

Year 9 into 10

Options Brochure

2024 - 2025



Pathways to your future.

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Introduction

Dear Parent/Carer,

Year 10 Courses and Options 2022-2024 (Level 2 qualifications)

Year 9 is a transition year during which your son/daughter has had the opportunity to engage in a number of GCSE option subjects alongside the compulsory core curriculum. It is now time for Year 9 students to make their final option choices which will lead to Level 2 qualifications and public examinations in GCSE and equivalent courses.

As a reminder, all students will take a set of **core subjects** following national guidelines in **English, Mathematics, Science, PE and RE**. In addition, a significant number of students will also be expected to study either a **Modern Foreign Language or History or Geography**.

This booklet provides details of the subjects available to our students in Years 10 and 11 together with the options process and timescale for choices to be made. We want each student to choose wisely, having considered their own aptitudes and abilities and hope that parents/carers will be able to support their children in making these important educational decisions.

We recommend that families consider what lies beyond KS4 when making choices. All students will progress to Post-16 education: whether they follow A Level and equivalent subjects, or move to work-based learning such as an apprenticeship; so it is important to plan ahead when making choices for Year 10. We will guide students along one of **three broad pathways** according to their current performance at school to ensure they are stretched and challenged but also able to cope with the demands of their Level 2 courses. We would strongly recommend that all students continue to study an Arts / practical based subject in Year 10 to continue to develop a broad breadth of skills and experiences.

This booklet provides details of the options process, timeline, frequently asked questions and subject specific pages. If you have any subject specific questions after you have read through this brochure then please email the appropriate class teacher or subject leader. Mr Newbey, Assistant Headteacher, will oversee the overall process and help students arrive at the final option choices. Please remember that whilst we will do our utmost to provide all the subjects offered and to accommodate all reasonable choices, financial, staffing or timetable constraints can occasionally make this impossible. We will engage you throughout the process and enter into a dialogue should we need to revisit option choices.

This is a crucial period for your child and I cannot stress too strongly the importance of the decisions being made. In response to parental feedback, the final Option Choices Form will be available online. The form must be completed online no later than the **22nd March 2024** and confirmation of choices will be made as soon after this as possible.

Yours faithfully,



G R Mullings Headteacher

The Key Stage 4 Curriculum

Curriculum Structure

The Key Stage 4 curriculum covers all Year 10 and 11 courses. It consists of core subjects and optional subjects. All students study the core subjects. Students will study up to four optional subjects (dependent on their recommended options pathway).

Non examination courses

Students will continue to follow a Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme, consisting of themes that form a natural progression from Year 8. These include, but are not limited to, personal development focusing on social and moral responsibility, Relationship and Sex Education, Mental Health Education and First Aid.

Careers/Work-Related Learning aims to ensure that students are fully prepared for the next stage of their educational journey as well as the world of work, while the Vyners Learning Journey supports involves researching and planning for the future. This revolves around the School's policy of building social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding (SMSC).

All students do Physical Education. Students who have a particular interest in PE may also study it as an option at Level 2 (GCSE PE or OCR Cambridge Nationals Sport).

All students will study Religious Education and Ethics. The RE and Ethics course leads to a GCSE (Short Course) qualification at the end of Y10. The full GCSE RE course is no longer available as an option.

Examination courses

Most examination courses lead to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and some courses lead to the Level 2 BTEC award or Cambridge Nationals.

GCSE Information

Option subjects leading to full GCSE qualifications will be covered in a single option block. BTEC qualifications leading to equivalent GCSEs will be covered in one option block.

Science and Maths GCSE courses are examined at two levels – Higher or Foundation. The highest grade you can get at Foundation level is a 5. Subject teachers will advise students and will make the final decision regarding the level of entry.

Some courses involve NEA non-exam assessment (coursework) which will count towards the final qualification

Grading

All GCSE qualifications are graded 9 to 1.

It is possible to fail a GCSE by getting a U (Ungraded) result.

Vocational subjects results are generally graded Distinction*, Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail. A Distinction is equivalent to a GCSE grade 7 and a pass equivalent to a GCSE grade 4.

