



PRIESTNALL  
SCHOOL

# Key Stage 4 Options Booklet

2023 - 2025



**PRIESTNALL**  
SCHOOL

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Dear Parents and Carers of our Year 9 students,

The Options are a very important time for your children. For the first time, they are able to have a say in the curriculum they study. These are decisions not to be taken lightly as their impact on further – and higher- education, together with career opportunities, may not be fully appreciated for some years to come. It is with this in-mind that we strongly recommend retaining a broad and balanced range of subjects up until the age of 16.

We feel that the wide range of subjects and combinations available will provide this breadth and would always suggest that the EBacc group of subjects be considered: these involve Geography/ History and a Language alongside the compulsory core subjects. We recognise that these will not be relevant for all, but do they form a strong academic base for future progress.

The Options take place at a very exciting time for Priestnall School as a whole, as we look to join the very successful and locally-based Laurus Trust. We are extremely proud to be joining this organisation, whose outlook and ambitions match our own. All members of our school community are likely benefit greatly from the move and our current Year 9, the Class of 2025, are in pole-position for this.

The students will already be familiar with the majority of the subjects from which they can choose however, it is essential that a really good understanding of both the content and demands of the courses on offer is grasped: this booklet and the Options Evening event are designed to provide this information.

Expressing a preference for subjects is only the starting point of the Key Stage 4 learning journey. From the preferences, all students will have an Options Interview with a member of the school's leadership team to discuss the suitability of their selections: these choices are important.

We hope that you will find this document useful. Should you require any further information, please don't hesitate to ask or contact a member of the school team. We want to ensure that, with yourselves, students make well-informed choices which are right for them and their future intentions.

Yours faithfully,

Miss R Howarth  
Head of School

Mr T Clarey  
Deputy Head of School

### Unashamedly Academic

The Laurus Trust  
Registered in England and Wales  
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# The Core Curriculum

The core curriculum is compulsory and will be studied by all students. This involves the following subjects:

- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Combined Science
- Physical Education
- Personal Development (including RE, Citizenship, PSHE, SRE)

Students will study 4 additional subjects alongside this compulsory curriculum.

## 1. The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The English Baccalaureate comprises a number of key subjects which ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is maintained. This will both foster the widest network of neuro-pathway development and embed an important range of knowledge and skills in young people. The EBacc will facilitate the widest scope of opportunities in education and careers after finishing secondary school. To achieve this, students will study a Modern Foreign Language and either History or Geography alongside the core curriculum. The Government/ Department for Education promote this ambition and so do all other high-quality schools.

All students are welcome to study for the EBacc, though we recognise that this might not be relevant or appropriate for all. It does, however, provide a solid baseline for progression after high school, further information about the EBacc can be found on page 6.

There are separate Pools from which to choose the EBacc subjects plus further option subjects

## 2. Further Option subjects

Students will choose additional subjects to complete their curriculum in Years 10 & 11. These will be as preferences made using SMS options via the SIMS Parent App.

It is important to recognise – and for us to emphasise- that post-16 college, sixth-form or other training is the place for specialism. A broad range of subjects should be retained up to GCSE-level.

Students will choose one subject from Pools 1 and 2, plus four additional selections from Pool 3 (two will be studied) **these must be ranked in order of preference:** 1 to 4 (1 = 1st choice).

# Option Pools

Pool 1 Select <b>ONE</b>	Pool 2 Select <b>ONE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geography</b></li> <li>• <b>History</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>French</b></li> <li>• <b>Spanish</b></li> <li>• Art &amp; Design*</li> <li>• Computer Science*</li> <li>• Drama &amp; Theatre Arts*</li> <li>• Engineering Design* (CNAT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Preparation &amp; Nutrition*</li> <li>• Health &amp; Social Care* (BTEC)</li> <li>• Separate Sciences*</li> <li>• Sport Studies* (OCR Level 2)</li> <li>• Textile Design*</li> </ul>
<p><i>* Note: these subjects are also available to be selected in Pool 3</i></p>		

## Pool 3: Further Options

Choose **FOUR** in order of preference:

(These subjects, courses and classes are exactly the same as those in Pool 2)

