



The Dixie Grammar
Senior School



GCSE Options Booklet

September 2023

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to inform you and your parents about:

- the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 leading to GCSE;
- the choices you will have to make as a result of the division of subjects into a compulsory core and supporting options;
- subject content and the way in which it is assessed.

The Curriculum: The purpose of the curriculum to GCSE is to keep open as many options as possible for careers and higher education, while allowing some specialisation in accordance with your own particular abilities and interests. Some Departments follow GCSE specifications and others International GCSE (IGCSE) specifications – there is no difference in value between these qualifications.

Examination Subjects: All students study English Language, Biology, Chemistry and Physics (leading either to three separate qualifications or to Double Award Science for which two grades will be awarded), Mathematics and a foreign language. **Almost all** students will be prepared for a separate IGCSE in English Literature.

In addition to the above you will be able to choose three **more courses** from: Art, Design & Technology, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Geography, a second foreign language (French, German or Mandarin), History, Computer Science, Music, Physical Education and Religious Studies.

The purpose of the GCSE Option Evening is for you to find out more about the different courses on offer – try to approach subjects with an open mind whilst thinking carefully about your strengths as a student. If you have any questions, your teachers will be only too happy to advise you further.

Making the Choice

You should try to make sure that you are not leaving out a subject that will be useful to support a likely future A Level or degree option, or your chosen career (in fact, many of the subjects likely to be needed in this way are included in the compulsory section of the Year 10/11 curriculum).

You should also check the course content of each subject to make sure it matches both your interests and your capabilities. Obviously you are much more likely to do well if you choose subjects that you enjoy and at which you are already reasonably successful. Don't choose a subject just because your friends are doing it, or because you get on well with a particular teacher – the course may be taught by someone else next year.

The rest of this booklet contains brief descriptions of all the GCSE courses.

Finally, please note two points:

1. Although we will do everything we can to give you the particular three subjects that you have chosen, we cannot guarantee that this will happen. It is sometimes beyond our ingenuity to fit all your choices into a workable timetable.

2. Occasionally we get too many people opting for a subject. We always look to run as many classes as there is demand for, but very occasionally we must reluctantly turn away those who are least suitable. The final choice of students for an over-subscribed course depends on:

- the aptitude and commitment a student has previously shown in this subject;
- the student's career objectives;
- the student's balance of options.

Careers Education and Guidance

Careers work began lower down the school and continues in Years 10 and 11. Students are introduced to Inspiring Futures, of which the School is a member, in Year 10. At the beginning of Year 11 all students undertake psychometric profiling and receive one to one guidance through their individualised profile. Work is done throughout Year 11 to develop and maintain this profile as an ongoing record of achievement.

Students are always welcome to visit the Careers Library and are able to use the resources when discussing and choosing a post-16 course with their Form Teacher, subject and PSHCE staff and the Head of Careers. Requests for information are always welcome. Students also have the opportunity to meet a variety of professionals, discuss experiences and share useful tips for future career choices during lunchtime sessions. Regular updates on a wide variety of careers together with information about courses and opportunities and informative sessions by external providers are communicated through the Student Bulletins. A work experience/placement opportunity for Year 11 students takes place after the GCSE Examinations.

CORE SUBJECTS

English Language & English Literature IGCSE

All students follow the Edexcel IGCSE 'B' specification for English Language and most also take the Edexcel IGCSE in English Literature.

English Language

The English Language course assesses students' ability to:

1. Read material and analyse what it says, how it says it and what it means (comprehension)
2. Write in a variety of different forms - e.g. to entertain, to argue a case, to describe.

The course is assessed by a single three-hour examination. This tests students' ability to read for meaning via comprehension tasks on previously unseen material and their ability to write for different purposes and audiences.

English Literature

English Literature is taken by the majority of students and taught alongside English Language. It is **not** part of the option scheme. Occasionally, students may not be entered for English Literature to enable them to concentrate on achieving the best possible grade in English Language. This decision is not normally taken until after the Mock Examinations in Year 11.

