The course is engaging and contemporary, part of it focuses on cyber security – looking at phishing, malware firewalls and people as the 'weak point' in secure systems, which students will study for the first time at this level.

It has a greater emphasis on 'computational thinking' and encourages mental versatility. Students will use their new found programming skills on an independent coding project by solving a real-world problem of their choice.

The course comprises of two 1.5 hour papers, both worth 50%.

This specification leads naturally to 'A' level Computer Science, vocational courses and degree level courses in the area of **computing, engineering and science**. In addition, the course provides the knowledge, skills and understanding that **a growing number of employers are demanding**.

Why choose GCSE in Computer Science?

Computing is of enormous importance to society, and the role of Computer Science as a subject is important in supplying the skills needed in science and engineering. Computer technology continues to advance rapidly. The growth in the use of mobile devices and web-related technologies has exploded, resulting in new challenges for employers and employees.

Consider these 10 reasons to study Computer Science

1. Computing is part of everything we do!

Whether you want to be a scientist, develop the latest killer application, or just know what it really means when someone says, "the computer made a mistake", studying computing will provide you with valuable knowledge.

2. **Expertise in computing enables you to solve complex, challenging problems.**

Computing is a subject that offers rewarding and challenging possibilities for a wide range of people regardless of their range of interests.

3. Computing enables you to make a positive difference in the world.

Computing drives innovation in the sciences, and also in engineering, business, entertainment and education. If you want to make a positive difference in the world, study computing.

4. Computing offers many types of well-paid careers.

Computing jobs are among the highest paid and have the highest job satisfaction.

5. Computing jobs are here to stay, regardless of where you are located.

There actually are more computing jobs than qualified people to fill them in the United Kingdom.

6. Expertise in computing helps you even if your primary career choice is something else.

Having a computing qualification will provide you with a foundation of knowledge, problem solving and logical thinking that will serve you well in most jobs.

7. Computing offers great opportunities for true creativity and innovativeness.

Creating high-quality computing solutions is a highly creative activity.

8. Computing allows you to work in groups or as an individual.

Computing is often about being part of a team but there is also plenty of space for individual flair and imagination.

9. Computing is an essential part of well-rounded academic preparation.

An increasing number of universities and employers see successful completion of a computer science course as a sign of a well-rounded education.

10. Future opportunities in computing are without boundaries.

Computing is one of those fields where it is almost impossible to predict what will happen next. This is why we cannot even begin to imagine all the ways that you can make a contribution to it and it can make your life's work exciting and real.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is a creative and highly inter-connected discipline that has been developed over centuries, providing the solution to some of history's most intriguing problems. It is essential to everyday life, being critical to science, technology and engineering, and necessary for financial literacy and most forms of employment.

GCSE in Mathematics

The course encourages students to develop confidence in, and a positive attitude towards, mathematics and to recognise the importance of mathematics in their own lives and to society. It will also provide a strong mathematical foundation for students who go on to study mathematics at a higher level post-16.

By studying GCSE Mathematics, students should:

Develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts.

1. Acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems.
2. Reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences and draw conclusions.
3. Comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.
4. Be able to recall, select and apply mathematical formulae.

Contents of course

The table below shows the approximate weightings of the topic areas for each tier of assessment.

Topic Area	Foundation tier %	Higher tier %
Number	25	15
Algebra	20	30
Ratio & proportion	25	20
Geometry	15	20
Probability & Statistics	15	15

In addition to the above points, GCSE students are encouraged to:

- Consolidate their understanding of mathematics.
- Extend their use of mathematical vocabulary, definitions and formal reasoning.
- Take increasing responsibility for the planning and execution of their work.
- Be confident in their use of mathematics.
- Recognise the application of mathematics in the world around them and be able to apply their mathematical knowledge in financial contexts.

There are two tiers of assessment – Foundation and Higher

- Foundation tier covers grades 1 to 5
- Higher tier covers grades 4 to 9

The GCSE is 100% exam based, with THREE examinations taken at the end of the course in May/June of year 11.

- There will be two calculator papers and one non-calculator paper.
- All exams taken must be at the SAME tier of entry.
- Students will be entered for the tier most suitable for them. A final decision will NOT BE MADE until January of year 11 and performance in the mock exams will be taken into account.

