

Year 9 *GCSE Selection*



'Scientia Unescamus' • 'Let us be United by Knowledge'

Welcome



It gives me great pleasure to present our inaugural GCSE Selection Prospectus. I hope you and your child find it inspiring and supportive when making final subject selections. These decisions will be imperative as we move towards A level study in 2023.

Mercia School is an exemplary learning environment, where academic rigour is prioritised. We deliver a structured and disciplined curriculum, in which all pupils can achieve their full potential. Our unique culture allows our exceptional staff to teach excellent lessons in which all pupils can thrive. I am delighted that pupils have high aspirations with many of them wanting to study at Russell Group and Ivy League institutions.

As we embark on this new chapter, we are determined that all pupils achieve exceptional examination results, whilst remaining perceptive and knowledgeable about the world around them. This will prepare Mercia pupils well for higher education and their professional careers. A drive for excellence will continue to permeate the school, led by our ambitious and dedicated staff.

Our school motto Scientia Unescamus, means **'Let us be United by Knowledge'**. We must continue to be united, so your child fulfils their educational potential. We place high value on the relationship between the school and home. It is essential this reciprocal partnership continues.

I am incredibly excited about what our pupils can achieve now and in the future.

MR D F WEBSTER
HEADTEACHER

Teaching and Learning



At Mercia School, we have a very clear ideology around teaching. The pupil experience at GCSE will continue to be traditional and academically rigorous, delivered by first-class subject specialists. Our research-informed approach will help all pupils, whatever their need or ability, flourish and reach their potential in all subjects. For both pupils and their teachers, this is a hugely stimulating time. Planning for the GCSE is well underway and we cannot wait to begin in September 2021.

Mercia School teachers are exceptionally hard-working, with many having impressive track records of delivering strong outcomes at GCSE and A Level. We are all committed to teaching with passion to ensure that pupils enjoy their lessons at GCSE and achieve well. All pupils will be supported by teachers, who will challenge pupils on to A Level study.

GCSE study requires commitment and determination from pupils. There will be some noticeable evolutions in our teaching, reflecting the increased rigour and demands of the courses on offer. Pupils will tackle even more challenging essays, examination responses and problem-solving activities. They will grapple with the complexities of each discipline, supported and challenged by their teachers, to begin their journey towards becoming subject experts. For the first time, pupils will have to complete some work at home on a regular basis. GCSE study will be a step up, but not a step too far.

Teaching will be complemented by extra-curricular activities that will inspire pupils to work tirelessly to achieve success. Trips and visits will be common in many subjects. We envisage international trips abroad to support teaching of content in history and geography. Theatrical and artistic visits will allow pupils to see great literary works in action, alongside world leading musicians and dramatists at the top of their craft. GCSE and A Level study will go well beyond the classroom, it will be a stimulating and enriching experience that prioritises academic excellence, alongside culturally fulfilling opportunities.

In summary, we promised a traditional approach to teaching and learning, and will proudly deliver throughout the GCSE course of study. Our staff will deploy their vast experience as examiners and GCSE/A Level teachers to support all pupils in securing excellent outcomes. Our pupils have been exceptionally well prepared for the challenges ahead, they must go in to this next phase with confidence and ambition.

If they wish, all pupils can access the very best universities in the land, or a valuable alternative. Our teaching and learning offer will make this ambition an exciting reality.

MR J G FISHER
DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

Careers at Mercia School



At Mercia School, we have placed a high value on our focus of careers and the development of future choices. You know that we are incredibly ambitious and believe that we can help all our pupils achieve their career goals, even those pupils who may not know what they are yet! We know from our experiences of working with young people that direction and ambition are central to keeping pupils going when times are hard, we also know that keeping the conversation about careers going at home is central to fostering ambition and aspiration.

All pupils made a Mercia promise at the start of their journey with us. This ‘promise’ is our first step in the encouragement of pupils to consider university and beyond. We know that pupils need to see it and hear about it to believe it. We have spent time in Mastery sessions studying careers and routes of employment. Pupils know what Russell Group Universities are and the requirements needed to get there. They are also aware of what the Ebacc qualification is and why it is favoured. We have attributed curriculum time to teaching explicitly what is often assumed, exclusive or for the privileged. We have made it our aim to give pupils the knowledge they need to make the right choices. We know this is an important step in the process of making deliberate decisions and you should be reassured that we are here to support and our focus on careers can really help make a difference. Our Big Challenge work exposed some real business potential across school. Our charity work has illustrated some much-needed philanthropy amongst pupils. Hosting of guest speakers and careers guidance, has allowed pupils to start to ask questions with very important answers. We know this is a dialogue and we know we will keep it going and we know you are a part of that too. That is why you will have a much needed one to one with us, so we can discuss and decide together.

You should also be aware that we have a package of careers support around our pupils. We adhere to the Gatsby Benchmarks closely. These are the standards set for exceptional careers guidance in schools.

These benchmarks include:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Our focus throughout the year will be the ongoing personal guidance and encounters that pupils need. Encounters with careers, exposure to workplaces and access to understanding what is out there should not be a benchmark, it is an entitlement, and we will ensure your child has knowledge of it all. With knowledge, we feel Mercia pupils will make smart choices and have successful futures. That’s our Mercia promise.

Please keep the conversation going at home, read and research together. Committing to something always fosters a greater determination than a passive acceptance. Make it your business to be informed and enthusiastic - come to us with any questions. We are here to help and already so excited about our Mercia Alumni! We know they will do brilliant things.

MS R Hollingsworth

MS R HOLLINGSWORTH
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

Types of Qualifications

GCSE

A General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is the main academic qualification taken in several subjects by pupils in secondary education. GCSEs in England have changed – this started with English and Mathematics in 2017. The reforms ensure that young people have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century. The new GCSEs ensure that pupils leave school better prepared for further study and beyond. Many of the topics studied within the subjects have changed, as well as the way they are examined. They cover more challenging content and are designed to match standards in high performing education systems elsewhere in the world. The new courses include much less coursework (non-examined assessment) than before, with only some of the more practical subjects like art, drama and music containing this element of assessment. Most exams are now taken at the end of the two-year course. In many subjects, pupils are required to answer essay-style questions.

There is also a new 9 to 1 grading system which was introduced by the Department for Education in the hope that the new GCSEs will “better differentiate between pupils of different abilities”. The table to the right shows how the new GCSE grades compare to the old ones – although it is important to point out that each grade cannot be directly compared, there are places where they can be aligned.

Grade 9

The new Grade 9 allows colleges and universities to identify those pupils with exceptional ability in particular subject areas. A Grade 9 is not the equivalent of an A*. It is a grade that has been included to recognise the highest performing pupils. There will be fewer Grade 9s awarded than there were A*s previously.

Grades 8, 7 and 6

Roughly, Grade 8 sits between an A* and an A grade. Grade 7 is equal to an A and Grade 6 sits just a bit higher than the old B Grade.

Grades 4 and 5

These grades represent a ‘pass’ mark, equivalent to an old C Grade. Grade 4 is considered a ‘standard pass’ and Grade 5 a ‘strong pass’.

	New grading structure	Old grading structure
	9	A*
	8	A
	7	
	6	B
Strong Pass	5	
Standard Pass	4	C
	3	D
	2	E
	1	F
		G
	U	U

Grades 3, 2 and 1

These grades correspond to old GCSE grades D, E, F and G. Grade 3 ranks somewhere in-between a D and an E, whilst Grade 2 is somewhere between an E and an F. A Grade 1 is similar to an old G Grade, and a U grade still refers to an exam that has been ‘ungraded’ – it simply did not achieve sufficient marks to get onto the scale.

Vocational Qualifications (BTEC)

A Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification is a nationally recognised, specialist work-related qualification. These qualifications rely much more heavily on non-examined assessment than examination performance. BTEC Firsts offer an introduction to work in a vocational sector and the grades awarded are Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction*. The BTEC grades broadly match with the GCSE grading system. A Pass is the equivalent to a GCSE Grade 4.

English Baccalaureate (Ebacc)

The Ebacc was introduced by the Government in 2011 which signifies success in a range of academic GCSE subjects. To achieve the Ebacc, pupils must complete and obtain a Grade 4 or higher in the following subjects:

- English Language and English Literature
- Maths
- Two Science - Combined (Trilogy), Separate (biology, chemistry and physics) or computer science
- French
- Either geography or history

Sixth Form

To enter study, many A level pupils will require a GCSE in the relevant subject (e.g. to study A level History, GCSE History is required). It is worth checking with teachers which subjects are prerequisites for certain careers. Mercia School's Sixth Form will be launched later in 2021, with publication of entry requirements and subjects offered.

Please note, in 2014, it became compulsory for all pupils to continue further education until their 18th birthday. This will take place in a 6th form or College.

Higher Education

Higher Education (HE) is the term used to describe courses of study at universities that are at a higher level than Sixth Form or College. These courses lead to qualifications called Degrees. Mercia School hopes all pupils will aspire to study at university.

Russell Group Universities

The Russell Group is a collaboration of 24 world-class research-intensive universities. These institutions are not only interested in the results that pupils achieve at GCSE and A Level, they are increasingly expecting pupils to have breadth of study as well as rigour in what they study. This generally means they consider the traditional academic subjects such as those included in the Ebacc as more appropriate for entry to their universities.

When applying to a university, and especially for a course at a competitive university, it is important to consider all aspects of the entrance requirements. Pupils should check university websites for details of required GCSE and A-level grades.

Informed Choices Website

(www.informedchoices.ac.uk)

Informed Choices is aimed at pupils aged 14 and upwards who are considering university and want information to help them choose the right subjects to study at Sixth Form or college. The guidance is written by admissions directors from the 24 Russell Group universities and provides information on why subject choice matters.

We will always strive to keep you informed about assessment at both GCSE and A level. If pupils are to achieve well, it is essential that parents/carers and the school work closely together.