The English Baccalaureate

What is the English Baccalaureate?

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was introduced as a performance measure in the 2010 school performance tables. It is not a qualification in itself. The measure recognises where students have secured a grade 4 (standard pass) or a grade 5 (strong pass) or better across a core of academic subjects - English, Mathematics, History or Geography, at least two Sciences and a Modern Foreign Language. From 2014 Computer Science GCSE was included in the Science element of the English Baccalaureate. In 2015 the Government announced that there will be an expectation that most students should naturally be studying this suite of subjects at GCSE level.

Why have these subjects been chosen for the English Baccalaureate?

The subjects included are designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to study a broad core of subjects, ensuring that doors are not closed off to them in terms of their future progression. For example, for students hoping to go to university, **The Russell Group of 24 top universities guide on making informed choices for Post-16 education** gives advice on which subjects can be most beneficial for students to choose depending on their aspirations. The English Baccalaureate is intended to give students greater opportunity to study in and beyond the vital core of English, Mathematics and the Sciences.

The English Baccalaureate is not intended to restrict options to just this academic core or to force these qualifications on students for whom they are not suitable. The core has deliberately been kept small to allow the opportunity for additional study - whether that is in other GCSEs or vocational qualifications.

To obtain the English Baccalaureate, current criteria wholly and exclusively comprise **six** GCSEs of grade 4, (grade 5 for strong pass) or higher, i.e. in **each** of the following:

- English Language & literature
- Mathematics
- At least 2 GCSEs in Science (which can include Computer Science)
- **plus**
- **One Humanity** (this currently means either Geography or History; no other subjects are counted)
- **plus**
- **One Modern Foreign Language** (i.e. **either** French **or** German **or** Spanish at Vyners).

Options Pathways

As part of our commitment that all students be given the most effective guidance throughout the options process we have three options pathways. Each student in Year 9 will be guided onto one of the three pathways based upon a range of information including their academic progress throughout Key Stage 3, their learning style and their aptitude in specific subjects. The three pathways are outlined below:

Triple Science Pathway

Students studying on this pathway will study GCSEs in Mathematics, English Language and English Literature, and the separate Sciences - Biology, Chemistry and Physics (Triple Science) as well as Short course RE. In addition, they will continue with **three** other subjects, **at least one** of which must be from the English Baccalaureate group of subjects (either Geography, History, French, German or Spanish). They also have an opportunity to take Psychology, Media Studies or Economics. This will result in nine GCSE qualifications. This pathway has been designed to adequately prepare students for A Level study and progression to university or degree apprenticeship. Students who wish to study sciences at A Level and beyond should follow this pathway.

EBacc Pathway

Students on this pathway will also study the core subjects (Mathematics, English Language, English Literature and Science). However, students on this pathway will study Combined Science rather than Triple Science. Students select **four** option subjects, with **at least one** being from the English Baccalaureate group of subjects (Geography, History, French, German and Spanish). Students on this pathway are strongly advised to continue with one humanity and one language in order to achieve the EBacc. They also have an opportunity to take Psychology, Media Studies, Economics or Business Studies. This pathway will adequately prepare students for A Levels or Level 3 vocational qualifications in order to progress to university or other Post-16 routes such as alternative vocational qualifications or apprenticeships.

Core Pathway

Students on this pathway will study the core subjects (Mathematics, English Language, English Literature and Combined Science). In addition, students studying on this pathway will receive an additional time allocation in English and Mathematics to ensure that they can successfully access their Level 2 courses and be adequately prepared for opportunities that are available Post-16. Students will continue with **three** of their subjects. It is strongly recommended that one of these is vocational. They also have an opportunity to take Psychology, Media Studies or Business studies

