



BOURNEMOUTH SCHOOL



Year 8 GCSE Options Companion

September 2026

Introduction

The aim of this companion is to take parents and students through the options process. We made the decision a number of years ago to move the options process into Year 8 which gives students an extra year to develop the depth of knowledge required for these very important examinations.

Since 2017 GCSEs have been designed to be more challenging and rigorous in their approach. A friend or sibling who took their GCSEs before 2017 will not be able to describe what the current GCSE is like. Please make the most of the opportunity at the Year 8 Parents' Information Evening to speak to us if you have any questions.

We know that choosing GCSE options can be a daunting process for students and parents. Everyone is trying to select the 'right' combination of subjects that keeps career opportunities open and enthuses and challenges whilst also developing the necessary skills that will make the individual employable in the future work force.

Our 'core' curriculum ensures that all students have a wide range of options available to them when selecting post-16 study options. By complementing this core with sensibly selected subjects, all students should achieve our aim of studying a 'broad and balanced' curriculum.

Our advice to students is:-

- 1) Pick subjects that you enjoy. You are going to have to put in a lot of work and we all work harder and better when we enjoy what we are doing.
- 2) Pick subjects in which high grades are likely. University offers will be influenced by GCSE grades. For the top universities and the most competitive courses, 9 and 8 grades are expected across the board.
- 3) Consider all of the subjects carefully. They are all worth studying for their own sake. Also, think about the skills that will be developed and how these skills might be useful to future work.
- 4) Not to pick subjects based around one particular career path at this stage. A whole range of factors will change and develop over the next few years. Young people will need to be adaptable and a broad range of subject choices can help this.
- 5) Be flexible and have a plan 'B'. Sometimes we cannot make things 'fit' into the timetable despite our best efforts. Having a back-up plan is always a good idea!

Advice and Information

Key Dates in the Process

Year 8 Parents' Information Evening 6-7pm	20 th November 2025
Options information available online	21 st November 2025
Year 8 Options Assembly Year 8 Parents' Evening	22 nd January 2026
Year 8 Options form issues	23 rd January 2026
Deadline for return of options choices form	13 th February 2026 8:00am

A Broad and Balanced Curriculum

At Bournemouth School we pride ourselves on offering a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all of our students. Students should be preparing themselves to be a flexible member of the work force, with skills that they can transfer from one job to another.

During the GCSE programme, students will be developing the following skills:

- Process and evaluate information; plan what to do and how to go about it; make informed and well-reasoned decisions; recognise that others have different beliefs and attitudes.
- Think creatively by generating and exploring ideas, make original connections; try different ways to tackle problems; work with others to find imaginative solutions and outcomes that are of value.
- Evaluate strengths and limitations; set realistic goals with criteria for success; monitor own performance and progress; invite feedback from others and make changes to further learning.
- Work confidently with others, adapt to different contexts and take responsibility; listen to and take account of different views; form collaborative relationships and resolve issues to reach agreed outcomes.
- Organise, show personal responsibility, initiative, creativity and enterprise with a commitment to learning and self-improvement; actively embrace change, respond positively to new priorities, cope with challenges and look for opportunities.
- Actively engage with issues that affect us as individuals and communities; play a full part in the life of Bournemouth School, by taking responsible action to bring improvements for others as well as individually.

Some of these will be developed through our careers programme which will include a work experience placement in Year 10.

Why do we offer a three year GCSE?

Our students have completed their Key Stage three entitlement by the end of Year 8 giving them a strong foundation upon which to build at GCSE. Our motivation for studying GCSEs over three years is to give students a broad curriculum whilst supporting their mental health and wellbeing – giving students more time means less stress. In addition students benefit from studying some key topics in more depth and there is extra revision time in advance of formal examinations in Year 11.

Advice and Information

Core Subjects (compulsory)

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Religious Studies
- French or Spanish
- Core Physical Education (compulsory, but does not lead to a GCSE qualification)

Options Subjects

- Geography
- History
- German (ab initio)
- Art and Design
- Business Studies
- Computing
- Design and Technology
- Graphic Communication
- Food Preparation and Nutrition
- Music
- Physical Education

Students select three options in total.

Students must select at least Geography or History (they may choose both).

Students should aim for a 'broad and balanced' curriculum that develops a range of skills. They should therefore consider all subjects carefully to produce the right balance of curriculum for them.

Please also note that course viability depends on resource and teaching staff availability. On rare occasions courses may have to be withdrawn. If this happens, we will speak to students and parents as soon as possible.

Careers

All students going through the options process will use a computer package called Kudos. Kudos asks students to answer questions on their likes and dislikes and their likely highest qualification level e.g. A levels, degree, etc. The package takes this information and then suggests some career areas that students might be interested in following. This information will include details of required qualifications and any specific subject requirements. This package can be used in conjunction with Careerscape, a separate computer package, which allows students to look at the requirements and the different routes of entry that exist for a particular job or field. Other sources of information include, but are not limited to:

- The Careers Library - a subsection of the main library in the library block
- Subject Teachers and Heads of Department
- Form Tutors and year co-ordinators
- Careers Advisor – appointments can be arranged through Mr Riddles and Mrs Barnard-Dyson

Further information on career pathways beyond GCSE can be found at the following sites:

Website Address	Description
Choose your future UCAS	Information on university courses and their entry requirements
https://amazingapprenticeships.com/	Information on apprenticeships, including a range of different schemes
www.gov.uk/national-curriculum	Information on the National Curriculum
GCSE options: Everything you need to know about choosing your GCSE subjects - BBC Bitesize	Information on how to go about picking options and some of the key things to bear in mind
https://careerpilot.org.uk/	General careers information.

How many GCSEs do students take?

Most students will study eleven GCSEs, which is above the national average. However, this is entirely manageable as our students complete their GCSE courses over three years.

For some students, studying nine GCSEs may be more suitable, allowing them to dedicate additional time to English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. If we believe this pathway would best support your son's progress, we will discuss it with you directly.

It is worth noting that many schools offer nine GCSEs as standard, and students following this route are not disadvantaged in any way.

Probable Year 12 Entry Requirements for September 2029

What grades do I need to join the Sixth Form at Bournemouth School?

To meet our Sixth Form entry requirements, applicants must have attained at least a grade 5 in **both** English Language and Mathematics, **and** have a “Best 8” GCSE points score of at least 50 points with a 9, 8, 7 or 6 in the subjects chosen or in a related discipline. Students wishing to study Chemistry or Mathematics must attain at least a grade 7 in GCSE Mathematics; students wishing to study Further Mathematics must attain a grade 8 in GCSE Mathematics.

Alternative entry to Music A level may be obtained by the student having ABRSM grade 5 (or equivalent) in theory **and** practical, by consultation with the Director of Music.

For further information about the process at any time, please contact Mrs Ateaque.

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