MISS J GREEN
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

'Scientia Unescamus'

'Let us be United by Knowledge'

SCIENTIA UNESCAMUS



English Literature

English Literature is the study of literary texts at an analytical level that allows pupils to develop a confidence in both reading and responding to challenging texts. The course allows for the development of personal voice and rewards pupils who have insightful knowledge and a passion for the subject. The course covers the main literary eras - from Shakespeare, to Dickens. The course also spans the genres of poetry and prose. Contextual understanding is key, as pupils are in a stronger position to really develop a firm understanding of what they are studying and essentially why it matters. Given our heavy influence on the canon, pupils are confident about the significance of literary greats and they will be able to exploit that knowledge throughout the course. Their prior knowledge is advantageous at this point.



MS R HOLLINGSWORTH
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA English Literature and Language,
PGCE Secondary English

Higher Education:
Newcastle University

Examiner for GCSE English Literature
Innovative in her approach to reading and creative writing, a love of learning is at the heart of Ms Hollingsworth's work and her English lessons.

The course will span the two years allocated and would be taught in a combined way with English Language. The course will be in units, based around each text, but the knowledge cross over and application of linguistic terminology will be similar to now and Mercia pupils will be very familiar with the writers and styles. This course will not feel like a 'step up', it will feel like continued experience of great texts.

Academically, success in English is obviously vital. Good qualifications in English are attractive to universities and employers, as they convey a level of communication and accuracy that is desirable. Mercia pupils have excellent vocabulary and knowledge of how language works for effect. In their analytical writing, pupils have a strong awareness of concepts such as power, relationships and politics. All this wider knowledge will be utilised in the exams and allow pupils an opportunity to develop genuine flair. Furthermore, our pupils are articulate and confident - essential to any successful future.

Supported by our Mastery Curriculum, being so well read means that we have more time for study and annotation. Inevitably, the GCSE course allows us to develop our writing styles and approaches, and pupils will be supported in their responses to unseen texts. Pupils have a lot to look forward to!

Knowledge in English

Pupils already have a firm foundation of knowledge in English. Essentially, their development of knowledge will continue, as the more they know about writers and texts, the more they can apply this and excel. English needs a firm foundation of knowledge, so that pupils can apply analysis and evaluate in different contexts. We have built this throughout Key Stage 3 (Year 7-9). In Key Stage 4 (Year 10-11), pupils will be taught knowledge of:

- Shakespeare - style, genre, language, context, literary significance and culture
- 19th Century Writers - social concerns, development of style, knowledge of language use
- A selection of Poetry, including Unseen Poetry - effects, purpose, meaning and expression, individual context
- Modern Text - The importance of contextual influence, style, author aims and message

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Pupils have read extensively at Mercia School and are happy to do so. As we have already read in excess of twenty-five high quality literary texts, this course will simply be an opportunity to develop what we know and embrace new texts. A firm grammatical knowledge is advantageous when exploring meaning and our approaches to planning already ensure that we have sustained writing. Our assessments have already prepared pupils for extended responses and we have developed pupils who have the ability to think, reflect and write with passion. We believe they will excel in this subject area and the content will feel familiar, due to how we have planned the whole course.

A Level and Beyond

We believe that Mercia pupils will be in a strong position to take English at A Level. English Literature is seen as a facilitating subject at university and offers a strong compliment to those studying history, or even as a passion for those studying mathematics and science. Given the academic nature and study, developing fluency and expression is a great cross over to all subjects and we think pupils who thrive in this subject will be supported in all their studies, with their skills of note taking, reading, analysis, planning and writing. Studied at university exclusively or as part of combined courses, studies in English make up over 22% of university courses. 52,540 students were studying English last year.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE English literature (8702)

Paper 1: Shakespeare and 19th Century Novel

Duration: 1hr 45 mins
Total Marks: 64
Weighting: 40% of GCSE

Section A Shakespeare: Pupils will answer one question on their play of choice. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the play and then to write about the play as a whole.

Section B 19th Century Novel: Pupils will answer one question on their novel of choice. They will be required to write in detail about an extract from the novel and then to write about the novel as a whole.

Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry

Duration: 2hr 15 mins
Total Marks: 96
Weighting: 60%

Section A Modern Text: Pupils will answer one essay question from a choice of two on their studied modern prose.

Section B Poetry: Pupils will answer one comparative question on one named poem printed on the paper and one other poem from their chosen anthology cluster. Pupils study fifteen poems in total.

Section C Unseen Poetry: Pupils will answer one question on one unseen poem and one question comparing this poem with a second unseen poem.

Author: Ms R Hollingsworth



MISS D HARVEY

Qualifications:
BA English Literature, PGDE Secondary English, MA Education

Higher Education:
Manchester Metropolitan University,
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE English Literature
Miss Harvey has a relentless passion for academic study, she hopes to inspire Mercia pupils to love scholarship and strive for excellence in English and beyond.



MS C BOLTON

Qualifications:
BA English Literature, MA English Literature, PGCE Secondary English

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE English Literature
Ms Bolton is an advocate for knowledge-based learning and using research to inform practice to ensure significant progress in English, for every pupil that she teaches.



English Language

English Language is the close study of a range of texts at an analytical level that allows pupils to develop a fine level analysis and close understanding of author craft and effects. The course allows for the development of an analytical voice and rewards pupils who have perceptive ability and a confident writing style.

The course covers the main literary eras - offering both prose and non-fiction texts spanning the 19th- 20th centuries. Terminology is key, as pupils are in a stronger position to really develop analysis of unseen texts when they have a confidence with the application of methods and a security in their comments on effects. Given our very academic curriculum, with a strong focus on grammatical knowledge, pupils are well prepared to tackle challenging unseen texts and meet the creative demands of writing for genre and purpose. Their prior knowledge is advantageous as pupils plan and write with confidence. We have worked on bettering reading skill and inevitably, better readers are better writers.

The course will span the two years allocated and would be taught in a combined way with English Literature. The course will be in units, based around each area of study, but the knowledge cross over and application of linguistic terminology will be similar to now and Mercia pupils will be very familiar with the teaching style and approach to texts. This course will not feel like a ‘step up’, it will feel like further exposure to an even wider variety of texts. Evaluation will be at the heart of what we do and pupils are in a strong position to develop effective evaluative voices as they are so well read and articulate.

Academically, success in English is obviously vital. Good qualifications in English are attractive to universities and employers, as they convey a level of communication and accuracy that is desirable. English Language GCSE is seen as the ‘employers choice’ and is deemed to be more functional in its approach. As a well-read pupil, Mercia pupils have excellent vocabulary and knowledge of how language works for effect. In their analytical writing, pupils have a strong awareness of concepts such as power, relationships and politics and they will apply these to good effect, exploring the choices writers make for their intended purposes. All this wider knowledge will be utilised in the exams and allow pupils an opportunity to develop their own creative writing also. Furthermore, our vocabulary teaching

and emphasis on high standards also helps to ensure pupils will stand out for these key attributes and are well placed for success here. Supported by our enrichment programme and the additional study in Mastery Time, being so well-read means that we have more time for developing personal flair and creativity. Pupils will no doubt enjoy developing their own writing styles and tastes and their critique of texts will reflect their exposure to the very best of literature and their ability to cope with unseen extracts.

Knowledge in English

Pupils already have a firm foundation of knowledge in English. Essentially, their development of knowledge will continue, as the more they know about writers and texts, the more they can apply this and excel. English needs a firm foundation of knowledge, so that pupils can apply analysis and evaluate in different contexts. We have built this throughout Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, pupils will be taught knowledge of:

- Language and Structure - how writers create meaning and effects
- Evaluation - how to critique the effectiveness and effects in texts
- Creative Writing - knowledge of genres and forms and features of style
- Summary and synopsis - linking texts, concise expression, detailed precision

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Pupils have studied extensively at Mercia School and are happy to do so. As we have already built a foundation of literary analysis and grammar knowledge, this course will simply be an opportunity to develop what we know and embrace new texts. A firm grammatical knowledge is advantageous when exploring effects and our approaches to planning already ensure that we have writers who think about what they want to communicate and how to do so. Our assessments have already prepared pupils for extended responses, writing in depth, planning and of course the importance of accuracy. Our approach to quizzing and testing has also ensured that pupils have retained much needed terminology and will be able to apply this fitfully in the examinations.

A Level and Beyond

We believe that Mercia pupils will be in a strong position to take English at A Level. English Language is seen as a favourable A level and is a strong compliment to those studying English Literature, history and politics. Given the academic nature and study, developing fluency and expression is a great cross over to all subjects and we think pupils who thrive in this subject will be supported in all their studies, with their skills of note taking, reading, analysis, planning and writing.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE English Language 8700
Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing

Duration: 1hr 45 mins
Total Marks: 80
Weighting: 50% of GCSE
Section A Reading: 1 short form question (1 x 4 marks) 2 longer form questions (2 x 8 marks) 1 extended question (1 x 20 marks)
All based on an unseen extract.

Section B Writing: 1 extended writing question (24 marks for content, 16 marks for technical accuracy).

Paper 2: Writers’ Viewpoints and Perspectives
Duration: 2hr 15 mins
Total Marks: 80
Weighting: 50%
Section A Reading: 1 short form question (1 x 4 marks)
• 2 longer form questions (1 x 8, 1 x 12 marks)
• 1 extended question (1 x 16 marks) Two Linked unseen extracts.

Section B Writing: 1 extended writing question (24 marks for content, 16 marks for technical accuracy).

Author: Ms R Hollingsworth



MISS M SMITH
Qualifications:
BA English Literature,
PGCE in Secondary English
Higher Education:
University of York, University of Oxford
During her academic studies, Miss Smith developed an avid interest in Gothic literature, American literature and feminist literary theory.



MISS M WINSTON-JACQUES
Qualifications:
BA English and Philosophy
Higher Education:
University of Sheffield
Miss Winston-Jacques believes her experiences within the charity sector have energized her pursuit to teach English and she is very excited for the GCSE/A-level courses of study.



MISS M ANSAR
Qualifications:
BA English
Higher Education:
University of Cambridge
Miss Ansar studied English at the University of Cambridge, where she strengthened her special interests in social justice, postcolonial narratives, contemporary literature, fringe subcultures, the arts, and social activism.

Mathematics

Maths is at the heart of Mercia School’s traditional curriculum. It helps pupils make sense of the world around them - not just in terms of numbers but, increasingly, in more complex arenas: algebra, geometry, statistics and probability. Mathematical knowledge and skill opens the doors to deeper understanding in many more subjects – especially the sciences. Grappling with increasingly difficult mathematical challenges means pupils develop methods to solve problems, even when solutions may not immediately seem obvious.