MUSIC

Unit 1: Performing We will study performance skills, improving accuracy, interpretation, phrasing and dynamics. Recorded and assessed internally One solo performance – any instrument, any style One ensemble performance – you must perform an undoubled harmony part in a group The combined length of performance should be at least 4 minutes	30%

Unit 2: Composing We will study composition skills in a variety of genres, improving skills in writing melodies, rhythms and harmony before developing into full pieces Internally assessed You will do: • One composition in response to a brief set by the exam board • One composition in any style of your choice Both pieces should add up to between two and four minutes.	30%

Unit 3 –Appraising We will listen to a wide variety of music from the areas of study below. Pupils will discuss the use of instrumentation, melody, rhythm, structure, dynamics, harmony, tonality, texture and historical and social context. **1 hour 15 minute examination** • 8 listening questions in total, two on each of the four areas of study • Identify musical elements and contexts • Musical dictation • Compare and contrast music	40%

Area of Study 1	Area of Study 2	Area of Study 3	Area of Study 4
Musical Forms and Devices	**Music for Ensemble**	**Film Music**	**Popular Music**
Western Classical Music **Set piece:** Badinerie for flute and strings by Bach	Chamber Music Musical Theatre Jazz Blues	Use of the elements of music to reflect what is on the screen	Pop and Rock Bhangra Fusion **Set piece:** Africa by Toto

Why choose to study GCSE music?

- You enjoy performing music
- You enjoy listening to different styles of music
- You enjoy being creative
- You would like to improve your confidence in performing
- You would like to learn how to write longer pieces of music
- You would like to develop your skills in a particular aspect of music such as reading music, performing, composing or theoretical skills
- You have enjoyed music in year 9 and would like to do more

Requirements

Pupils who choose to study GCSE music would benefit from having peripatetic music lessons throughout the length of the course, though it is not compulsory. Pupils should work towards performing at a Grade 3 standard by year 11, anything higher than this will attract extra marks.

What could you do with Music after GCSE?

- Study A-level or BTEC Level 3 Music
- Study a Performing Arts Qualification
- Continue learning and developing your skills on your instrument
- Continue pursuing performance opportunities

What careers can you do with music?

- Session musician
- Orchestral musician
- Teacher
- Composer
- Music therapist
- Events management
- Musical Theatre performer
- Music publisher
- Conductor and many more!

Studying Music shows colleges and universities that you are:

- Creative
- Committed
- Analytical
- Reliable
- Confident
- Expressive

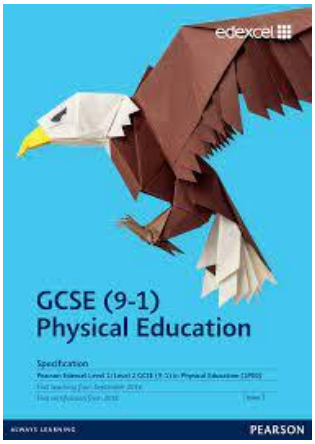
Other benefits of studying music

Research shows that participating in music study benefits both brain structure and brain function. Just like well-exercised muscles protect the ones and joints, reduce blood pressure and increase energy levels, music education produces bigger, better-functioning brains – a benefit to people of any age.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Exam Board: Edexcel

The GCSE in Physical Education will equip students with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values they need to be able to develop and maintain their performance in physical activities. Students will also gain understanding of how physical activities benefit health.



Theory – 60% - assessed with 2 exam papers at the end of Year 11. Theory work to cover the following modules:

Fitness and body systems	Health and Performance
Applied anatomy and physiology	Health, fitness and well being
Movement analysis	Sport psychology
Physical training	Socio-cultural influences
Use of data	Use of data

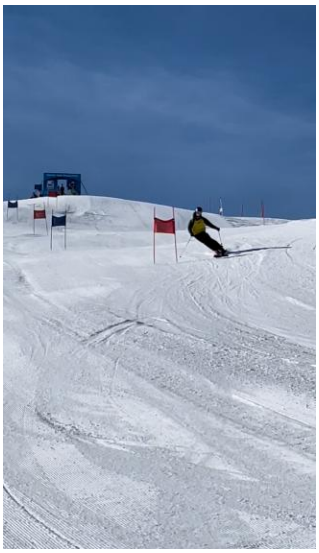
Practical – 40%

(10%) Personal Exercise Programme.