Summary of Options Pathways

<u>Pathway</u>	<u>Core Subjects</u>	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Further Options</u>
<p><u>Triple Science Pathway</u></p> <p>You will be told by the Head of Science if you can take this pathway</p> <p>(10 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and R.E (Short Course)</p> <p>(7 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Keep one from: History, Geography, French, German, Spanish</p> <p>(1 GCSE)</p>	<p>Keep any other two subjects from Year 9 and drop three</p> <p>Some may opt to pick up one new subject in place of a subject currently studied.</p> <p>These options are: Economics, Psychology or Media (2 GCSEs)</p>
<p><u>EBacc Pathway</u></p> <p>(10 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, Combined Science (Trilogy) and R.E (Short Course)</p> <p>(6 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Keep one from: History, Geography French, German, Spanish</p> <p>(1 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Keep any other three subjects from Year 9 and drop two</p> <p>Some may opt to pick up one new subject in place of a subject currently studied.</p> <p>These options are: Economics, Psychology, Business Studies or Media</p> <p><u>To qualify for the EBacc a language and a humanities should be retained.</u> (3 GCSEs)</p>
<p><u>Core Pathway</u></p> <p>(9 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, Combined Science (Trilogy) and R.E (Short Course)</p> <p>(6 GCSEs)</p>	<p>Additional English and Mathematics</p>	<p>Retain three subjects from Year 9 and drop two others</p> <p>Some may opt to pick up one new subject in place of a subject currently studied.</p> <p>These options are: Psychology, Business Studies or Media (3 GCSEs)</p>

Important dates in the Options Process

Thursday 25 January 2024 Year 9 Options Information Presentation available on school website

Thursday 25 January 2024 Options Brochure available in the Student Zone on the school website

Thursday 7 March 2024 Year 9 Parents' Evening (video calls)

Friday 22nd March 2024 Deadline for completion of online options choices

Before May Half Term Once the initial allocation of students to courses has been processed and timetabling constraints have been identified, individual student interviews will take place if all of their option choices can not be allocated. Students will be notified of interview times via their tutors. Students absent on the day of an interview will have interview times reallocated. The timing of one student's interview relative to another has **no** impact on access to options choices.

Where appropriate, options choices will also be reviewed by the Inclusion Manager, who will also conduct options interviews with students placed on the register of Special Educational Needs.

Summer Term Option choices confirmed.

Please bear in mind that, before choices can be confirmed, final timetabling viability checks must have been completed; the options process forms only part of structuring the timetable for the next academic year.

Processing Students' Options Preferences

Please refer to the practice options form at the end of this brochure. It is essential that option choices are entered clearly with a reserve choice in case your first choices are not available. Transfer the choices to the online form when you are ready, but no later than **22nd March 2024**

Constraints

We aim to build the timetable as best we can to reflect all students' choices. Inevitably a minority of students will be allocated reserve courses where the optimum timetabling solution will not allow a particular combination.

Health and Safety dictates that in certain practical subjects a maximum group size be observed. These restrictions make subscription to such courses more competitive.

Significant under-subscription to a course may render it financially unviable, in which case the school reserves the right not to run the course.

What to do now

Read about all the core courses and the options courses available. Once course preferences have been arrived at, students should enter their choices. Once absolutely sure that the choice of courses is correct, the entries can be **completed on our website Student Zone Options**.

You **must** complete the online options form **by 22nd March 2024**. Please see our website Student Zone Options.

Option choices completed late will be processed after those received on time and may result in a restricted choice, so please ensure you complete the online form on time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my son/daughter need to state a reserve for every option chosen?

- No - only one reserve subject is required. This is because courses may be oversubscribed or may not run due to insufficient demand.
- Giving a reserve subject allows the Timetabler to best meet your child's requests.

Some people mistakenly see vocational subjects as an easier option, but what are the main differences between these and GCSEs and are they easier?

- At Vyners we offer three vocational courses, IT (BTEC), Performing Arts (BTEC) and Sport (OCR Cambridge Nationals). These are robust qualifications that have developed over time. They are made up of a number of units. To complete each unit students' work is assessed along the way, pulling together skills, knowledge and understanding. This ongoing assessment allows students to analyse and improve their own performance through their course in much the same way as they would in the workplace.
- All teacher assessment is complemented by an external assessment to give a clear and robust view of the student's real abilities and performance.
- Vocational subjects offer a vocational pathway with more emphasis being placed on practical skills and may be suited to those with particular career routes in mind.
- Vocational subjects are not easier than GCSEs - they offer alternative content and assessment modules that are designed for students with an interest in vocational subjects.