Pupils at Mercia School have built solid foundations of mathematical knowledge and skills throughout Key Stage 3. All pupils have become increasingly fluent in working with number. On top of that, the main principles of algebra, shape, proportion, ratio, probability and statistics have all been introduced. Whatever their starting point, Mercia pupils have made excellent progress – this has been down to their hard work as well as some of the extra aspects of maths at Mercia School, including: the Accelerated Maths programme; the Junior Maths Challenges; and optional enrichment in areas such as decision maths and puzzles.

The maths curriculum for Key Stage 4 has been designed especially to build on and strengthen the knowledge and skills taught in Key Stage 3. Increasingly, pupils will apply what they know to situations involving multi-step problems. They will be expected to communicate as expert mathematicians. And they will need to draw on their fortitude as learners when things get tricky (as they inevitably will!).

The content and structure of the upcoming curriculum will appear familiar to pupils. It will comprise a mix of number, algebra, shape, probability and statistics topics. These will become increasingly challenging – for example with the introduction of trigonometry, surds and algebraic proof. As always, Mercia School teachers will introduce and explain new concepts carefully before pupils practise applying their newly-gained knowledge.

Knowledge in Maths

Pupils at Mercia have made excellent progress in their maths, and have become fluent in the most crucial knowledge. In Key Stage 4, pupils will be taught new areas including:

- Trigonometry
- Advanced proportional reasoning – including direct and indirect proportion
- Quadratic equations and their graphical representations
- Vectors
- Congruence and similarity

Pupils will also be given extended practice in applying the knowledge gained in Key Stage 3 to more advanced problem solving and reasoning situations.

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Pupils will continue to complete many ‘low stakes’ quizzes in maths to ensure that new knowledge and skills are practised till they are mastered. Teachers will still lead from the front – showing examples, explaining reasoning and correcting misconceptions when they arise. Assessments will follow a similar structure to Key Stage 3 but will gradually incorporate longer and more challenging multi-step questions.

As our pupils are keen to tell us, they don’t just practise till they get something right; they practise till they can’t get it wrong. Maths is perhaps the subject where practice pays off most obviously. Pupils will be explicitly encouraged and guided to revisit and practise areas that they have found difficult. They will often choose to re-do assessment papers, looking to make significant improvements following feedback. And as Year 11 approaches, we will support pupils to practise past examination papers to ensure they can reach their potential when GCSE day arrives!

We will also continue to develop online learning tools to support those who want to push themselves further – Hegarty Maths is one example of this and we are looking forward to seeing who will be the first ever Mercia pupil to complete it!

A Level and Beyond

Pupils at Mercia School will be in a good position to study maths at A level. Maths continues to be the most popular A level chosen in the country, and with good reason – it demonstrates a willingness to work hard, a dedication to precision and a commitment to improve analytical and quantitative skills. A Level Maths is not just for those wanting to study the subject at university – it opens doors in a huge range of academic and employment areas: from science to finance and economics; from engineering to architecture.

Mercia School will also offer Further Mathematics at A Level for those developing even more of a passion for the subject and aiming for the very top university places in maths, engineering, economics or the sciences.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: Edexcel (1MA1)

3 papers of 90 minutes each. Each paper is worth 80 marks. The first paper is a non-calculator paper; on papers 2 and 3 the use of a calculator is permitted. There are two tiers of entry, with Foundation Tier allowing up to a Grade 5 to be achieved. The Higher Tier enables pupils to achieve the highest possible grade of 9. Decisions on which tier pupils will enter will be made during Key Stage 4.

Grading and Understanding Accreditation

Grade boundaries are decided by the examination board after marking of all papers is complete. Having said that, we would expect them to be relatively stable from year to year so throughout Key Stage 4 we will be able to give pupils a good indication of what grade they should be targeting. Mock exams will also help with this process.

Maths is an extremely hierarchical subject, meaning pupils will need to have mastered the basics before moving onto higher level skills such as those mentioned previously. Moving onto these higher skills naturally leads to higher possible final grades. The table to the right from Edexcel gives a broad indication of the nature of the content on GCSE higher tier papers. These proportions are similar for foundation tier, albeit with slightly more weighting on number skills and less on algebra.

Number	12–18%
Algebra	27–33%
Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	17–23%
Geometry and Measures	17–23%
Statistics & Probability	12–18%

Author: Mr A Brown



MR A BROWN
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA Economics and Management, PGCE Secondary Mathematics, MA Economics

Higher Education:
University of Oxford,
University College London

Examiner for GCSE Mathematics

Mr Brown believes strongly that all children are entitled to an excellent mathematical education and that deep mathematical learning will lead to young people being able to access exciting opportunities across the range of sciences and social sciences.

Teachers of Mathematics



MISS R ELLIS

Qualifications:
BSc Mathematics and Geography,
PGCE Secondary Mathematics

Higher Education:
University of Leeds

Examiner for GCSE Mathematics

Miss Ellis is an ardent mathematician and is tremendously eager to celebrate the mathematical successes our pupils have, no matter how large or small they may be.



MR J JEWELL

Qualifications:
BSc Mathematics and Statistics,
PGCE Secondary Mathematics

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE Mathematics

Mr Jewell enjoys teaching the problem-solving element of mathematics because of the challenge it can present. He cannot wait to put pupils through their paces at GCSE/A-level.



MR L BERRY

Qualifications:
MMath (Hons) Mathematics

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Mr Berry is an ardent believer that a deep knowledge-based mathematics curriculum will lead to developing outstanding young people at Mercia.



MR B JENNINGS

Qualifications:
MMath (Hons) Mathematics,
PCGE in Secondary Mathematics

Higher Education:
University of Warwick,
University of Cambridge

Mr Jennings believes mathematics education should focus on clearly establishing foundational skills and knowledge so that students can then deepen their understanding through solving challenging problems.





Combined Science: Trilogy

Importance of Science

Human progress throughout history has largely rested on advances in science - from our knowledge of gravity to cutting-edge medicines, students of science have shaped our modern world. All of these advances can trace their origin back to individuals learning about science as pupils. That's why it is in the interests of governments, companies and wider society to promote science as a subject at schools; it ensures the next wave of progress in all of the fields that affect our daily lives. A strong scientific understanding is imperative in order to understand the world in which we live.

Structure of GCSEs

The Combined Science: Trilogy GCSE is the core, compulsory science offer for all pupils. **The Trilogy set of GCSEs gives pupils 2 GCSEs in science, however all three disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics are taught and examined.** Pupils will study each science discipline with a specialist teacher and sit two GCSE papers per discipline. There are 21 required practical activities which are also assessed in the examinations with questions relating to these practicals accounting for 15% of marks.

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

All Mercia pupils have a depth and breadth of secure scientific knowledge. At Mercia, we have taught the core foundational knowledge, as well as the rich knowledge around the edges of the disciplines. This forms the springboard to further study, opening the doors for a bright future at A Level and beyond. Pupils will have mastered the required practical activities. They will apply their knowledge to different situations around these practicals in order to deepen their understanding of practical technique.

A Level and beyond

We believe that Mercia pupils have the strongest possible foundations to be highly successful in the sciences at A Level. Our teachers' extensive and varied scientific experience has been utilised to carefully craft a science curriculum that seamlessly prepares pupils as scientists from day one. Pupils with science qualifications are in demand across all employment sectors. Science is a prerequisite for a career in medical professions, the pharmaceutical industry, technology and engineering sectors and many more.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy (8464)

Biology Paper 1: Cell Biology; Organisation; Infection and response; and Bioenergetics.

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Biology Paper 2: Homeostasis and response; Inheritance, variation and evolution; and Ecology.

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Chemistry Paper 1: Atomic structure and the periodic table; Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter; Quantitative chemistry; Chemical changes; and Energy changes.

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Chemistry Paper 1: The rate and extent of chemical change; Organic chemistry; Chemical analysis; Chemistry of the atmosphere; and Using resources.

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Physics Paper 1: Energy; Electricity; Particle model of matter; and Atomic structure.

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Physics Paper 2: Forces; Waves; and Magnetism and electromagnetism

Duration: 1hr 15 mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 16.7% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Additional Examination Information:

- 20% of marks are mathematically based.
- 15% of marks are based on required practical activities.
- Please note there is a higher and foundation tier paper.

Author: Mr S Cottrill



MR S COTTRILL
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BSc Natural Environmental Science,
PGCE Secondary Science,
MSc Contaminant Hydrogeology

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE Science

Prior to becoming a teacher, Mr Cottrill worked as an Environmental Scientist specialising in the assessment and remediation of contaminated land and sites, particularly within the petrochemical industry.





Separate Sciences

What are Separate Sciences?

Separate Sciences (also known as ‘Triple Science’) is an option choice available to all pupils with a love of science. **This enables pupils to gain 3 GCSEs; in biology, chemistry and physics.** By choosing the Separate Science route, pupils are prepared for the transition into A Levels in biology, chemistry or physics. Although it is possible to study science A Levels without studying Separate Sciences, we strongly recommend this route if you are considering a future in a scientific career.

Knowledge in Separate Sciences

There are some fascinating topics included when you opt for GCSEs in biology, chemistry and physics! In biology, you will study topics including the brain, eye and kidneys with increased opportunities for dissection, monoclonal antibodies and their medicinal use, plant diseases, cloning, genetics, ecology and farming. These topics fit particularly well with GCSE Geography.

In chemistry, you will learn about nanoparticles, polymerisation, amino acids, DNA, analytical chemistry and industrial methods and much more. This is an invaluable foundation for chemistry and a career in the medical, pharmaceutical or engineering professions.

In physics, you will study the additional topics of radioactive isotopes, nuclear fusion and fission, mechanics, waves, lenses, sound technology and the endlessly fascinating space physics!

Increased Practical Content

Pupils carry out 28 required practicals. These are assessed in the examinations with questions relating to these practicals accounting for 15% of marks.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE Separate Sciences: Biology (8461), Chemistry (8462), Physics (8463)

Below is the detail of examination for the Separate Science. Please note there is a higher and foundation tier paper.