- Planning the PEP, Carrying out and monitoring the PEP, evaluation of the PEP

(30%) Skills and performance in three different sports (at least one must be team and at least one individual).

Team activities		Individual activities	
Football	Rugby League	Amateur boxing	Sculling
Badminton	Rugby Union	Athletics, Rowing, Kayaking	Skiing or Snowboarding
Basketball	Squash	Badminton	Rock Climbing
Camogie	Table tennis	Canoeing	Squash
Cricket	Tennis	Cycling	Swimming
Dance	Volleyball	Dance	Table Tennis
Gaelic football	Handball	Diving	Tennis
Hockey	Hurling	Golf	Trampolining
Lacrosse	Netball	Gymnastics	Equestrian



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience" Fr Teilhard de Chardin SJ.

In KS/4 all pupils will be entered for a full course GCSE in Religious Studies with the AQA exam board. Assessment will be by two written exams of 1 hour 45 minutes each at the end of Year 11.

The course consists of two separate units

Component 1 Catholic Christianity

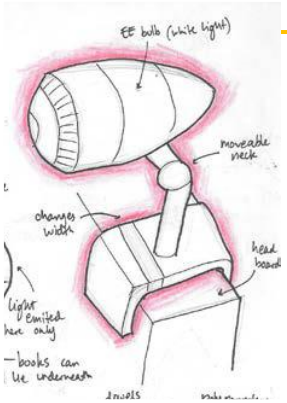
What's assessed?

Catholic beliefs, teaching, practices, sources of authority and forms of expression in relation to the following:
Theme 1 Catholic Christianity
Theme 2 Incarnation
Theme 3 The Trinity
Theme 4 Redemption
Theme 5 The Church and the Kingdom
Theme 6 Eschatology

Students will also study Component 2 Judaism and Ethics

Theme 1 Judaism – Practices and Beliefs
Theme 2 War and Peace. Human Rights and Social Justice

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY



Specification 8552 AQA

We are continuing to deliver the AQA syllabus which has been delivered successfully at St Mary's over the last few years. There is a great focus on technical knowledge as well as the inclusion of a more developmental project element in this course all of which must be completed in school.

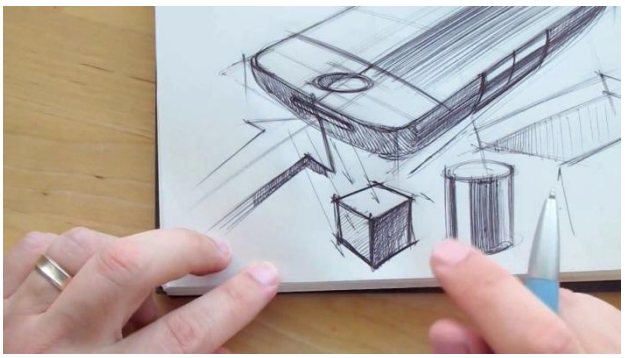
Aims of the Course

1. To encourage pupils to combine their designing and making skills with their knowledge and understanding in order to design, make and analyse design prototypes.
2. A greater focus on presenting the students with wider technical knowledge whilst embedding further cross curricular knowledge such as scientific and mathematical principles.
3. To give the students the opportunity to develop practical designing skills and the confidence to design, make and modify products for identified purposes, selecting and using resources effectively and thoughtfully. This includes the environmental and moral understanding of the role of the designer in the wider world.
4. To encourage the development of pupils' critical and aesthetic abilities, enabling them to evaluate design and technology activities, including their own, in the context of an identified need.
5. To encourage pupils to consider the effects and implications of their own and other technological activity and developments.

Scheme of Assessment

The AQA specification that is followed has a single tier of entry with one two-hour exam paper at the end of the course. The assessment looks thus:

Unit 1 – Written Paper (8552/W): 2 hours – 100 marks – weighted as 50% of final grade.



What's assessed?