Paper 1 is taken by **all** students and worth **60%** of the final grade. This assesses students' ability to analyse poetry (including previously unseen material) and a modern prose text (for example, 'Of Mice and Men').

For the remaining **40%** of the qualification, there are two possible routes – coursework or a second examination paper. The route taken will be determined by the class teacher after consideration of what is best for a particular group.

Students will therefore **either** produce two pieces of coursework: one based on a modern drama text (usually 'An Inspector Calls') and one on a 'literary heritage' text (for example, 'Macbeth' or 'Romeo and Juliet') **or** sit an exam that requires essay responses to these texts.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-english-language-b-2016.html>

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-english-literature-2016.html>

Foreign Languages (French / German/ Mandarin)

Speaking a foreign language has long been one of the most instantly admired and **impressive skills** you can develop. If you can hold a conversation in a language other than English, people notice.

The limits of my language are the limits of my world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Students at Dixie have **a golden opportunity** to get noticed, because all are in a position at the end of Year 9 to continue with two foreign languages, choosing from French, German and Mandarin. Such opportunities exist almost exclusively now in the independent sector and few schools can offer the rich and balanced languages curriculum from Y6-9 your children have experienced here.

In Years 10 and 11, all students study one foreign language as part of the core curriculum. **A second foreign language** can be studied also and these, of course, would count as option one of their option choices. It is possible, then, to study French and German, French and Mandarin or German and Mandarin. Students who only wish to study one language at GCSE have a free choice between French, German and Mandarin, as long as timetabling allows.

He who knows no foreign languages knows nothing of his own.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A language GCSE is academically rigorous and so is **highly valued** by potential employers as a sign of a student's capabilities. The subjects promote an eye for detail, use of logic, and the generation of ideas, sharp memory, identifying codes and patterns as well as the ability to express ideas and communicate clearly. As such, they are not just for those who wish to live abroad or work in an international arena, but are excellent preparation for a **wide variety of future study and career paths**.

All GCSEs build on work completed so far and the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking are weighted equally in the exams at the end of Y11 to allow whatever strengths a student has to be rewarded.

Full details about the AQA specification we follow for French, German and Mandarin can be found by following these links:

[French](#)

[German](#)

[Mandarin](#)

Mathematics

At The Dixie Grammar School, we aim to nurture an enthusiasm for Mathematics, build confidence and equip our students with the essential mathematical skills needed in both the work place and the wider world.

In the next two years you will extend and consolidate your knowledge of concepts and techniques in the areas of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and statistics towards the International GCSE.

The Edexcel International GCSE consists of two examinations, each two hours long. There is no coursework. The makeup of each examination is 57 – 63% Number and Algebra, 22-28% Geometry, 12 – 18% Statistics and Probability.

The Higher Tier enables grades 9-4 to be obtained. Generally, all students are entered for the Higher Tier; however occasionally the Foundation Tier (Grades 1-5) may be considered for some individuals.

The International GCSE course includes several topics which do not feature in the GCSE Mathematics course and therefore we feel this is an excellent preparation for those who wish to study Mathematics further.

The specification and past papers for the course can be found at:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-mathematics-a-2016.html>

Science

The aim of the Science Department is to equip every student with an all-round understanding of the three Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) and develop their interest in the scientific world. This should help them to understand scientific issues and make informed decisions when they leave school. It will also give a solid foundation for those who wish to go on and pursue science related careers. All students are expected to study all three subjects as part of their IGCSE course. The School teaches the Edexcel International GCSE specification, as this prepares students well for A levels in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

The IGCSE course begins from Year 9 and students are put in sets for Science depending on their interest and aptitude and based on their Year 8 exam results. This start in Year 9 allows us to develop the practical skills of the students through a variety of investigations in and out of the classroom and spend more teaching time on each topic. The students will all continue to study Biology, Chemistry and Physics throughout their IGCSE course, taught by specialist teachers.