<p><b>Academic Core</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Separate Science</b> (Triple Award: 3 x GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry &amp; Physics)</li> <li>• <b>Geography</b></li> <li>• <b>History</b> (History or Geography can be combined with Pool 1 choice)</li> </ul> <p><b>Technologies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Preparation &amp; Nutrition</li> <li>• Engineering Design* (CNAT)</li> <li>• Hospitality &amp; Catering</li> <li>• Construction Multiskills</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Arts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art &amp; Design</li> <li>• Graphic Communication</li> <li>• Textile Design (only one of the above)</li> <li>• Music</li> <li>• Drama &amp; Theatre Arts</li> <li>• Film Studies*</li> <li>• Creative Media Production (BTEC)* (*not together : too similar)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Computing/Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Studies</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> </ul> <p><b>PE/Sport/Dance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE GCSE*</li> <li>• BTEC Tech Award in Sport (V)*</li> <li>• Dance GCSE* (*not together : too similar)</li> </ul> <p><b>Other Humanities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics &amp; Philosophy (RE)</li> <li>• Sociology*</li> <li>• Health &amp; Social Care* (BTEC) (*not together : too similar)</li> </ul>
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We will endeavour to ensure that a timetable is created which enables these option choices to fit alongside the core, but this is not always possible and students need to be happy with the prospect of studying any of the subjects they choose – hence the importance of thinking carefully about all choices and preferences.

These option choices are a commitment: the school's timetable for 2023-24 will be created from them and, as such, students will not be able to change their mind in Year 10. Please choose very carefully.

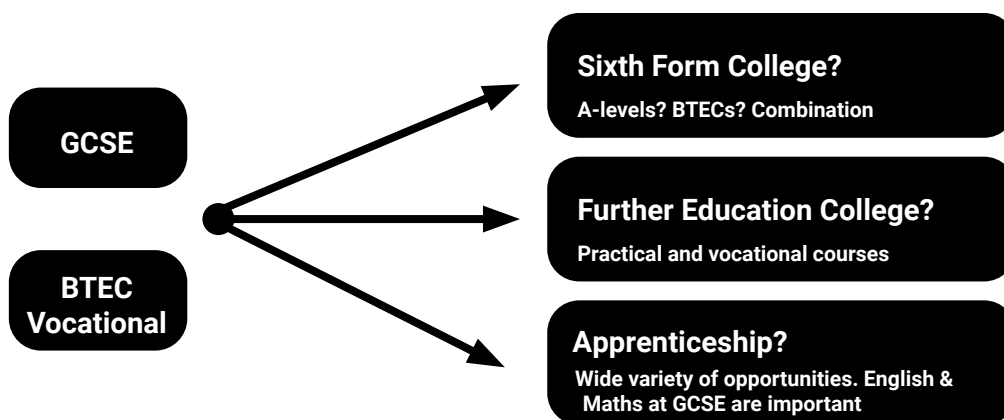
## Factors to consider when making option choices

### 1. Progression

All students need to consider the choices available and the potential post-16 destinations they have in-mind when they move on from Priestnall. These decisions are not only for the here & now, but they need to prepare these young people for their future.

Whichever subjects are chosen, it is important that success at Key Stage 4 leaves as many future opportunities available as possible.

All the qualifications offered at Priestnall can provide a variety of progression opportunities.



### 2. Breadth and rigour

The aim of our Key Stage 4 curriculum offer and options process is to provide all students with a curriculum that is relevant, ambitious and broad in order to achieve the best set of qualifications they can. It is a competitive world out there!

Breadth means that choices made are not unnecessarily narrow, a result of picking subjects that are too similar: all talents and interests need developing up to GCSE level. As many future options as possible should to be kept open for post-16 futures.

Rigour is about seeking qualifications which, as well as providing breadth, will both challenge and push these young people to achieve their best – hence the desire for the majority to study the EBacc combination of subjects.

### 3. Assessment Requirements

It's important to consider the assessment requirements of the courses available. For instance, how many and how long are the exams? Are extended written answers a common part of assessments? Are there practical or performance elements of the course which add to the final grade? Does coursework contribute to the overall grade?

### 4. What not to consider

Don't consider what others, particularly friends, are choosing; what's right for them may not be right for you and it's your future you need to be thinking about. The students in Year 10 classes will not be the same as they were in Year 9.

Don't choose subjects because you think they will be easier than others. All the subjects offered at Key Stage 4 have equivalence: there are no easy options at Key Stage 4!

Similarly, don't choose a subject because you like a particular teacher: options classes may be taught by anyone in that department and teachers move on in their careers.

## What is the English Baccalaureate?

The English Baccalaureate, or EBacc, is a set of subjects that seeks to maximise young people's options for further study and future careers. In order to complete the EBacc, students need to study English, Maths, Science, a Language and a Humanities subject.