Biology (8461)

Biology Paper 1: Cell biology; Organisation; Infection and response; and Bioenergetics.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Biology Paper 2: Homeostasis and response; Inheritance, variation and evolution; and Ecology.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Chemistry (8462)

Chemistry Paper 1: Atomic structure and the periodic table; Bonding, structure, and the properties of matter; Quantitative chemistry, Chemical changes; and Energy changes.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Chemistry Paper 2: The rate and extent of chemical change; Organic chemistry; Chemical analysis, Chemistry of the atmosphere; and Using resources.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Physics (8463)

Physics Paper 1: Energy; Electricity; Particle model of matter; and Atomic structure.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Physics Paper 2: Forces; Waves; Magnetism and electromagnetism; and Space physics.

Duration: 1hr 45 mins

Total Marks: 100

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Question type: Multiple choice, structured, closed short answer, and open response.

Author: Mr S Cottrill



MISS M CHAPMAN

Qualifications:
BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science,
PGDE in Secondary Science

Higher Education:
Sheffield Hallam University

A passionate biologist, Miss Chapman is a keen advocate for the environment and teaches pupils the significance of pro-environmental values in our lives.



MISS C MCKENNA

Qualifications:
BSc in Medical Biochemistry,
PGCE Chemistry, MA in STEM Education

Higher Education:
University of Swansea,
King’s College London

Examiner for GCSE Science

Hugely passionate about teaching GCSE and A-Level Chemistry, Miss McKenna is excited to deploy her experience to help develop a GCSE course that will challenge and enthuse Mercia pupils.



MR J BERRY

Qualifications:
MSci (ARCS) Chemistry,
PGCE Secondary Science (Chemistry)

Higher Education:
Imperial College, London

Examiner for GCSE Science

Mr Berry loves asking his pupils to consider how the theories he teaches are supported by evidence, and how scientific ideas have developed over time.



MR E REES

Qualifications:
MSci Natural Sciences in Chemistry and Physics, PGCE in Secondary Science

Higher Education:
University of Durham

Mr Rees fervently believes in teamwork and is clear of the need to develop and provide the highest standard of scientific education to the school’s pupils and wider community.



French

At Mercia School we aim to create “linguists”. A linguist is someone who is skilled in foreign languages. This means that they have a deep understanding of and a clear passion for their language. They are able to use the language orally or written in a spontaneous manner and they have a high proficiency in the mechanics that make up a language. Our pupils at Mercia School are on this journey.

In the first three years of study at Mercia School, pupils have learned about the cultural and historical events that make France and the French language so important and vibrant. They have learned about Réunion - an island in the Indian Ocean, which is actually part of France. They have studied Joan of Arc, the speeches of Charles de Gaulle and literature from Mauritius. As well as this, they have developed a superb knowledge of the grammar that binds the French language together.

The final two years of their compulsory French study will see them use that grammatical and cultural understanding to express a range of nuanced opinions on a range of topics. They will develop their skills in the four examined areas of study: **reading, writing, listening and speaking.**

The programme of study in GCSE French is split broadly into five central themes: **Identity and culture** (personality, spare time, celebrations); **Local area, holiday and travel** (my area, dream holidays, food and weather); School (my school; school rules; future plans); **Future aspirations, study and work** (career choices, hopes and dreams; the importance of languages; applying for jobs); **International and global dimension** (the planet; the environment; volunteering).

Pupils at Mercia School have already studied these themes in their first three years, which puts them at a great advantage.

The GCSE course should not feel more difficult than the course in Key Stage 3. We have high expectations and so we will expect pupils to work independently to learn the increased amount of vocabulary that they will be exposed to in lessons. The pupils have a superb understanding of grammatical structures but they now need to expand the contexts in which they can show this understanding. In French lessons, we will sing, we will chant, we

will sweat the small stuff. It is only a continuation of the standards we have set ourselves which will ensure our pupils become the great linguists we know they can be.

Our emphasis on grammatical fluency and regular exposure to high-level grammatical structures will mean pupils are able to write and speak extensively in a range of contexts. If your ambition is to be able to order food at a French restaurant or to use your French foundations to become an interpreter at the United Nations in Manhattan, you will be well served by study at Mercia School.

Knowledge in French

Pupils already have a superb foundation of grammatical knowledge in French. This will develop over the course of GCSE study. They will need to use this knowledge in new contexts as they are exposed to new vocabulary. They will develop knowledge of a range of basic and higher-level vocabulary that they will need to use with their knowledge of grammar such as tenses and mood. In Key Stage 4, pupils will be taught knowledge of:

- Grammar – tenses; pronouns; subjunctive mood
- Vocabulary – in line with the themes in the course of study
- Listening and reading skills- how to pick out key concepts in extended sequences of speech
- Speaking in French – register; asking and answering questions; idiomatic phrases

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Pupils in French at Mercia School have prepared well for success at GCSE. Our focus on grammatical fluency has meant that pupils are able to use various grammatical structures in several contexts, both spontaneously and with meticulous planning. Their grammatical knowledge thus far means that pupils have already mastered the majority of high-level grammatical structures expected from GCSE pupils. We always use proper grammatical terminology at Mercia School and stress the importance of grammar to give pupils the tools to express themselves properly in written and spoken French.

Our assessments have helped pupils become adept at writing extended pieces on a range of topics and they have had chance to practice speaking scenarios, like Role Play, which will appear in their GCSE exam. By creating our own listening, reading and translation activities, we have exposed pupils to much more high-level vocabulary and structures than their peers in other schools by this time. Our approach to quizzing and retrieval has meant that the fundamental, non-negotiable, every lesson vocabulary has been embedded well in our pupils and they are able to use this readily and with verve.

A Level and Beyond

We believe that our approach to French at Mercia School, and our desire to make our pupils into great linguists will put them in a strong position for A Level study. Languages are always changing and as such, the study of a language facilitates a huge breadth of other subjects at A Level and university. Research shows that a qualification in a foreign language can increase your salary by up to 20%.

Several Russell Group universities have said that they look favourably on applicants with an A Level in a language when comparing with similar pupils without any language qualifications. Given the academic nature of the subject, French study will be a benefit to a large number of other subjects, dealing as it does with fluency, analysis and communication.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: Edexcel GCSE French (1FR0)

Paper 1: Listening and understanding in French

Duration: 35 mins including 5 mins reading time (foundation)
45 mins including 5 mins reading time (higher)

Total Marks: 50

Weighting: 25% of GCSE

Paper 2: Speaking in French

Duration: 7-9 mins plus 12 mins preparation time (foundation)
10-12 mins plus 12 mins preparation time (higher)

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 25%

Tasks: Task 1 – a role play based on topic (allocated by exam board)
Task 2 – questions based on a picture stimulus based on topic (allocated by exam board)
Task 3 – conversation based on two themes. The first of these is chosen by the pupil in advance of the assessment. The second is allocated by the exam board.

Paper 3: Reading and understanding in French

Duration: 45 mins (foundation)
1 hr (higher)

Total Marks: 50

Weighting: 25%

Tasks: Students must answer all questions in each of the three sections:
Section A is set in English.
Section B is set in French.
Section C includes a translation passage from French into English with instructions in English.

Paper 4: Writing in French

Duration: 1 hr 10 mins (foundation) includes French to English translation.
1 hr 20 mins (higher) includes French to English translation.

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 25%

Tasks: Foundation tier – three open response questions and one translation into French.
Higher tier – two open response questions and one translation into French.

Author: Mr B Drury



MR B DRURY
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA Journalism and French,
PGCE Secondary French

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE French
A passionate advocate of the French language, Mr Drury holds a particular interest in the city of Bordeaux, modern French cinema and 20th century French history.



Teachers of French



MISS L HERITAGE

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) in Modern Foreign Languages,
MA in Conference Interpreting and
Translation Studies, PGCE in Secondary
Modern Foreign Languages, MEd in
Research in Second Language Education

Higher Education:
University of Durham,
University of Cambridge

Examiner for GCSE French

Miss Heritage believes her responsibility
extends far beyond GCSE and A-level
studies; her role is also to foster a genuine
appreciation for the value of language and
foreign cultures.



MISS I BUNN

Qualifications:
BA in French and Politics,
PGCE in Secondary French

Higher Education:
University of Nottingham

Miss Bunn is astounded by the level of
French pupils achieve at Mercia School,
she is keen to put children through their
paces at GCSE and A-level.



History

History is the study of the past, but also the creation of knowledge about the past, as historians interrogate and interpret historical evidence to explain how and why things happened. The unforgettable characters and stories we encounter make history a fascinating subject in its own right; however, a strong historical education is also an essential tool for understanding and navigating the modern world, and living as informed, critical and compassionate citizens.

Pupils taking GCSE History at Mercia School will gain an advanced understanding of British and international history, and build upon the strong foundational knowledge they acquired in Key Stage 3. The course will be divided into four elements, comprising two units which focus on British history, and two which focus on the wider world. The broad coverage of wide-ranging time periods and places makes the course fascinating and varied: Pupils will study all time periods from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century, and while they will certainly deepen their understanding of Britain’s past, they will also explore diverse places and regions from Berlin to Budapest; from Cuba to Korea.

Throughout the course, pupils will analyse authentic historical sources, including photographs, cartoons, video footage, diaries, and newspaper reports, and interrogate and evaluate the scholarship of leading historians. They will also write extended answers to challenging but fascinating questions about historical causation, change and continuity, and the similarities and differences between different time periods. While GCSE study will certainly come with additional challenge, pupils will feel confident that their history curriculum in Key Stage 3 has equipped them with the strong foundations for academic success.

History is a highly valued subject that opens doors to a wide range of pathways, both for further academic study at A Level and university, and for future employment. Pupils studying GCSE History at Mercia will develop skills of communication, critical analysis, and evaluation which are essential for diverse fields of study and work. Crucially, they will build a treasure trove of memorable knowledge and stories that will illuminate their study of other academic disciplines, deepen their understanding of current affairs and politics, and hopefully stay with them forever.

Knowledge in history

The History GCSE strikes a fantastic balance between familiar content that builds on periods that Mercia pupils have already studied, and new content that will enthuse and inspire our historians.