Set 1 students work towards separate IGCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. This is a demanding course as no extra teaching time is given and is suitable only for the most able students with a particular interest in Science. Other students will work towards dual award Science which provide 2 GCSEs split between the three specialisms. Student performance is monitored closely and those who work well in Year 9 and 10 may be given the opportunity to move into the separate Science set. Likewise, some students who are struggling may be moved into a dual Science group. Final decisions about exam entry are made after mock exams in Year 11 following consultation with students, parents and staff.

These Edexcel Science courses share core material and both prepare students well for A-level in all Science subjects.

Links to Specifications:

[Edexcel International GCSE Biology](#)

[Edexcel International GCSE Chemistry](#)

[Edexcel International GCSE Physics](#)

[Edexcel International GCSE Science: Dual Award](#)

OPTION SUBJECTS

Art

GCSE Art consists of two elements: coursework (60%) and a controlled examination (40%). You will be asked to produce a body of coursework, and the examination lasts a total of ten hours.

The choice of coursework is left to the discretion of the student who, with the help of department staff, will map out their own areas of interest to study over the two years of the course. However, the teaching of drawing skills is fundamental, as it is our belief that success in every area of Art starts with drawing. These drawing skills feed into projects on graphic design, textiles, mixed media, painting, ceramics, etc., as coursework components.

<http://ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-art-and-design-j170-j176-from-2016/>

Computer Science

Computers are ubiquitous in modern life. Today's young people are expected to be competent digital citizens whether learning, working or socialising. Understanding how digital technology works and being able to develop solutions to problems by writing computer programs are highly sought after skills in the modern world.

Edexcel International GCSE Computer Science (4CP0)

Our GCSE-level Computer Science is firmly based around problem solving and programming. Our teaching language is Python; this is one of the most widely used programming languages and is used as a main teaching language by the majority of universities. The Computer Science IGCSE uses a range of interesting and engaging contexts to test the knowledge, skills and understanding of the students. The focus is on practical problem solving but with a good dose of academic rigour so that the specification builds solid foundations for A level. The topics covered are:

1. Problem solving
2. Programming
3. Data
4. Computers
5. Communications and the Internet
6. The bigger picture (emerging trends, issues and impact)

The assessment breaks down as follows:

Paper 1:

Principles of Computer Science (written exam). This 2-hour exam assesses knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of computer science. It consists of a mix of multiple choice, short and longer answer questions. It is worth 50% of the marks.

Paper 2:

Application of Computational Thinking (written and on computer exam). This 3-hour exam covers the practical application of computational thinking. Students are required to interpret, create and amend algorithms; develop and test programs; show an understanding of data representation and storage; and to construct and interpret logical statements, truth tables and pseudocode. It is worth 50% of the marks. This IGCSE requires students to code their programs on a computer. This provides a much more realistic context for assessment than GCSEs in Computer Science which require programs to be written out long hand.

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-computer-science-2017.html>

Design & Technology

Introduction

Studying Design and Technology offers students the exciting opportunity to identify and solve real problems through designing and making products. They will be given the opportunity to use their imagination and learn through practical experimentation. The subject brings together skills and knowledge from many other subject areas, in particular the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). Students considering the course should therefore have an interest, and reasonable ability in maths and science, as well as the desire to be creative.

At the Dixie Grammar School

The department has a well-equipped IT/Graphics room and workshop, for example the IT/Graphics room contains several CAD/CAM machines such as a 3D printer and laser cutter. Students will be placed in small groups, with no more than 13 in a class. This is extremely beneficial as it allows students the freedom to explore their own individual projects, whilst receiving a high level of support from staff.

What will students study and how is it assessed?

Students study towards a full GSCE course

WJEC Eduqas GCSE (9-1) in DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY.

The course is broken down into two areas. The NEA (Coursework) and a written exam.