The subjects that count towards this include:

- English (Literature and Language)
- Mathematics
- Science (Core science, Separate sciences, Computer Science)
- Humanities (History, Geography)
- Languages (Spanish, French)

By studying a compulsory curriculum of English, Maths and Science at Key Stage 4 alongside History, Geography and a language for GCSE, students will complete their EBacc suite of subjects.

The EBacc is seen to have tangible benefits. A study by the UCL Institute of Education showed that studying subjects included in the EBacc provided students with greater opportunities in further education and increased the likelihood that a pupil would stay on in full-time education. Sutton Trust research also revealed that studying the EBacc can help improve a young person's performance in English and Mathematics.

The EBacc also has implications for further study. If your ambition is to go to a top university, these universities have made it clear that they will be looking for high grade A-Level passes in some of what they consider to be the most challenging subjects:

- Maths and Further Maths
- English Literature
- Physics, Chemistry, Biology
- History
- Geography
- Languages (Classical and Modern)
- Economics
- Computing

Therefore, if you think you might want to go on to do A-Levels in any of these subjects, they will be well supported by the EBacc suite.

## What different types of qualification are available?

Students at Priestnall are able to choose from two types of qualification: GCSEs and BTEC/CNAT/Tech Awards (Vocational). Below is a summary of each, as well as some of the key differences.

### **GCSEs:**

These qualifications take a more 'traditional' approach to assessment, with all assessment taking the form of exams at the end Year 11. All these exams are set externally by exam boards. GCSEs are more content-driven than BTECs with success relying upon a student's growing ability to recall and apply factual information and skills. Colleges and Sixth Forms do not always require GCSEs for further study, but more selective providers may.

### **BTECs:**

The BTECs and other Vocational courses at Priestnall are Level 2 qualifications. This means that they are the equivalent to GCSEs and are fully recognised by post-16 education providers and employers. The main differences between BTECs and GCSEs relate to the course content and assessment procedures. BTEC courses differ from GCSE courses in that they do not have as many examinations. Assessment is largely based on coursework. However, these courses do still have an external examination element. Vocational courses are similar in that coursework is the predominant form of assessment. There is also, usually, an examination aspect that is conducted at some point across the two years. BTECs and the other Vocational courses provide progression onto Level 3 courses offered by post-16 education providers in the area. These Level 3 qualifications (post-16) attract UCAS points in the same way that their A Level equivalents do, enabling progression to university and further study.

# Post-16 Education

The school has excellent links with Stockport's local sixth form colleges and those further afield and we have well-established relationships with Training and Apprenticeship providers in the Greater Manchester area.

Whilst in Year 10, students will have the opportunity to access a range of activities and events to inform and prepare them for Post-16 options. In the summer term of Year 10, students will have the opportunity to access a range of talks, group interviews and Post-16 information sessions, as well spend a day at a sixth form college to sample some Post-16 subjects and courses. There will also be an Education & Training Fair for parents/carers and students. This will help students gain the knowledge and information required for them to make an informed decision about the choices available to them when they leave Priestnall.

Students will be accessing an innovative and easy-to-use careers guidance software programme called Start which seeks to help young people make better and more informed choices about their career path. Connected to live labour market information and course data, Start allows students to create a personal profile which generates suitable jobs, qualifications and new destinations to explore. Start is easy to use and students can begin to build their own profile in minutes. Start provides clear, concise and up-to-date information on what they have to do to move towards a career in those industries, such as choosing the right subjects, courses or apprenticeships.

We would like to encourage you to work with your child on their future progression using this programme. Start can be accessed via the internet once your child has registered on the system. The Careers page on the school website has a wealth of information and links to various external websites which you may find useful when thinking and discussing Post-16 opportunities. For all the latest information relating to Post-16 opportunities please follow the Careers & Post-16 Twitter page @Priestnall\_Car.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance is available to all students in school and is delivered by Mrs Slack the school's Post-16 & Careers Advisor and Miss Ali, from Stockport Family. Every student is invited to a 1-1 Careers Guidance Interview from Year 10 through to Year 11.