- GCSE historians at Mercia School will study the following components:
- **Germany, 1890-1945.** In this period study, pupils will learn about the development of Germany during a turbulent half century of change which saw the development and collapse of democracy, and the rise and fall of a Nazi dictatorship.
 - **Conflict and tension between East and West, 1945-1972.** This wider world depth study covers the causes and events of the Cold War. It explores the rivalry and conflict between the USA and the USSR in locations including Berlin, Hungary, Cuba and Vietnam.
 - **Power and the people, c.1170 to present day.** This British thematic study focuses on the changing relationship between people and the state since the Middle Ages. Pupils will explore the roles played by war, religion, the economy, ideas, and important individuals in challenging authority and enhancing people’s liberties and rights.
 - **Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603.** In this British depth study, pupils will gain an advanced understanding of the major events of Elizabeth I’s reign, and explore the changing experiences of ordinary people during the Elizabethan ‘Golden Age’.



How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

The Key Stage 3 history curriculum at Mercia School has been carefully designed to prepare our pupils for the challenges of GCSE study. Our GCSE historians will find reassurance in recognising many familiar characters and stories from history, from Henry VIII to Hitler; from the Spanish Armada to the Suffragettes. Our prior curriculum has also been designed to give pupils the necessary foundational knowledge for GCSE content that they have not previously studied. In short, our pupils’ rich knowledge base will allow them to adapt to the GCSE course with confidence.

Similarly, our lessons and prior assessments have equipped Mercia historians with the disciplinary skills necessary for GCSE success. These skills include extended writing, analysis of authentic historical sources, and engagement with historical scholarship and interpretations. Crucially, our knowledge-rich approach means that pupils already feel confident in studying, recalling, independently revising and applying large bodies of historical knowledge. In this respect, progress from Year 9 to Year 10 will feel like a challenging but achievable ‘step up’.

A Level and Beyond

We hope that many pupils who take GCSE history will go on to study history at A Level, or even at university. Success in GCSE history will certainly prepare pupils for the additional demands of A Level study, which requires more advanced proficiency in writing extended essays, analysing authentic source material, and engaging with the work of professional historians.

History qualifications are highly valued by universities and employers because they develop a wide range of desirable skills. These include the ability to assess large bodies of evidence, and to evaluate conflicting interpretations – crucial in a digital age overflowing with information and misinformation – as well as excellent skills in written communication and constructing persuasive arguments. History is therefore considered a ‘facilitating subject’, which means that it is commonly required or preferred by universities for access to a wide-range of degrees. Mercia pupils who go on to study history at university will find it a versatile degree that opens doors to future pathways in diverse fields, including law, journalism, politics, business, education and academia.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE History (8145)

Paper 1: Understanding the Modern World

Duration: 2 hours

Total Marks: 84

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Section A Period study: Pupils will answer six questions on our period study, which is Germany, 1890-1945.

Section B Wider world depth study: Pupils will answer four questions on our depth study, which is Conflict and tension between East and West, 1945-1972.

Paper 1: Shaping the Nation

Duration: 2 hours

Total Marks: 84

Weighting: 50% of GCSE

Section A Thematic study: Pupils will answer four questions on our thematic study, which is Power and the People: c.1170 to the present day.

Section B British depth study: Pupils will answer four questions on our depth study, which is Elizabethan England, c.1568-1603.

Author: Mr T Bannan



MR T BANNAN
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) History, MA History, PGCE Secondary History

Higher Education:
Royal Holloway, University of London

Mr Bannan passionately believes that a challenging and academically rigorous historical education is the entitlement of every pupil.

Teachers of History



MR J G FISHER

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) History, PGCE Secondary History, MA Education and Leadership

Higher Education:
University of York, University of Manchester

Senior Examiner for GCSE History

Mr Fisher believes that to fulfil your potential you must work hard and embrace challenge. He specialises in Germany and American history post-1850.



MR C SMITH

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) History, PGCE Secondary History

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE History

Mr Smith has a particular interest in 19th century British history, including the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire, the latter topic being his specialism in his final year at university.





Geography

Geography is the academic subject of the kinder and better future to come. The subject explores issues at the intersection of understanding our physical world and the human-made world. As such, the geography course at GCSE gives pupils opportunity to use their knowledge from a range of subjects. For example, science and mathematics are linked to engineering solutions chosen to improve places; and geographers use literacy and analytical expertise to express their ideas. As a result, Mercia’s young geographers will be the next decision makers for Planet Earth’s future.

Our GCSE course is based on enquiries into 8 topics, all related to contemporary debates and fieldwork opportunities. Examples include choosing the most appropriate management strategies for UK coastlines prone to flooding and erosion; critiquing governments and businesses when studying reasons for global inequalities and climate change; evaluating the impact of urbanisation and economic growth on our quality of life and our ecosystems; predicting future conflicts based on food and water security; as well as recognising how earthquakes and volcanoes can both create and destroy.

Through decision making exercises, pupils will learn which sources and methods of data representation are most appropriate in specific situations. Through using this information, they will then be challenged to compare and contrast different opinions about places. Pupils at Mercia also recognise that local and global issues are interconnected and interdependent. GCSE geography is their next opportunity to explore how ‘everything is connected to everything else’.

An enthusiasm for fieldwork is crucial to success at GCSE. Mercia pupils must be committed to participate fully in our fieldwork opportunities so that they can apply ideas for how real-life enquiries can be conducted. In physical geography, pupils will step through rivers to collect data to explore processes and features. In human geography, qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used to ascertain the quality of life in urban areas. This will also include the interpretation of computer based geographic information systems.

Knowledge in Geography

Our pupils have an exceptional range of geographical knowledge. In Key Stage 3, studies have been linked to major geographical concepts, which will be important for the GCSE course. These are:

- Physical Processes: natural systems creating our environment
- Interdependence: the flows and interconnectedness of life on Earth. Due to globalisation, everything is connected to everything else
- Diversity: including socio-cultural backgrounds shaping opinions and decisions
- Sustainability: the need to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- Place: spatial locations with attributed meaning

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Due to their hard work in Key Stage 3, our pupils already possess excellent knowledge of vocabulary in all of the 8 topics explored at GCSE. They have also developed a strong understanding of the key physical and human processes shaping our Earth today. Mercia’s approach to regular quizzing is ensuring strong long term memory for this terminology and geography assessments place a high value on pupil confidence in these areas.

Pupils have also encountered a number of place-based examples related to GCSE questions. Examples include mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the impact of natural disasters in Haiti. This means that they are ready to investigate new case study examples in greater depth at GCSE.

A Levels and Beyond

Geography has a long established reputation as a hugely popular and highly regarded academic subject. At A Level, pupils will continue to engage in contemporary issues relating to the state of the Earth, and draw upon the work of prominent thinkers in the field. A Level pupils also have the opportunity to conduct their own chosen fieldwork enquiry, allowing them to explore specific questions important to their interests. Previous enquires have ranged from investigating how ethnic identities shape a sense of place; to exploring potential carbon sinks to mitigate against climate change.

Additionally, geography is a facilitating subject, meaning it is amongst the subjects most commonly required by universities to access a wide range of degree courses. Geography graduates also have one of the highest employment rates following graduation. This is due to the dynamic nature of the ever-changing subject, and the range of personal attributes developed through its study.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: OCR Geography Specification B J384

Paper 1: Our Natural World

Duration: 1hr 15mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 35% of GCSE

- Topics:
- Global Hazards
 - Changing Climate
 - Distinctive Landscapes
 - Sustaining Ecosystems
 - Fieldwork

Paper 2: People and Society

Duration: 1hr 15mins

Total Marks: 70

Weighting: 35% of GCSE

- Topics:
- Urban Futures
 - Dynamic Development
 - UK in the 21st Century
 - Resource Reliance
 - Fieldwork

Paper 3: Geographical Exploration

Duration: 1hr 30mins

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 30% of GCSE

- Topics:
- Synoptic Assessment
 - Geographical Skills
 - Decision Making Exercise

Author: Mr D Dunn



MR D DUNN
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA Geography, PGCE Secondary Geography, MA Applied Professional Studies Education

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE Geography

Mr Dunn is a passionate advocate of a knowledge-based geographical education and is excited at the prospect of designing and delivering a first-class geography curriculum for GCSE and A-level.



MISS H LOWES

BA (Hons) Geography, MA in Educational Leadership, PGCE in Secondary Geography

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield, University of Manchester

Examiner for GCSE Geography

In 2016, Miss Lowes won the Rex Walford Award from the Geographical Association, an award for outstanding, innovative curriculum design in Geography.



MR D RIDLER

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) Geography, MA Applied Professional Studies in Education, PGDE in Secondary Geography

Higher Education:
University of Sheffield

Examiner for GCSE Geography

Whilst completing his degree, Mr Ridler was particularly interested in socio-cultural geographies and the geographies of elections in the UK.



Music

GCSE Music provides pupils with the opportunity to advance their knowledge and understanding of the breadth of the subject, while enabling them to experience what it is to be a performer and composer. As such, it is perfect for those pupils who have a keen interest in creating and listening to different styles of music and who wish to broaden their experience and musical understanding.

Pupils choosing this course must be proficient in a musical instrument/voice. As a minimum, pupils must be working towards a performance level of Music Grade 3 by the end of Year 11.

When studying specific set works, pupils will gain an insight into the background of the composition and composer. Pupils will also build on their understanding of the musical elements and specific compositional devices. Through listening and evaluation of these significant works in the musical canon, pupils will gain the knowledge required to apply this to other examples and excel in the course.

In composition, this knowledge of key pieces and devices will then be applied to their own ideas, responding to a brief creatively as composers do, researching and refining creative ideas in a final project. They are able to write music in any style, playing to their strengths as musicians, while also developing a detailed understanding of genres they love.

The performance aspect of the course allows pupils to develop their technical ability on their chosen instrument, understanding what it is to develop a performance both as a soloist and as part of an ensemble. Over the two-year course, pupils will gain experience of presenting themselves in a variety of contexts, building confidence in this key life skill. Those pupils who choose GCSE Music will be expected to attend ensemble groups in the department such as bands, choirs and other groups, as well as contribute to showcases and shows. These groups and events will be of great benefit to their continued development of musicians, as well as deepening their understanding of the industry itself.