- Core technical principles
- Specialist technical principles
- Designing and making principles

<u>Questions in the exam</u>

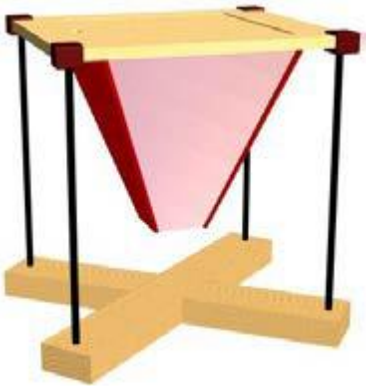
Section A: Core technical principles (20 marks)

Multiple choice and short answer questions assess broad technical knowledge and understanding.

Section B- Specialist technical principles (30 marks). Several short answer questions (2-5 marks) and one extended response to assess a more in depth knowledge of technical principles.

Section C – Designing and making principles (50 marks)

Unit 2 – Design and Make task (8552/C): 30-50 Hrs – 100 Marks - weighted as 50% of GCSE final grade



What's assessed?

Practical application of:

- Core technical principles
- Specialist technical principles
- Designing and making principles

What does the project involve?

• A substantial design, development and make task.

Assessment criteria focus on the following:

• investigating

• designing

• making

• analysing and evaluating.

In the spirit of the iterative design process, marks will be awarded for work throughout each stage of the design process.

Task(s)

• Contextual challenges are released annually by AQA on 1 June, in the year before submission.

• Students will produce a working prototype and a portfolio of evidence (maximum 20 pages) to demonstrate the assessment criteria above.

• Work will be marked by teachers and moderated by AQA

The overall qualification is graded from 1-9

In our experience students who are interested in the technical aspects of design as well as having an open, creative way of thinking will be most likely to succeed at this qualification. This specification is very rigorous in its examining of the technical aspects of the subject and therefore would suit students who have a good grasp of mathematics, physics and science in general as well as good creative designing abilities.

Design and Technology is not to be regarded an easy option. It requires hard work, dedication and an ability to think both laterally and in a strategic manner in order to achieve a successful outcome. It is, however, challenging, fun and exciting to be able to design and make your own solution to a set problem and an excellent option for those students who are able to think creatively and work hard. Students will be expected to make full use of the extra-curricular sessions in order to complete their coursework in Year 11.

SCIENCE

The science department will offer two options next year:

1. Accelerated GCSE Course

Separate GCSE qualifications in BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY and PHYSICS. (This course is only available to those pupils identified by the Science Department as having the ability to cope with this more demanding course. The Triple Science course will be offered to students whose results from their year nine exams show they have the aptitude and application necessary to undertake the additional work involved with an accelerated course.) Each GCSE will be graded 9-1 with 9 being the top grade.

2. GCSE Combined Science

This is the equivalent of two GCSE's but it will be examined as one course.

The Combined Science course will be graded 9-1 with 9 being the top grade, however as it is the equivalent of two GCSE's two linked grades will be awarded. For example 5, 6 is a higher grade than 5,5. The new grade 3 is the equivalent of a grade D.

Everyday life has many questions science can help answer. These may be questions about:

- Who we are: for example, the history of the planet Earth
- Personal choices: for example, how healthy our lifestyles are
- How we use scientific knowledge: for example, controlling air pollution, TV, radio, newspapers and the Internet are full of scientific information but it is not always reliable. Often, facts are mixed with opinions, and there are different points of view.
- Students will develop skills throughout the course to identify these.

GCSE COMBINED SCIENCE is a course for everyone.

You will learn about some of the most important **Science explanations.** These can help you make sense of the world around you. You will also learn about how science works. Combined Science will be timetabled for ten hours every two weeks.

You will develop skills to help you:

- Weigh up evidence on both sides of an argument
- Make decisions about science issues that affect you.

By the end of this course you will be more confident about dealing with the science you meet everyday.

In combined Science you will study the following units split into the disciplines Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Biology

B1 You and your genes, B2 Keeping Healthy, B3 Living together – food and ecosystems, B4 Using food and controlling growth, B5 The human body – staying alive, B6 Life on Earth – past, present and future, B7 Ideas about Science, B8 Practical skills in Biology

Chemistry

C1 Air and water, C2 Chemical patterns, C3 Chemicals of the natural environment, C4 Material choices, C5 Chemical analysis, C6 Making useful chemicals, C7 Ideas about Science, C8 Practical skills in Chemistry.

