



St Paul's Catholic School GCSE and BTEC Pathways 2025-26



Making decisions for a better future

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Dear Parent(s), Carer(s) and Students.

Please find enclosed details of the pathways available to your child from August 2025 as he/she prepares to enter the next stage of their learning. Ensuring students are on appropriate courses and studying options that are challenging and will meet or exceed their potential and prepare them for future life is crucial to this process. Often students find choosing subjects difficult. If this is the case, consider the following:

- seek advice and direction from the relevant subject teachers
- clarify if this is a subject your daughter will enjoy and is currently achieving well in
- don't choose a subject just because peers have
- Consider Post 16 and Post 18 option pathways and possible future careers.

The DFE and school measures students' attainment and progress using a student's best 8 qualification results. (A8 and Progress8)

The English Baccalaureate (EBACC) qualification formally recognises the value of 'Facilitating Subjects'. Increasingly, competitive universities are expecting that students will have studied at least two facilitating subjects at A Level. The facilitating subjects include maths, further maths, English literature, physics, biology, chemistry, geography, history and languages.

We aim to ensure every Year 8 student chooses to undertake a programme of study that is aspirational and engaging. The distinct pathways ensure each student has a clear journey through to post 16 study or employment. The number of subjects a student can choose to study is three. The rationale for this is threefold;

- 1) student well-being
- 2) students do not need 11 GCSEs
- 3) It is hoped that students will be able to secure stronger grades in the subjects they are studying.

This booklet aims to outline the 3 learning pathways with a detailed outline of all subjects to ensure that students have a comprehensive guide to support them with the demanding process of making their choices. In addition, there is a full transition programme in place; including a series of assemblies, signposted student support and the Pathways Evening in order to ensure good decisions can be made.

It is important to note that the Government's intention is to increase numbers of students studying a language. The ability to study a language up to GCSE or A Level puts young people in a privileged position in the workplace and offers many opportunities that would not be open to those without a language. I therefore encourage your child to continue studying the language they have been in Years 7 and 8.

I am confident you will find this booklet and the support in place helpful.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Conaghan', written in a cursive style.

Mrs S Conaghan

Principal

Key Stage 4 Qualifications

The combination choice of subjects and qualifications will have a significant impact on all subsequent choices at Key Stage 5 and beyond. It is essential that students choose courses and qualifications that suit their learning needs and career aspirations. The transition into Key Stage 4 is a very important staging post along the educational journey and requires careful thought and reflection.

The curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 meets the aims outlined by the Government through the provision of two main types of qualifications:

Business and Technology Education Council (BTECs). The BTEC qualifications have a strong vocation focus, whereby the theoretical elements of the course are frequently delivered through real life case studies. Additionally, there is a strong focus on placing the learning in context through trips, visits and, in some cases extended work experience. There are now also external exams within BTECs.

Qualification choices at Key Stage 4 will naturally flow through to the available choices at Key Stage 5 and beyond. The most competitive universities such as Oxbridge and Russell Group universities - a group of 24 universities which demand some of the highest entry criteria for degree courses:

<https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk> are less likely to accept Level 3 BTEC qualifications and may have a stronger focus on facilitating subjects. However, over 95% of universities do accept BTECs especially where they offer relevant subject areas (<http://university.which.co.uk/advice/can-you-get-into-university-if-youre-studying-btecs>). It is therefore critical that students and parents give time to thoroughly considering the wider context within which final subjects and qualification selections are made.

The aim is to personalise the curriculum to meet the needs of all students as far as possible. For instance, a student may demonstrate outstanding independent learning skills and a preference for more applied learning at Post 16 and beyond. Many more universities are now offering degrees designed for students who have come through a BTEC route and who wish to pursue a more applied or vocational career. In addition, a number of students explore the option of studying High Level Apprenticeships.

Alternatively, the increasingly rigorous GCSEs forms a solid foundation for a range of A Levels that require high level research and analytical skills fundamental to being successful on more traditional degree courses. All students will take either GCSEs or a combination of GCSEs with one or possibly two BTEC courses alongside. Whatever qualifications are selected, the most

important thing is that students enjoy their learning, consequently make outstanding progress throughout Key Stage 4 and that there is a pathway at Post 16 and beyond.