There are numerous studies that demonstrate the positive effects of studying music both academically and practically. This includes improving brain function and working memory; improving performance in other areas of the curriculum; developing pupils’ ability to express themselves through providing a creative outlet; and teaching pupils how to develop their creative ideas in a way that represents who they are. Music helps to develop numerous transferable skills, essential throughout life.

Knowledge and practical techniques in Music

Musicians need a firm understanding of the musical elements and their knowledge from Key Stage 3 will be built upon during their studies in Key Stage 4 in the following areas:

- Performance – both as a soloist and as part of an ensemble
- Composition – structuring original ideas and developing these using techniques
- Appraisal – analysis and evaluation of key features and devices and relating these to context and purpose
- Listening – identifying key features aurally

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Throughout the units in Key Stage 3, pupils have developed a strong understanding of the musical elements, and are familiar with studying specific pieces and composers, analysing key features and devices, building a foundation of musical vocabulary and knowledge in their evaluations. Our approach to quizzing and testing has ensured that pupils have retained vital terminology. Assessments have already prepared pupils for both the appraisal and coursework aspect of the GCSE. Mercia pupils have been given a range of performance opportunities throughout Key Stage 3, as well as during their academic music lessons. In composition, pupils have already successfully used a number of key compositional devices in their own pieces, developing their understanding of the compositional process. They know and appreciate the importance of structure, development of ideas and the use of musical elements, all factors that are crucial to success at GCSE.

A Level and Beyond

If Mercia pupils wish to take their study of music further, the academic and disciplinary knowledge developed in this qualification will provide a strong foundation for A Level. Music is an academically rigorous subject, while also allowing pupils to develop their creative and technical ability on their chosen instrument(s) and in compositions. This combination of creative and academic study is recognised by universities and provides a good step towards degrees in a wide range of subject areas including sciences, mathematics, languages, humanities and the arts.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: Edexcel Music (IMM0)

Unit 1: Performance

Recordings of performances, teacher marked and externally moderated

Duration: Minimum of 4 mins in total

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 30% of qualification

Content:

- One solo performance.
- One ensemble performance.

Requirments:

- Score, professional recording or written commentary.
- Recordings of performances
- Both Solo and Ensemble performances must be minimum of 1 minute long, combined performance time must be 4 minutes.
- Must be performed on instrument/voice. Lessons with a teacher are strongly recommended, with a performance level of Grade 3 by the end of Year 11

Unit 2: Composition

Recordings and scores of compositions, teacher marked and externally moderated

Duration: Minimum of 3 mins in total

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 30% of qualification

Content:

- Two compositions.
- One is set to a brief.
- One is free composition.

Requirements:

- Recording of both compositions.
- Notated scores (Sibelius), Track Sheet (GarageBand or Cubase) or written commentaries for both compositions.
- Together the compositions must add up to a minimum of 3 minutes (the minimum length for each composition is 1 minute).

Unit 3: Listening and Appraisal

Paper sat in exam conditions in Year 11

Duration: 1 hour 45 mins

Total Marks: 80

Weighting: 40% of qualification

Content:

- 8 set works from 4 Areas of Study (Instrumental Music, Vocal Music, Music for Stage and Screen and Fusions) and unfamiliar pieces related to them.
- Requirements:
- Section A: areas of study, dictation and unfamiliar pieces (68 marks). 6 questions related to 6 of the 8 set works. One short rhythm/melody dictation exercise and one question on an unfamiliar piece with a skeleton score.
 - Section B: extended response comparison between a set work and one unfamiliar piece (12 marks).

Author: Mrs R Jarvis



Areas of Study

Area of Study 1: Instrumental Music 1700 - 1820	Area of Study 2: Vocal Music	Area of Study 3: Music for Stage and Screen	Area of Study 4: Fusions
J.S Bach: 3rd movement from Brandenburg Concerto no. 5 in D major	Purcell: Music for a While	Schwartz: Defying Gravity from Wicked	Afro Celt Sound System: Release from the album 'Volume 2: Release'
Beethoven: 1st movement from Piano Sonata no.8 in C minor	Queen: Killer Queen	John Williams: Main title from Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope	Esperanza Spalding: Samba Em Preludio from the album 'Esperanza'



MRS R JARVIS
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BA Music, PGCE in Secondary Music

Higher Education:
University of Manchester

Mrs Jarvis is hugely passionate about teaching music and believes that every child has the right to an outstanding musical education at all levels of schooling.





Art and Design (Fine Art)

Completing GCSE Art will allow pupils to thoroughly explore their own interests and ideas. During the qualification, they will study a range of topics/themes, developing and refining their own artwork through research, experimentation and workshops. Pupils will be able to work in and experiment with drawing, painting, mixed-media, sculpture, printmaking and ceramics.

The duration of the course is two years and is 100% practical. For component 1, pupils will successfully create a portfolio of work based on a sustained project, for example, portraiture. Pupil work will develop over time in response to investigations around the subject area and the materials/mediums they experiment with. The creation of a final piece will illustrate how pupils realise their intentions through investigations. For component 2, pupils will independently choose a starting point/theme from the exam board's paper. They will use knowledge and techniques to produce a creative response within a 10 hour supervised time limit. This will take place after a preparatory period, thus allowing pupils to embark on the examination with confidence.

At Mercia, all pupils have an exceptional ability in evaluating their own work, which will be beneficial to the reflective element of the GCSE. Art is a valuable asset, as employers look for people who have the ability to think creatively and critically. The course allows pupils to be self-expressive and explore their own passions within art. Excellent artists are able to see the world in different ways, they use original thought and vision to create unique pieces. This process is highly stimulating, develops creativity and builds confidence.

Knowledge in Art

Mercia pupils already have specialist knowledge, having studied practical techniques, the work of related artists, movements, art styles and history. Pupils will be able to explain art work in detail, referring to the artist's choice of media, and drawing on knowledge about key characteristics and history of relevant art movements. This will be beneficial to the only written element needed for GCSE Art - annotation to explain art work.

Knowledge of the Formal Elements underpins all work produced at Key Stage 3. Pupils will be able to use the Formal Elements confidently, and be able to experiment and explore the elements in order to produce visually strong quality pieces of work. Mercia pupils understand composition, and this will help pupils understand why artists use composition to strengthen their art work.

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Mercia pupils have worked extremely hard during their art lessons. All pupils have created final pieces of work in response to a project (e.g. printmaking and architectural drawings) and have taken time and effort with the presentation of their work in sketchbooks. All of the knowledge and techniques covered have built towards the GCSE.

Drawing is a fundamental part of the Art GCSE. During Key Stage 3, pupils have developed a variety of drawing skills. This includes three-dimensional drawing and perspective drawing. Previous lessons have focused on exploring a wide range of techniques, preparing pupils for the next phase of learning.

GCSE Art is similar to how we have run projects previously, however these will be completed in more depth. Pupils will be encouraged to create their own ideas showing command of the assessment objectives.

A Level and Beyond

GCSE Art will give pupils the absolute confidence to aspire for a career in any art-related field. The knowledge and skills achieved through the course will provide a substantial platform for the progression of studying art at A Level or a further educational pathway. The creative arts industries are a very popular career choice and are a huge part of the economy. If pupils wish to study art at university, they will be required to study it at A level or equivalent. Some universities may wish for pupils to have a foundation diploma in art and design. Studying art can lead to powerful careers in architecture, design, art history and teaching.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE in Art and Design 8202

Component 1: Portfolio

A portfolio that in total shows explicit coverage of the 4 assessment objectives. It must include a sustained project evidencing the journey from initial engagement to the realisation of intentions and a selection of further work undertaken during the pupils' course of study – **AQA Exam Board**

Duration: No time limit

Total Marks: 96

Weighting: 60%

Component 2: Exam

Students respond to their chosen starting point from an externally set assignment paper relating to their subject title, evidencing coverage of all four assessment objectives – **AQA Exam Board**