How will I know whether my son/daughter is best suited to taking only GCSEs or to combining them with one or more vocational subjects? Where can I get more advice?

- Advice is available from subject teachers and the Year Leader, Mr Brookes. Our Careers Adviser is also available for individual meetings by appointment.

I've read that certain vocational subjects are equivalent to one or more GCSE(s). What does this mean for my son/daughter?

- Level 2 vocational subjects hold the equivalent of 1 or 2 GCSEs dependent upon the number of hours required to complete the qualification. Studying a larger vocational subject may help students who have a particular career in mind to progress along their vocational pathway. Smaller vocational subject qualifications are suited to those who wish to keep their future options open. Currently Vyners only offer the vocational subjects that result in 1 GCSE equivalent grade.

What effect will one or more optional vocational subject qualifications have on my son/daughter's applications for Post-16 education, including university?

- A vocational subject course is just one of the options subject available and on its own will not adversely affect applications to Post-16 education. Students who achieve well at KS4 may study A Levels or may continue along the vocational pathway by studying Level 3 vocational subjects (or a combination of both).

- Each Post-16 course will have its own specific requirements. This will typically include Mathematics, English and Science at grade 5 or higher together with a range of other subjects which should ideally include a Humanity and a Language.
- For all further education courses, the basic requirement is that each student achieves specific grades in a given selection of subjects.
- It should be noted that 20% of Level 3 vocational subject holders (A Level equivalent) go on to undergraduate degree courses at university.

To what extent will the school tell my son/daughter which option subjects he/she should or should not take?

- Subject teachers will provide guidance to students on the appropriateness of their choice of an individual subject.
- Senior staff will talk with students about their option choices, their future education, career goals and advise them of the appropriateness of their choices for achieving those goals, taking into account their academic profile.

· Broadly, what factors have dictated the subject groupings?

- The subject choices of History or Geography; French or German or Spanish are EBacc subjects which support future progression.
- For the other options there is an initial free choice from the option subjects available. Students' choices are then collated and various combinations of option blocks are tested against staffing and timetabling constraints to achieve a best fit on first choices for the majority of students. This process produces the option blocks which are then used for the follow-on discussions with students.

Who should parents contact if they have questions or concerns prior to the options form submission regarding (a) specific subjects or (b) choices generally?

- Questions relating to a specific subject should be addressed to the subject teacher or Subject Leader.
- Questions regarding the options process should be addressed to Mr Brookes, Year Leader or Mr Newbey the Assistant Headteacher overseeing the options process.

What is the next step if my son/daughter does not get one or more of his/her first option choices?

- If it is not possible to allocate all of their first choices, then in most cases a reserve choice will have been allocated. The situation will be explained to them and they will be given an opportunity to change their choices if necessary.
- A revised form giving the option blocks will be issued so that they can discuss the available choices with you before returning the completed form so that their allocation can be finalised.
- At this point it will not be possible to change the subjects in the option block.

Who should parents contact in the first instance if they have questions or concerns following the options outcome?

- If parents have any concerns following the options allocation they should contact Mr Brooke, Y9 Year Leader, or Mr A Newbey, the Assistant Headteacher overseeing the options process, who will work with them as far as possible to achieve a satisfactory outcome.
- The options process is not undertaken lightly and timetabling and staffing constraints have an impact on what we can offer. Inevitably, some students will not get exactly what they would like but we will work with parents and students to achieve the best possible outcome.

Can parents request an interview (outside of parents' evening) at any of the above stages?

- We would like to assist you in the Options process as much as possible. Please do contact the school to make an appointment to see the subject teacher or Subject Leader if you have questions about a particular course, the Year Leader, or your child's form tutor or other support staff for general questions, or Mr Newbey on specific aspects of the options process.

Year 10 Core Subjects

English

Mathematics

Science

Religious Education

Core PE

All of these subjects are compulsory:

English leads to two GCSE qualifications in GCSE English Language and GCSE English Literature.

Mathematics leads to GCSE Mathematics.