Component 1: Design and Technology in the 21st Century written examination: 2 hours 50% of qualification

A mix of short answer, structured and extended writing questions assessing candidates' knowledge and understanding of the following topic areas:

- Design and technology and our world
- Smart materials
- Electronic systems and programmable components
- Mechanical components and devices
- Materials

Component 2: Design and make task Non-exam assessment: approximately 35 hours 50% of qualification

A sustained design and make task, based on a contextual challenge set by the exam board, assessing candidates' ability to:

- Identify, investigate and outline design possibilities
- Design and make prototypes
- Analyse and evaluate design decisions and wider issues in design and technology.

What type of career could a Design & Technology qualification lead to?

There are many different career paths a Design and Technology student could take, here are some examples:

Architecture, Art therapy, CGI/ Animation, Costume Design, engineering/ aerospace engineering, Fashion design/ Shoe design, Fine artist, Furniture Design, Graphic design, Illustration, Interior Design, Model Making/ Special Effect industry, Textile design, Printmaking, Product Design, Prosthetics, Set and theatre design

What skills are required to study Design and Technology?

The ability to meet deadlines, good practical ability, enjoyment of activities, problem solving skills, the ability to use ICT to create a portfolio, an interest in mathematics and science, the ability to work alone and in groups, the ability to work on topics/theme for a long term (as portfolio) both at school and at home.

The specification can be found here:

https://www.edugas.co.uk/qualifications/design-and-technology-gcse/#tab_keydocuments

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Food Preparation and Nutrition GCSE is an exciting and creative course which focuses on practical cooking skills and will ensure students develop greater understanding of nutrition, food provenance and the working characteristics of food materials. Students will also learn about British and international culinary traditions, food security and food safety.

At the heart of the qualification is a focus on developing practical cookery skills and a strong understanding of nutrition.

The specification will encourage students to develop a broad range of knowledge, understanding and technical skills related to food preparation and nutrition. The emphasis is upon enabling learners to make connections between theory and practice and apply understanding of food and nutrition when preparing and cooking food.

Subject content

- Food preparation skills – these are intended to be integrated into the five sections:
 1. Food, nutrition and health
 2. Food science
 3. Food safety
 4. Food choice
 5. Food provenance

Assessments

Examination assessment Paper 1: Food preparation and nutrition (50%)

What's assessed

Theoretical knowledge of food preparation and nutrition from Sections 1 to 5 above.

How it's assessed

Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes

100 marks

50% of GCSE

Questions

Multiple choice questions (20 marks)

Five questions each with a number of sub questions (80 marks)

What's assessed

Task 1: Food investigation 15% of GCSE

Students' understanding of the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients.

Task 2: Food preparation assessment 35% of GCSE

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.

How it's assessed

Task 1: Written report (1,500–2,000 words) including photographic evidence of the practical investigation.

Task 2: Written portfolio including photographic evidence. Photographic evidence of the three final dishes must be included.

We will study the AQA examination board specification

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/food-preparation-and-nutrition>

Geography IGCSE

Why should I take Geography at IGCSE?

Geography is the study of the world around us and gives us an opportunity to learn about why we live the way we do and why the natural world looks and behaves in the way it does. It provides a link between the arts and the sciences and covers a broad base of knowledge. If you are motivated and enjoy investigating new places then you should seriously consider studying Geography at IGCSE.

What qualification will I get?

We will study the Edexcel IGCSE specification (2017). Further information can be found on the Edexcel website <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-geography-2017.html>. You will gain an IGCSE qualification in Geography at the end of the course and this will be marked 9-1 as with all UK GCSE qualifications.

What will I learn about?

We teach all six topics covered by the specification.

Physical Geography

1. River environments
2. Coastal environments
3. Hazardous environments

Human Geography

4. Economic activity and energy
5. Ecosystems and rural environments
6. Urban environments

You will also learn about:

- Globalisation and migration
- Fragile environments
- Development and human welfare
- Investigative skills

Are there any Fieldwork opportunities?

There will be an opportunity to participate in a day trip to the coast to study beach profiles and land uses, a visit to Leicester to study urban land use and some skill development sessions. We hope to offer a residential fieldtrip during your IGCSE studies. This may be to Iceland or a UK based destination. There will also be opportunities to participate in Investigative work whilst learning different topics on the course.