# FAQs

## **Who do I speak to if I have any questions?**

*If you have any questions about specific courses, please direct these to the course leader/head of subject: more general questions should be addressed to the options team: [options@priestnall.stockport.sch.uk](mailto:options@priestnall.stockport.sch.uk). We will respond as quickly as possible.*

## **Can Geography and History be chosen?**

*Yes, they can, but both subjects are heavy on content rely on fairly long written answers in assessments. We would advise students to think very carefully about this combination and speak with their current teachers in those subjects.*

## **What do the Separate (Triple) Sciences involve?**

*As a core subject, all students study Science and this will result in a combined award of two GCSEs. However, some may wish to study each of the three separate sciences – Biology, Chemistry and Physics - in greater depth and sit a GCSE in each, resulting in the award of three GCSEs: It is not possible to just choose only two of these. Separate Science will take up an option choice. If you are interested in taking the Separate Sciences, then you must think very carefully. If you have a love of Science, a good track record of success in assessments and a possible wish to study Science at A-Level then it may well be a good choice. You should discuss your choice with the Science Department, whose job it is to make sure that students are guided appropriately. You do not have to have taken Separate Sciences to get onto A-Level science courses, but it is an advantage.*

## **What happens if there are insufficient numbers to make a course viable?**

*At times we have to make difficult choices around the economic viability of a course. We will contact you about this as soon as this becomes a possibility so that you can review the alternatives. We will only withdraw a course when we have exhausted what we see as the alternative curriculum options.*

## **What happens if too many students choose a course?**

*This very rarely happens, but for some subjects we only have a limited number of specialist teachers, who may have commitments elsewhere. In the event of this happening, subject leaders and teachers will be consulted – along with K.A.S.H. information. Of course, students and their parents/carers will be consulted in this eventuality.*

## **Will option choices involve a change in year-half?**

*In order to provide as many students a possible with their highest priority option choices, and to balance up core classes, a change of year-half is sometimes necessary. This will only affect teaching groups in the compulsory subjects: option subject classes are mixed-ability and comprised of students from both the X and Y year halves (There is no hierarchy to the year halves). By Year 10, we would expect students to recognise that their curriculum and learning is what matters most. Students will not be required to change LC groups and social times are when friendship groups can get together. Teachers are aware that Year 10 classes may involve students from different year halves and will make their own decisions about seating plans.*

## **What happens if I pick subjects too similar in content?**

*Some combinations of subjects are not allowed. This is usually where the content and assessment procedure are too similar. This information is detailed in the Options Overview and Options Form. If this happens we will guide you towards alternatives.*

## **What happens if there is a change of mind?**

*These option choices are a commitment. The school's timetable for 2023-24 will be created from them and, as such, courses and class numbers will be fixed at an early stage. Our position therefore is that students will not be able to change their choices. Only in very exceptional circumstances, for instance when courses are taught at the same time and there is space in the class might a change be considered. With this in-mind, please make option choices very carefully!*

## **What happens if the school can't make a student's options fit?**

*As soon as it appears that this might be the case, we will speak with the student. This is where the 'order of preference' in the option choices comes into play. We will always explore about what is possible with these in-mind: hence the importance of considering each choice in detail. Our priority is to create a timetable that allows as many students as possible to study their preferred subjects.*

## **Are there any entrance requirements for courses?**

*There are no specific entry requirements for our Key Stage 4 courses, but students should consider their 'form' in a subject prior to selecting it.*

# About Key Stage 4

Key Stage 4 is the term used to refer to Years 10 and 11. Students will study a combination of compulsory and optional subjects. Details of all the courses available can be found in this booklet.

At Key Stage 4, student work will be assessed by a formal examination(s) and/or Controlled Assessments (which take place during the course – and have replaced coursework). In light of the government's revisions, the formal examinations will occur only at the end of Year 11: modular exams have been abolished in the majority of cases.

Most students will work towards a GCSE qualification in the majority of their subjects. Government revisions to the National Curriculum and GCSEs mean that all GCSE courses will be awarded with a 'points' grade of 9 - 1 (9 being the highest). Students who do not achieve the lowest grade receive a "U" ("unclassified") grade. Other qualifications do exist which are valued as equivalent to GCSEs in terms of Post-16 progression. Details of these qualifications are described within subject areas.

At Key Stage 4, qualifications and awards may be divided into two categories:

- Level 1 refers to qualifications and awards equivalent to the GCSE grades 3 to 1
- Level 2 refers to qualifications

All GCSEs will be awarded a 9 - 1 point-grade.

## Target Setting

Students will have specific and aspirational GCSE Target Grade for each subject they study. These targets are clearly communicated to parents as well as students through our reporting system, and are discussed and reviewed at Parents' Evenings.

# Glossary of Terms

BTEC Business & Technology Education Council

CYPD Children's & Young People's Directorate

DfE Department of Education

GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education

NQF National Qualification Framework

NVQ National Vocational Qualifications

QCDA Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency

UCAS Managing applications to higher education courses in the UK



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