Physics

P1 Radiation and Waves, P2 Sustainable Energy, P3 Electric circuits, P4 Explaining motion, P5 Explaining materials, P6 Matter- models and explanations, P7 Ideas about Science, P8 Practical skills in Physics

Studying science teaches you how to interpret data, think logically, and communicate clearly and carefully. These are all valuable skills, which are needed in many different jobs that are not science based.

The Combined Science requires sixteen practical activities to be completed during the course. Each student completes four examination papers. Three separate papers in Biology, Chemistry and Physics respectively and then a fourth paper on data analysis. Practical skills and ideas are assessed by the data analysis paper. It will, in part, contain questions to draw on student's understanding and experience of the practical experiments.

Accelerated GCSE Course

GCSE Biology, GCSE Chemistry and GCSE Physics.

The Triple Science course will be offered to students to who have achieved a grade 5 in the SAT taken during the Easter term.

The courses look in more detail at scientific theories. However the course is an accelerated program, each of the GCSE's will be timetabled for two hours per week.

You will learn in more detail about some of the most important Science explanations. These can help you make sense of the world around you. You will also learn about how science works.

You will develop skills to help you:

- Weigh up evidence on both sides of an argument
- Make decisions about science issues that affect you.

By the end of this course you will be more confident about dealing with the science you meet everyday.

In the Biology, Chemistry, Physics GCSE's you will study the following units, however the content examines in more detail scenarios with a more rigorous explanation of patterns and relationships.

Biology GCSE

B1 You and your genes, B2 Keeping Healthy, B3 Living together – food and ecosystems, B4 Using food and controlling growth, B5 The human body – staying alive, B6 Life on Earth – past, present and future, B7 Ideas about Science, B8 Practical skills in Biology

Chemistry

C1 Air and water, C2 Chemical patterns, C3 Chemicals of the natural environment, C4 Material choices, C5 Chemical analysis, C6 Making useful chemicals, C7 Ideas about Science, C8 Practical skills in Chemistry.

Physics

P1 Radiation and Waves, P2 Sustainable Energy, P3 Electric circuits, P4 Explaining motion, P5 Explaining materials, P6 Matter- models and explanations, P7 Ideas about Science, P8 Practical skills in Physics.

Each GCSE requires eight practical activities to be completed during the course. Each student will complete two examination papers for each GCSE; one looks at breadth of knowledge whilst the second paper examines the depth of knowledge. Both papers assess practical skills and ideas in Science. This will, in part, contain questions to draw on the student's understanding and experiences of the specified practical experiments.

All Science qualifications are now examined in linear style. This means all examinations are taken at the end of Year 11.

Vocational Courses

Food Technology: Hospitality and Catering Level 1/2

The Hospitality and Catering course is for learners with an interest in food, cookery and catering. It will provide the opportunity to learn a broad range of practical skills to a high level.

Through theory and practical lessons, you will gain an understanding of how ingredients work together and the nutrition needed for a healthy lifestyle.

Part of the course explores the hospitality industry and work place settings and there is the opportunity to take a level 2 Food Handling City and Guilds Certificate enabling you to work in hospitality and catering on a full or part time basis.

Why choose Hospitality and Catering?

- ✓ You enjoy cooking and would like to expand your cooking skills.
- ✓ You would like to work in a food related industry.
- ✓ You enjoy the balance a practical subject gives to your academic studies.
- ✓ You work well as a kinaesthetic learner – learn by 'doing' and 'making

Assessment

Exam board – EDUQAS

Unit 1: The Hospitality and Catering Industry. External Theory Examination (40% of the GCSE

Unit 2: Hospitality and Catering in Action. Internally Assessed including a 3 our practical exams (60% of the GCSE)

Your course could lead to:

- Sixth Form A level subjects
- Catering and Hospitality at Ludlow and Hereford College
- Professional Diploma in Food Technology and Management
- Degree in Food Technology or Nutrition
- Catering College
- Chef Apprenticeship

Things to consider:

- This course is equivalent to GCSE 1-9 and count towards sixth form entry.
- This course requires an after school skills session once a week and you may be required to sometimes cook through break or lunch times.