Science – the course followed may lead to a GCSE double or triple award, worth two and three GCSEs respectively.

Religious Education - the GCSE short course in RE will continue into Year 10, which was started at the beginning of Year 9. All Year 10 students will take the Short course RE GCSE public exam in summer 2025.

[**Link to Curriculum Maps for all subjects**](#)

[**Link to KS4 & GCSE Information for all subjects**](#)

Year 10 Option Subjects

History

Geography

Modern Foreign Language (French, German and Spanish)

Art & Design

Drama

Music

Performing Arts BTEC

Photography

BTEC IT

Computer Science

Physical Education

Design & Technology

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Sports Studies Cambridge Nationals

New Subjects that can be picked up in Year 10:

Business Studies

Economics

Media Studies

Psychology

[Link to Curriculum Maps for all subjects](#)

[Link to KS4 & GCSE Information for all subjects](#)

Example Student - Petunia Jones

Petunia is in Year 9 and currently studies:

English
 Maths
 Science
 History
 Geography
 R.E
 P.E GCSE
 French
 Art
 Design and Technology

Petunia wants to do Triple Science and her science teacher has told her she is on the list of triple science students. As a result she will complete the Triple Science Pathway Form. Petunia does not want to pick up a new subject.

Triple Science Pathway (9 GCSEs)

Table 1	Option 1: Please pick ONE from the following options you currently study: Geography, History, French, German or Spanish	History
	Reserve Option 1 Subject	Geography

If you are **not** picking up Economics, Psychology or Media, indicate in the table below the subjects you would like to continue studying. If you are going to pick up one of the subjects listed please complete table 3 instead.

Table 2	Subject to continue with	P.E GCSE
	Subject to continue with	Art
	Reserve Subject	Design and Technology

If you would like to pick up Economics, Psychology or Media indicate this in the table below by listing the subject you would like to continue with. **If you do not wish to pick up economics, psychology or Media you DO NOT need to complete this table as you would have completed Table 2.**

Table 3	Subject you want to pick up from Economics, Psychology or Media:	
	Subject to continue with:	
	Reserve Subject	

Example Student - Jackie Charlton

Jackie is in Year 9 and currently studies:

English

Maths

Science

History

Geography

R.E

P.E GCSE

Spanish

Photography

Design and Technology

Jackie doesn't want to do Triple Science and really wants to carry on studying Spanish. As a result he should complete the EBacc Pathway Form. Jackie does want to pick up a new subject as he has always wanted to do Economics.

Ebacc Pathway

Table 1	Option 1	
	Retained EBacc subject 1: Geography or History	Geography
	Retained EBacc subject 2: French, German or Spanish	Spanish

If you **do not** want to start studying Economics, Business Studies, Psychology or Media, indicate in table 2 below the subjects you would like to continue to study from your current year 9 course. If you want to take a new subject please complete table 3 instead.

Table 2	Subject to continue with	
	Subject to continue with	
	Reserve Subject	

If you want to start studying Economics, Business Studies, Psychology or Media indicate this in the table below by listing the one subject you would like to pick up and also the subject you are continuing with from your year 9 course. ...

Table 3	Subject I wish to pick up:	Economics
	Subject to continue with:	Photography
	Reserve Subject	Design and Technology

Example Student - Bobby Moore

Bobby is in Year 9 and currently studies:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- History
- Geography
- R.E
- P.E GCSE
- German
- Photography
- Food Technology

Bobby has been informed by the school that they need to complete extra Maths and English. They also want to pick up Psychology. As a result they should complete the Core Pathway.

Core Pathway

If the student does **NOT** wish to pick a new subject they need to indicate in Table 1 which THREE subjects they would like to continue with in year 10.

Table 1	Subject to continue with	
	Subject to continue with	
	Subject to continue with	
	Reserve Subject	

If you would like to pick up Business Studies, Psychology or Media complete Table 2 by indicating which of these subjects you will be taking and which other two subjects you will continue to study from year 9.

Table 2	Subject I wish to pick up:	Psychology
	Subject to continue with	P.E GCSE
	Subject to continue with	Geography
	Reserve Subject	Food Technology