How will I be assessed?

The course will be assessed through two exams. The first will cover Physical topics and will be 1 hour 10 minutes long. The second exam will cover human topics and will be 1 hour 45 minutes long. In the exams there will be a variety of question styles including multiple-choice, short and extended answer, graphical and data as well as practical enquiry questions.

How will Geography help in the future?

Geography is a widely accepted qualification for academic progression and can be studied up to degree level. It provides opportunities to develop data selection and analysis skills as well as building key skills required to be successful in further academic study.

History

Why study GCSE History?

Interest: In history we meet extraordinary characters, read awe inspiring tales of wonder and heroism and are often astonished at man's ability to be cruel. What can be more interesting than knowing and understanding our own History?

Useful Skills: The ability to evaluate sources; present arguments clearly; construct logical arguments, and solve problems with detailed analysis.

Critical thinking: The world is full of people who want us to believe what they say, for example politicians, journalists and advertisers. In order to be free in the modern world we must keep exercising our minds, and testing and evaluating the pronouncements and judgements of others. History gives us this training.

Development as an individual: As we learn about other people we learn about ourselves. As we study History we learn about the human race, we learn what it means to be a human being, we learn what human beings are capable of. We also learn to put ourselves in perspective. We realise that there have been intelligent, honest and good people in other ages who have not shared our prejudices, our attitudes and our ideas. So History teaches us tolerance, flexibility, openness and awareness. To study History is to become a more complete human being.

Course outline for Edexcel GCSE History

Paper 1: Thematic study and historic environment

- Medicine in Britain, c1250–present with special reference to WW1

Paper 2: British depth study and period study

For the depth study:

The reigns of King Richard I and King John, 1189-1216

For the period study:

Superpower relations and the Cold War, 1941–91

Paper 3: Modern Depth Study

Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918–39

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/history-2016.html>

Music

What is GCSE Music all about?

GCSE Music is about creating, listening to and understanding music from a range of genres. The OCR course covers performing, composing and listening in a wide variety of musical styles – classical music, world music, film music and popular music. The course is assessed in three components:

Performing	30%
Composing	30%
Listening and Appraising	40%

(Based on four Areas of Study)

Will I enjoy this course?

You should enjoy this course if you want to study a subject that:

- Involves performing as a soloist and as part of an ensemble
- Involves listening to a broad range of musical styles
- Involves composing or arranging music
- Offers the opportunity to extend your expertise in Music technology

How does it follow on from what I have learned before?

You will improve your skills in performing and composing different types of music. You will listen to a wide variety of music and learn more about how and why it was written and performed and how it is structured.

How is the course assessed?

Listening and appraising is assessed by an examination at the end of the course. You will listen to and answer questions on four Areas of Study.

The Composing and Performing elements are ongoing throughout the course. The final assessment involves submitting recordings of both a solo and an ensemble performance and completing two compositions under controlled conditions.

You will use a computer music-publishing program and computer sequencing as part of the course as well as traditional notation and music theory skills.

If you are contemplating taking this course, be aware that:

- You should be able to play/sing to a high standard (approximately Grade 4) although it is not necessary to have achieved a set grade.
- GCSE Music students are expected to take an active part in school music.

How will GCSE Music enhance my career opportunities?

GCSE Music is the basis for further musical study, but it also provides a substantial range of transferable skills. In order to become accomplished musicians people have to be self-disciplined and be able to work independently, highly regarded qualities for study at degree level and in employment. Many of the skills developed in the course would be very useful in any career which involves creative thinking, communication, presentation and expressive skills.

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-music-j536-from-2016/>

Physical Education – Cambridge IGCSE

IGCSE Physical Education is an interesting and exciting course that enables students to learn about how the body and mind work to influence sporting performance and the structure and influences of physical activity and sport in the UK. It also contains a significant practical component enabling students to be rewarded for their sporting performance.

Will I enjoy this course?