Duration: Preparatory period followed by 10 hours of supervised time

Total Marks: 96

Weighting: 40%

Author: Miss A Roberts

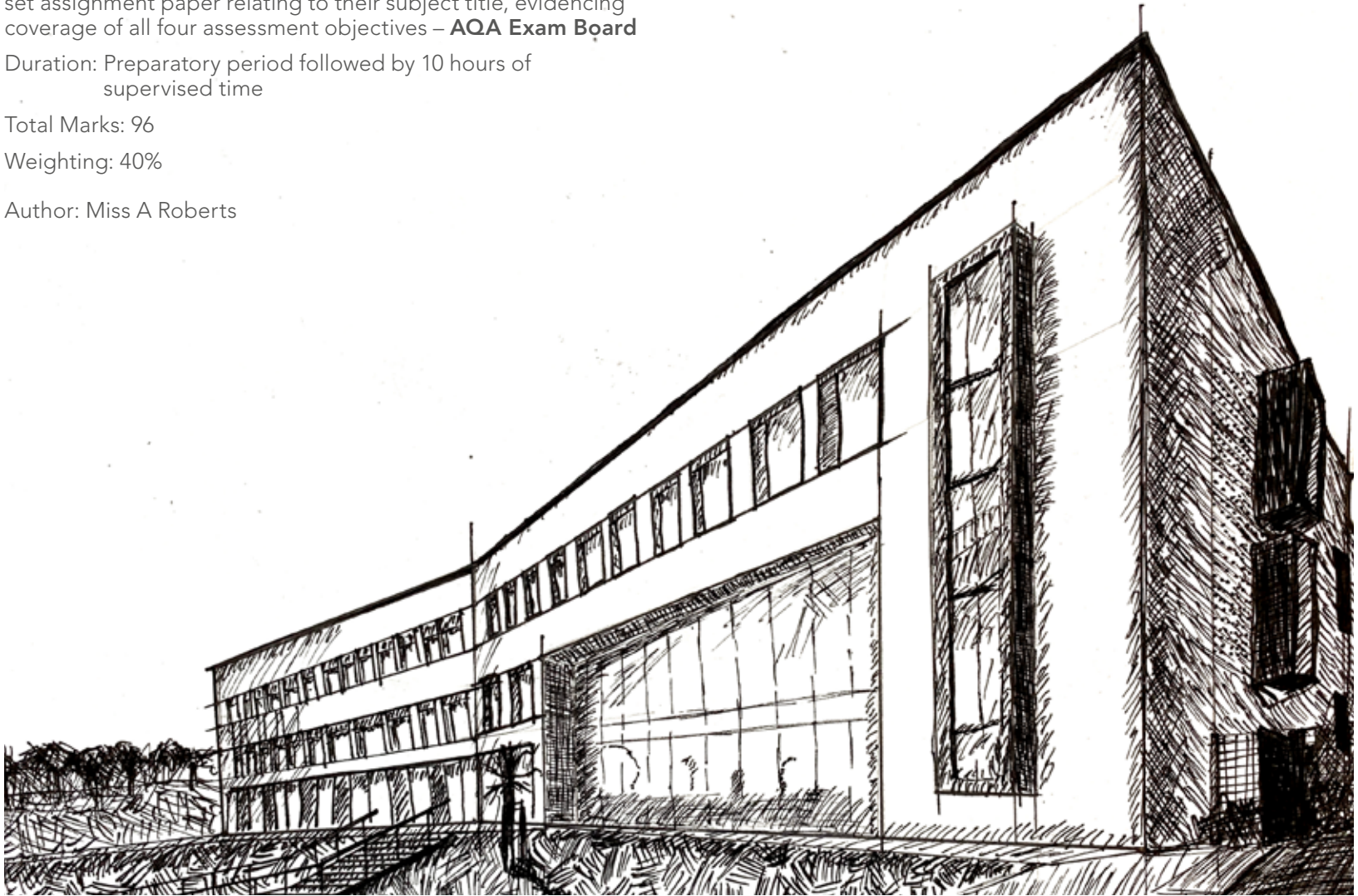


MISS A ROBERTS
TEACHER OF ART

Qualifications:
BA (hons) Fine Art, PGCE Art and Design

Higher Education:
Lancaster University

Miss Roberts' favourite movement is Pop Art, and she has gained expert knowledge in a wide variety of disciplines, including drawing, painting, sculpting, animation, sound and film.





Drama

The world around us is forever evolving and changing. Our response to that can be seen through the mediums of the creative arts such as; theatre, film, literature, music, art and countless more. As Brecht noted, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape the world.” The benefits of studying GCSE drama and theatre are significant. Using theatre as a tool to express thoughts and opinions, pupils will not only become accomplished dramatists, but also confident, articulate individuals who will be ready to flourish in modern society.

Analysis and evaluation are at the heart of this GSCE course. Pupils will not just study performing techniques, by the end of the course they will have excellent understanding and appreciation of theatre as a whole and will be able to comment on how and why they were influenced by it. GCSE dramatists will become directors, designers and performers in their own right. Due to the academic rigour of our school, Mercia pupils are well prepared to deliver mature and creative responses to theatre.

Practising live performances will be essential to success in the GCSE course. As such, the expectation is that pupils taking GCSE drama must play key roles in any school productions or showcases. Pupils are expected to be involved as either performers, assistant directors, lighting, costume, and sound design and stage management. Participating in these events is an excellent opportunity for pupils to advance their knowledge of theatre and show their commitment to the subject.

GCSE drama is an academic subject with a formal written examination. Pupils who choose drama will need to be confident, willing to perform in front of others, and able to commit to rehearsal time outside of lessons.

Knowledge and Performance Techniques in Drama

Our pupils already have a firm foundation of knowledge and key dramatic terminology. During this course, their knowledge and understanding will continue to grow. They will be taught knowledge of:

- Theatre Practitioners - Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud
- Styles of Theatre - Physical Theatre, Naturalism and Non-naturalism
- Theatre Makers and their specific techniques – performer’s movement and vocal techniques, directors and rehearsal techniques, production design such as costume, lighting, set and sound
- Analysis - examining performance techniques, dramatic conventions and styles of theatre in order to interpret it
- Evaluation - making judgement on their own and others use of performance or design techniques in terms of finding ways to better improve their work and of professional theatre to question and respond in a creative way

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

During the GCSE course, pupils will harness the knowledge and performance techniques they have studied and explored during Key Stage 3. Pupils have a firm understanding of essential performing techniques and dramatic conventions. Pupils have a strong understanding of dramatic terminology and vocabulary, they will apply this successfully in the written coursework and exam. In terms of performance techniques and skills, our pupils are now accustomed to performing in front of an audience and are becoming confident performers. Our assessments have already touched upon the level of commitment needed by pupils to prepare appropriately for a performance. This level of dedication will help pupils be very successful at GCSE level and beyond.

A Level and Beyond

Pupils would look to Theatre Studies at A Level to continue their study. The A level is seen positively by many universities as it strongly complements other subjects such as English and history. The academic and creative nature of the A Level enables pupils to practically explore new content, as well as develop their existing knowledge base. Pupils who have an A Level in Theatre Studies are most likely to complete degrees in theatre and film, performing arts, media and journalism and theatre/design.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: Eduqas GCSE Drama (C690QS)

Component 1: Devising Theatre

Non-exam assessment, internally assessed, externally moderated

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 40% of GCSE

Aim: Pupils participate in the creation, development and performance of a piece of devised theatre using techniques of an influential theatre practitioner or genre, in response to a stimulus set by exam board

Marked as: Pupils can choose to be marked as a performer or designer

- Work Produced:
- A realisation of their piece of devised theatre
 - A portfolio of supporting evidence
 - An evaluation of the final performance or design

Component 2: Performing from a Text

Non-exam assessment, externally assessed by a visiting examiner

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 20% of GCSE

Aim: Pupils will gain a deeper understanding of how to interpret text for a performance and realise artistic intentions. They will study and perform two extracts from the same performance text chosen by centre

Marked as: Pupils can choose to be marked as a performer or designer

- Work Produced:
- One performance using sections from both extracts
 - A written artistic intention of 250 words

Component 3: Interpreting Theatre

Assessed: Written Exam

Duration: 1 Hour 30 minutes

Total Marks: 60

Weighting: 40% of GCSE

Aim: Pupils demonstrate their understanding of how drama and theatre is developed and performed through the study of a set text and through responding to live theatre.

Section A: Pupils answer a series of questions from an unseen extract from the set text. 35 marks in total. A series of shorter questions ranging from 2-3 marks. 1 longer form question. (1 x 10 marks) 1 extended question. (1 x 15 marks)

Section B: Pupils are required to analyse and evaluate one piece of live theatre viewed during the course. (1 x 15 marks)

Author: Miss S Ward



MISS S WARD
TEACHER OF DRAMA

Qualifications:
BA Performing Arts,
PGCE in Secondary Drama

Higher Education:
University of Salford

Miss Ward has a passion for Physical and Musical Theatre. She is a trained singer and delights in leading school productions and showcase events.



BTEC First Award in Sport

The BTEC qualification in Sport provides an insight into the sport sector. The course incorporates key aspects of the industry, such as fitness testing and training for sport and exercise, practical sports performance, and sports leadership. The vocational nature of this course allows pupils to apply their knowledge through the experience of real-life situations.

Knowledge in Physical Education and Sport

Pupils at Mercia School already understand the importance of fitness as a performer in a variety of sports as well as the benefits of exercise for physical, social, and mental health and wellbeing. Physical activity has been the main priority throughout KS3, with pupils focusing on practical performance. In comparison, this course has a much greater emphasis on theoretical knowledge. Pupils will complete four units:

- Fitness for Sport and Exercise
- Practical Performance in Sport
- Applying the Principles of Personal Training
- Leading Sports Activities

A level/BTEC Level 3 and Beyond

If Mercia pupils are interested in taking their study of sport further, the subject specific knowledge and skills developed in this qualification will provide a strong foundation for academic or vocational study at level 3.

Sport is an increasingly popular career sector, with demand for higher level expertise in performance analysis, business management, and community engagement, as well as hands-on participation. Universities and colleges offer several qualifications in sport including sports administration and governance, coaching and physiotherapy, and sport and exercise science.

Course Specifics

Exam Board: Pearson BTEC Level 2 First Award in Sport
Unit 1 Fitness for Sport and Exercise

Type of Assessment: Onscreen Test under examination conditions
Duration: 1hr 15 min
Total Marks: 60
Weighting: 25% of qualification
Content:

- Components of fitness and principles of training
- Training methods
- Fitness testing and determining fitness levels

Unit 2 Practical Performance in Sport

Type of Assessment: Internal Assessment
– Project based assignment
Weighting: 25% of qualification
Content:

- Rules, regulations and scoring systems for selected sports
- Skills, techniques, and tactics in selected sports
- Review of sports performance

Unit 3 Applying the Principles of Personal Training

Type of Assessment: Internal Assessment
– Project based assignment
Weighting: 25% of qualification
Content:

- Design and implement a personal fitness training programme to achieve own goals and objectives
- Musculoskeletal system and cardiorespiratory system and the effects on the body during fitness training
- Review personal fitness training programme

Unit 6 Leading Sports Activities

Type of Assessment: Internal Assessment
– Project based assignment
Weighting: 25% of qualification
Content:

- Attributes associated with successful sports leadership
- Plan and lead a sports activity
- Review the planning and leading of sports activities

Grading and Understanding Accreditation

Internal Units

BTEC First pupils receive a grade for each internally assessed unit (Level 2 Distinction, Level 2 Merit, Level 2 Pass, Level 1 Pass or Unclassified). Each unit grade is awarded after all assignments for that unit have been completed. To achieve a Distinction or Distinction*, a learner must show outstanding knowledge and application across all aspects of each unit.

External Unit

The external unit is an online exam, completed in Year 10. The exam lasts 1 hour 15 minutes. Grade boundaries are set by the awarding organisation.

Author: Miss J Green



MISS J GREEN
CURRICULUM LEADER

Qualifications:
BSc (Hons) in Physical Education with QTS
Higher Education:
Sheffield Hallam University
Passionate about health and fitness, Miss Green has a desire for ensuring that all pupils make exceptional progress across the subject-range, but especially in physical education.



MR D WEBSTER

Qualifications:
BA PE Education, MA Education and Leadership, NPQH
Higher Education:
University of Nottingham
A keen sportsman, he relishes teamwork and is thrilled to lead Mercia School where every teacher is committed to ending social and educational inequality.