Personal organisation is key to learning practical skills, students are required to bring a range of ingredients every week for practical lessons

Post-16 Options

There are several options for students when they leave St Mary's. Most students continue with full-time education at local colleges or schools, but some choose a work-based learning route with an apprenticeship.

At Hereford Sixth Form College and other schools with a sixth form, students will normally study three or four A level or equivalent subjects. Equivalent subjects can be extended certificates or subsidiary diplomas, equivalent to 1 A level and national diplomas, equivalent to 2 A levels.

The minimum entry requirements for A level study regardless of institution is at least 5 passes at grade 4 or above in GCSE including English language, maths and sometimes a particular grade in the subject to be taken (see college or school prospectuses or websites for specific subject entry requirements).

Students may choose to continue their education at other colleges such as Hereford College of Arts, Herefordshire College (formerly Hereford & Ludlow College), which includes Holme Lacy Campus, Hartpury College and Gloucestershire College or other schools with sixth form provision. These colleges offer vocational courses from entry level to at least level 3 which prepare young people for a career in a particular occupational area. Schools with sixth forms tend to offer a mix of A levels, GCSEs and vocational subjects.

Vocational courses can be taken a different levels:

- Level 1 courses such as BTEC Foundation or Level 1 Diploma (equal to 5 GCSEs grades 3-1)
- Level 2 courses such as BTEC Level 2 Diploma (equal to 4-5 GCSEs grades 9*-4)
- Level 3 courses such as the BTEC Extended Diploma and T Levels (equal to 3 A levels).

T Levels are a relatively new qualification which started to be offered in September 2021. They are a 2-year course mixing classroom learning and "on the job" experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approx. 45 days).

From 2027, the government plan to introduce V Levels which will replace many BTEC qualifications. You can find further details about the plans at https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2025/10/new-v-levels-and-post-16-qualifications-explained/.

The other main post-16 option is an apprenticeship. They are available at different levels from level 2 and 3 initially with the potential to reach level 7, equivalent to degree and post degree qualifications. Apprentices are paid a minimum of £8.00 hourly rate for under 18s (correct for 2026 entry) whilst they gain their qualifications. Entry to apprenticeships can be competitive so good GCSE grades are required especially in maths and English. Degree apprenticeships are becoming popular choices following a 2-year college or sixth from course such as A levels or T Levels as an alternative to full-time degree study. Entry requirements will be the same as for a full-time degree alongside working full-time in many cases, so not an "easy option".

See websites https://www.gov.uk/become-apprentice & https://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/degree-apprenticeships for further information.

Entry to higher education is likely to remain competitive and choices made in Year 9 might be crucial. For high achievers who are contemplating study at Oxbridge or one of the Russell Group universities, it may be advantageous to include particular subjects at GCSE. Please see the Informed Choices booklet from the link below.

Pupils requiring further information are welcome to speak to Mrs Pattison-Wake, the school Careers Adviser and Careers Lead, who is in school every week in the Careers Office, use online school subscriptions to eCLIPS or make use of the Careers Library in school. Parents may email any queries to APattisonWake@st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk in the first instance.

Useful websites for research:

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

www.hereford.ac.uk – Hereford Sixth Form College

www.hlnsc.ac.uk – Herefordshire College (including Holme Lacy)

www.hca.ac.uk – Hereford College of Arts

www.jmhs.hereford.sch.uk/sixth-form/ - John Masefield
www.jkhs.org.uk/page/?title=Sixth+Form&pid=3 – John Kyrle

www.hartpury.ac.uk – Hartpury College

www.gloscol.ac.uk – Gloucestershire College (bases in Gloucester, Cheltenham & Forest of Dean)

www.herefordcs.com/sixth-form/our-sixth-form/ - Hereford Cathedral School www.hwgta.org – Hereford & Worcester Group Training Association

www.riverside-training.co.uk – Riverside Training

www.informedchoices.ac.uk – Informed Choices

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk – Not Going to Uni