- Are you keen, enthusiastic and passionate about sport?
- Do you participate in sport inside and outside of school?
- Do you want to learn about and improve your own sporting performance?
- Do you like a practical aspect to your learning?
- Are you interested in learning about the theoretical side of sport, how the mind and body work and how these impact on sports performance?
- Would you like a career in the sport, health and fitness industry?

If the answer to one or more of the above questions is yes, then this course is likely to be for you!

How is the course structured?

The course is split into two components, one theoretical and one practical both of which contribute equal marks to the overall grade.

Theoretical Component:

The theory component consists of four areas of study:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Health, fitness and training
- Skill acquisition and psychology
- Social, cultural and ethical influences

It is assessed by one exam at the end of Year 11 and contributes 50% of the marks towards the overall grade.

Practical Component:

The practical component consists of assessment in several activities from the following categories:

- Games
- Gymnastic activities
- Dance
- Athletics
- Outdoor and adventurous activities,
- Swimming
- Combat activities

The best four scores from a minimum of two categories will contribute 50% of the marks towards the overall grade.

For more information on the course please see the Cambridge IGCSE PE syllabus [here](#).

Where could IGCSE PE lead me?

The areas of study you learn about will be invaluable on a personal level and will help you to be an improved sports person no matter what your standard. The qualification also opens several career opportunities within sport, health and fitness such as: sports science and nutrition, physiotherapy, teaching and coaching, personal training, sports development or working for a national governing body to name but a few.

Religious Studies

Religious Studies is taught in small groups to give plenty of opportunity for friendly, informal discussion but is academically rigorous and challenging.

You will enjoy this course:

- If you are interested in learning about what people believe.
- If you like exploring how people's faith affects their daily lives.
- If you are open to being challenged and to challenging different beliefs.
- If you enjoy debating contentious ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, war and conflict, gender or racial discrimination.
- If you like contributing orally to class discussion.

Why choose Religious Studies?

- It affects every area of human life – our choices, our morals, our identity our politics.
- It involves the big questions – Who am I?, Where does the universe come from?, Are Science and Religion opposites?, Does God exist?

- It develops academic skills such as analysis, evaluation, essay writing and critical thinking.
- It compliments other GCSE subjects such as History, Geography, Science, Art, and English Literature.
- It increases your awareness of differences in society.
- It prepares you for a multicultural world and workplace.

What exam board and specification?

AQA Religious Studies A specification (8062), the subject content is as follows:

Two components/papers:

- 1 A study of the beliefs teachings and practices of TWO religions.
(Christianity and Buddhism)
- 2 FOUR religious, philosophical and ethical themes chosen from the following:
 - **Relationships and Families** – Sexuality, Marriage, Divorce, Gender Roles
 - **Religion and Life** – Origins of the Universe and Humanity, the Environment, Abortion, Euthanasia, the Afterlife.
 - **The Existence of God and Revelation** – Arguments for and against God's Existence, how can we 'know' God?
 - **Religion, Peace and Conflict** – Terrorism, War, Pacifism
 - **Religion Crime and Punishment** – Aims of Punishment, Death Penalty, is forgiveness possible?
 - **Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice** – Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism, Poverty.

Each component will be assessed by an examination of 1 hour 45 minutes at the end of the two-year course.

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-a-8062>

Beyond GCSE

This course is an excellent foundation for those wishing to study Religious Studies at 'A' Level – a subject highly regarded by top universities as it develops those skills necessary for a range of courses such as: Theology, Philosophy, Law, History, English and Politics to name but a few.

Career opportunities

Those with Religious Studies at GCSE often go into careers requiring 'people skills' and good communication, such as:

- Local Government
- Politics, Caring Professions Including Medicine
- Media And Journalism
- Advertising
- Marketing
- Publishing
- Teaching and Law

How families can help

- By encouraging students to read widely and drawing their attention to stories with an ethical or religious theme in the news and media in general.
- By discussing issues and encouraging students to express themselves in a thoughtful way.
- By acknowledging religious objects, buildings, people when around and about and on holiday sightseeing.