MISS C ROTHERY

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) in Dance, Sport and Physical Education, PGCE in Secondary Physical Education
Higher Education:
Liverpool Hope University
Miss Rothery is a very talented sportswoman in her own right. She has trialled for the England Netball Team and has been coached at the highest standard of the game for a number of years.



MR M GODDEN

Qualifications:
BA (Hons) History, PGDip in Advanced Sports Coaching Practice, PGCE in Secondary History
Higher Education:
University of Sheffield
A talented sportsman, Mr Godden is passionate about the vital role sport plays in daily life. He continues to play National League Hockey for Sheffield Hockey Club.



Religious Studies

The importance of Religious Studies (RS) cannot be understated. Mercia’s high-quality provision allows pupils to develop knowledge of world religions and to make sense of the cultures in the world around them. The course of study provokes challenging questions about meaning and purpose in life, beliefs about God, ultimate reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human.

The GCSE course will equip pupils with knowledge and understanding of a range of religions and world views, enabling them to develop their ideas, values and identity. Pupils will learn about the part that religion has to play in some of the key social and moral issues of the present day. This is rooted in the study of religious scripture, looking at the Old and New Testaments and the Qur’an. Excitingly, this provides pupils with the knowledge that they need to engage in theological discussion, and to move on to discuss the historical dimensions of religion in both the past and present.

The course will span the two years allocated and would be taught in a logical, coherent way. This will allow pupils to develop and refine a strong understanding of Islam, Christianity and each religion’s attitude to a wide range of social issues. The chosen course will feel very familiar to pupils, given their exposure to both Abrahamic faiths and other moral/ethical questions, notably during Year 9. Subject to decisions made by the incoming post holder, the likely course of study will consider the following:

Year 10: Study of Religions

- **Christianity: Beliefs and Teachings** - pupils will study the Christian view on the nature of God and key theological teachings including beliefs about creation, life after death, salvation and the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.
- **Christianity: Worship and Practices** - pupils will explore how Christians put their beliefs into practice through worship and prayer. The growth of the church, Christian mission and evangelism will also be studied.

- **Islam: Beliefs and Teachings** - pupils will study the Islamic view on the nature of God and key theological teachings including beliefs about life after death, angels, prophethood, the imamate and the Sunni/Shi’a divide.
- **Islam: Worship and Practices** - pupils will explore how Muslims put their beliefs into practice through the Five Pillars of Islam. Pupils will also examine beliefs about jihad and significant festivals.

Year 11: Thematic Studies

- **Relationships and Families** - pupils will consider the nature and purpose of the family in the 21st century, including religious attitudes towards divorce and remarriage.
- **Religion and Life** - pupils will examine the origins and value of the universe, the use and abuse of the environment including animal rights and attitudes towards issues of life and death, including abortion and euthanasia.
- **Religion, crime and punishment** - pupils will explore the causes of crime and the aims of punishment within the context of the British legal system. Pupils will also discuss different views on the debate around the death penalty and the effectiveness of prison as a form of punishment.
- **Religion, human rights and social justice** - pupils will consider the fair treatment of people including issues of religious freedom, prejudice, discrimination, the status and role of women, wealth and exploitation of the poor.

Knowledge in Religious Studies

During the GCSE, pupils will be challenged to deepen their already impressive knowledge of Islam and Christianity. If pupils understand the explicit teachings of each religion, they will achieve well. Pupils will be required to study religious teachings and relate them clearly to a wide range of philosophical, ethical and social issues. The stronger their knowledge of Islam and Christianity, the better. We have built this throughout Key Stage 3, especially in Year 9. The pupils are in an excellent position to achieve well.

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

Pupils have had an intellectually rigorous, chronologically designed RS curriculum during their Year 9 course of study. By the time they begin their GCSE course, pupils will have a strong understanding of world religion.

By building on their already excellent knowledge, pupils will understand the history, teaching and role in modern society of several religions. This means pupils have huge potential to succeed and achieve well in GCSE RS. Pupils have been challenged since they arrived at Mercia to write effectively, most notably in English and history. The skills learnt in these subjects will be directly transferrable to the demands of the RS course. We are exceedingly confident that pupils have been well-prepared for the rigour and demands of GCSE RS.

A Level and Beyond

A Level Religious Studies (RS) is a popular choice nationally. It is a strong option that combines well with most A Level options, perhaps most notably history, geography and English. Given that the A Level specification insists upon a deep knowledge of a world religion, and philosophy and ethics, RS would be a useful A Level in reading degrees in history, English or philosophy, politics and economics (PPE).

Course Specifics

Exam Board: AQA GCSE Religious Studies 8062

Paper 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices

Duration: 1hr 45 mins
Total Marks: 96 (plus 6 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
Weighting: 50% of GCSE
Section A: Christianity
Section B: Islam

Each religion has a common structure of two five-part questions of 1, 2, 4, 5, and 12 marks. Each religion is marked out of 48.

Paper 2: Thematic Studies

Duration: 1hr 45 mins
Total Marks: 96 (plus 6 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar)
Weighting: 50%
The paper has questions on 6 themes (Theme A-F); pupils answer 4 of them.

- Theme A - Relationships and Families
- Theme B - Religion and Life
- Theme E - Religion, crime and punishment
- Theme F - Religion, human rights and social justice

Paper 2 question structure: Each theme has a common structure of one five-part question of 1, 2, 4, 5 and 12 marks. Each theme is marked out of 24.

Please be aware RS will only be offered if we are able to recruit an excellent subject specialist.

Author: Mr J G Fisher





Computer Science

Computer Science is a challenging and exciting qualification that builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills established through the electives programme in Key Stage 3. The content of the GCSE will develop strong computational understanding and will engage pupils in thinking about real world applications. Pupils will use computational thinking skills to solve problems and design systems. They will develop their understanding of the power and limits of human and machine intelligence.

This course will be of particular interest to pupils who are passionate about computers and interested in problem solving and programming. **Experience of programming/coding out of school is essential to achieving success in this GCSE.** In addition, a strong understanding of mathematical and scientific concepts related to computer science would be advantageous. With regard to compatibility between home and school, it is worth noting that school computers use the Windows operating system.

Knowledge in Computer Science

In the past, ICT used to focus purely on computer literacy - teaching pupils, over and over again, how to word process, how to work a spreadsheet and how to use outdated systems no longer fit for our every-changing modern society. Computer Science is technically challenging. At Mercia School, we are excited to teach pupils the intricacies of computer science, information technology, and digital literacy. We will teach them how to code, and how to create their own programs; not just how to work a computer; but how a computer works, and how to make it work for them and our society. These are precisely the sort of skills which are often lacking in the jobs market right now. Mercia will provide pupils with outstanding knowledge in computer science which will allow them to thrive in this domain should they choose to.

How Pupils are prepared for GCSE

The GCSE course of study will enable pupils to develop key skills that prove their aptitude in digital information technology. Pupils will develop effective ways of working, such as project planning, the iterative design process, cyber security, and legal/ethical codes of conduct. We are hugely confident that pupils' experience at GCSE will allow them to flourish at A Level. Practical, creative and academic, A Level Computer Science builds on the skills and knowledge developed at GCSE, with an emphasis on problem solving using computers, computer programming and algorithms, and the mathematical skills such as Boolean algebra used to express computational laws and processes. Having gained significant programming skills at GCSE, pupils will be exposed to several programming paradigms and languages and the opportunity to develop their own computing project.

A Level and Beyond

It is our strong ambition that pupils may pursue both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Computer Science. Computing degrees allow professionals to specialise in specific areas, such as programming and cyber security. These concentrations allow graduates to fill high-demand, well remunerated positions. Some pupils may even earn doctorates in subjects like robotics and bioengineering – this level of ambition and aspiration is essential to our computer science offer at Mercia School.

The career opportunities for computer science graduates can be classified into seven categories:

- programming and software development
- information systems operation and management
- telecommunications and networking
- computer science research
- web and Internet
- graphics and multimedia
- training and support
- computer industry specialists

Course Specifics

Exam Board: OCR GCSE Computer Science (J277)

Paper 1: Computer Systems (non-calculator)

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins
Total Marks: 80 marks
Weighting: 50%

The paper has questions on the following:

- Systems architecture
- Memory and storage
- Computer networks, connections and protocols
- Network security
- Systems software
- Ethical, legal, cultural and environmental impacts of digital technology

Paper 1 question structure: All questions are mandatory. This paper consists of multiple choice questions, short response questions and extended response questions.

Paper 2: Computational thinking, algorithms and programming

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins
Total Marks: 80 marks
Weighting: 50%

The paper has questions on the following:

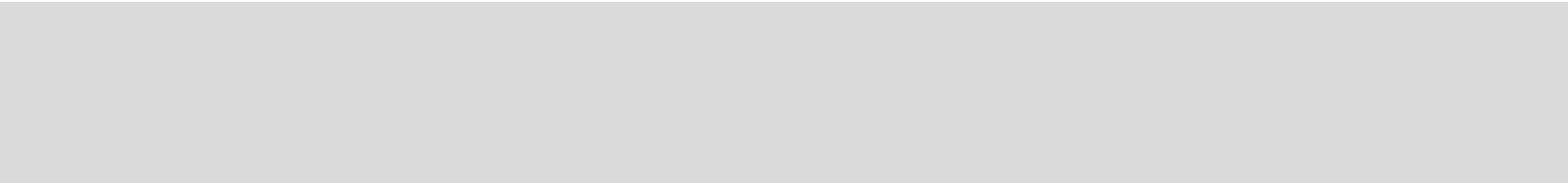
- Algorithms
- Programming fundamentals
- Producing robust programs
- Boolean logic
- Programming languages and Integrated Development Environments

Paper 2 question structure: All questions are mandatory. The paper is split in to Section A and B. In Section B, questions assessing students' ability to write or refine algorithms must be answered using either the OCR Exam Reference Language or the high-level programming language they are familiar with.

Please be aware Computer Science will only be offered if we are able to recruit an excellent subject specialist.

Author: Mr J G Fisher





Pupil Notes

Handwriting practice lines on page 42, consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Handwriting practice lines on page 43, consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

