BOURNEMOUTH SCHOOL



Year 8

GCSE Options Companion

For courses starting September 2027

Introduction

The aim of this companion is to guide parents and students through the GCSE 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 important examinations. Please do speak to us at the Year 8 Parents' Information Evening 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: one that keeps career opportunities open, enthuses and challenges whilst also developing the necessary skills that will make the individual employable in the future workforce.

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 carefully selected options, students will have a broad and balanced curriculum which is personalised to their interests.

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 tend to work harder and achieve more when we enjoy what we are doing.

2) Pick subjects in which you are likely to achieve highly. University offers are influenced by GCSE grades. For the most competitive universities and courses, grades 9 and 8 are expected across the board.

3) Consider every subject carefully. All subjects are worthwhile in their own right. Think about the knowledge and skills that you will develop and how these might be useful in future study and employment.

4) Avoid choosing subjects based on one particular career path. A great deal can change over the next few years. Young people will need to be adaptable and a broad range of subject choices will help to keep future opportunities open.

5) Be flexible and have a Plan B. Very occasionally, despite our best efforts, it is not possible to accommodate everyone's first choices within the timetable. Having a back-up plan is always sensible.

Advice and Information

Key Dates in the Process

Year 8 Parents' Information Evening 6-7pm	17th November 2026
Options information available online	18th November 2026
Year 8 Options Assembly Year 8 Parents' Evening	21st January 2027
Year 8 Options form issued	22nd January 2027
Deadline for return of options choices form	12th February 2027, 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. We want students to develop into adaptable individuals, equipped with transferable skills that will support them throughout their future education and employment.

During the GCSE programme, students will develop a range of important skills, including:

- 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?

By the end of Year 8, our students have completed their Key Stage 3 curriculum, providing them with a strong foundation on which to build their GCSE studies.

Studying GCSEs over three years allows students to follow a broad curriculum while supporting their wellbeing. Having additional time reduces the pressure of covering large amounts of content in a shorter period and allows students to study key topics in greater depth. It also provides additional time for revision and preparation ahead of their formal examinations in Year 11.

Subject choices

All students study the core subjects listed below. You then choose one humanities subject and two further GCSE options.

Core Subjects (compulsory)	**Humanity** (choose one)	**Options** (choose two)
English Language	History	Art, Craft & Design**
English Literature	Geography	Business Studies
Mathematics		Computing
Biology		Design and Technology
Chemistry	Want to study both History and Geography?	Geography
Physics	*Choose one as your Humanities subject and the other as one of your two options.*	Graphic Communication**
Religious Studies		History
French or Spanish		Food Preparation & Nutrition
Core Physical Education*		Music
		Physical Education

* Core Physical Education is compulsory, but does not lead to a GCSE qualification.
** Students cannot study both Art, Craft & Design and Graphic Communication.

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 Information and Guidance

At this stage, most students are unlikely to have decided on a particular career path. However, exploring different careers and understanding how subjects can link to future opportunities helps them make informed decisions and keep their options open.

At Bournemouth School, we use the Unifrog careers platform (https://www.unifrog.org) to help students explore their interests, discover different careers and understand the qualifications and pathways available to them. All students were introduced to Unifrog during Year 7 and already have their own accounts. We encourage students to revisit the platform independently, particularly as they begin considering their GCSE options.

Through Unifrog, students can:

- **Explore different careers** and discover jobs they may not have previously considered.
- **Identify their interests and strengths** and see how these might relate to different career pathways.
- **Research qualifications and subject requirements** for careers that interest them.
- **Explore future pathways**, including A levels, apprenticeships and university.
- **Make informed GCSE choices** by developing a better understanding of how subjects may relate to future opportunities.

We would encourage parents and carers to explore Unifrog alongside their child and use it as a starting point for conversations about their interests, ambitions and GCSE choices.

Further Careers Support

Alongside Unifrog, students have access to a range of careers resources and support within school:

- **The Careers Library** – Located within the main school library in the Library Block, our dedicated Careers Library offers a range of resources to help students explore different careers, qualifications and future pathways. Students are encouraged to make use of these resources when researching their GCSE options.
- **Subject Teachers and Heads of Department** – Can provide advice about GCSE subjects, course content and how subjects may link to future study and careers.
- **Form Tutors and Year Coordinators** – Can offer guidance and support throughout the options process.
- **Careers Lead and Careers Adviser** – Available to provide further careers information, advice and guidance where needed.

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. Many schools offer nine GCSEs as standard, and students following this route are not disadvantaged when applying for further education or future opportunities.

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

To meet our current Sixth Form entry requirements, applicants must achieve:

- At least grade 5 in both English Language and Mathematics.
- A minimum "Best 8" GCSE points score of 50.

GCSE grade 6 or higher is typically required in the subject a student wishes to study at A-level. Further information about subject-specific entry requirements is available on the school website: https://www.bournemouth-school.org/admissions-2/joining-the-sixth-form/

Please note that these entry requirements are reviewed regularly, and the requirements for students joining the Sixth Form in 2030 will be published closer to the time.

Any questions?

For further information about the process at any time, please contact Dr Carter.
E-mail: tcarter@bournemouth-school.org