Key Stage 5: Sixth Form

Key Stage 5 is the next stage of the learning process; it builds on the knowledge and skills developed in Key Stage 4. The pathways established in Year 9 continue through into the Sixth Form. While students have the opportunity to review their pathway on the completion of their GCSEs, for many the next phase of the educational journey involves a further selection of courses and qualifications that is a little less complex. Students will have an even more defined pathway with a narrowing of their personal curriculum and an increase in the depth of their learning.

All students are expected by law to stay in education, training or employment until the age of 18 years. For most students this means staying in full time education at school or college or undertaking an apprenticeship-

<https://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/apprenticeships-223>

The Government policy is that students who fail to achieve at least a standard pass (Grade 4) in their GCSE English or Maths will be required to continue with these subjects post 16 until they do achieve a standard pass or higher.

St Paul's Sixth Form

While we recognise that there are many different settings within which to study Post 16, we endeavour to ensure that all students in Year 11 have a suitable option to continue their studies at St Paul's Sixth Form. We are delighted that a significant number our students chose to continue their education with us as well as a number of students from other schools. We offer a wide range of A Levels and BTEC qualifications.

Please see the Sixth Form Website which contains the Post 16 Prospectus, entrance criteria and course guides for more information: http://www.st-pauls.leicester.sch.uk/?page_id=8462

Illustration of Post 16 Choices-(these are subject to change year on year)

Geography	History	Product Design
Computer Science	English Language	Business
Business	Textile Design	Applied Science
Psychology	Sociology	Art
Spanish	Photography	Theology
Drama & Theatre Studies	Biology	Sport
Economics	Mathematics	Dance
English Literature	Further Mathematics	Chemistry
French	Creative and Digital Media(BTEC)	Physics

Option choices made at Key Stage 4 will have a significant impact on possible choices at Key Stage 5 and beyond. It is critical when students (with parents and carers) are making choices about their future careers that they consult widely and keep as many different routes open as possible.

If a student has a particular career in mind it is important to find out the pathway for that career by talking to subject teachers, other staff members, the Careers Advisor, family members and others whom are known to work in that career area. It is also very important to review online literature.

The best site for researching Higher Education is the University's College Applications System

(UCAS— website <http://wwwucas.com/>)

Through this website you can access a vast database of undergraduate degree information including subject and grade entry criteria. Another very useful website is the Guardian site (<http://careers.theguardian.com/>) with a substantial range of resources.

The transition from Year 8 into 9 is the perfect time to start the challenging, and at the same time, exciting processes of considering Higher Education and career options.

Careers

Year 9-11 students have the opportunity to use the Careers Education & Guidance (CEAG) provision within the school including our new platform **unifrog**. This is delivered through PSHEe lessons, assemblies, tutor time as well as specific Careers and Work Related Learning (WRL) activities. Mrs Mc Donagh is our dedicated Careers Coordinator who is responsible for CEAG across the year groups. One to one guidance interviews are available at key transition times i.e. Year 8 Pathways and Post 16 choices. A range of careers resources is being updated and developed to provide a quality careers area that is available to all students. Specialist CEAG is available to cater for students individual needs in conjunction with the SENDCo Miss Boyle and the Local Authority.

Career Education and Employability Skills

Career opportunities are explored and students practice their skills to investigate different types of qualifications. Students gain an understanding that different pathways can lead to the same goal. Students develop transitional skills becoming more aware that they are responsible for their own career progression and for developing the skills they need to achieve their goals. Issues such as diversity in the workplace, recognising and challenging stereotyped career roles, are discussed. Students develop research skills to find relevant job and Labour Market Information (LMI) and understand the importance of this, to subject and career choices.

Useful websites

www.nationalcareersweek.com

– tips on looking for work experience

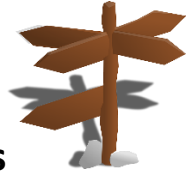
www.careersbox.co.uk

– useful for exploring different careers

<https://www.unifrog.org/>

explore further education and apprenticeships

<https://kudos.cascaid.co.uk>



Learning Pathways

Compulsory Subjects

All students study the following subjects:

- Mathematics
- English Language
- English Literature
- Science: either Combined Science or Triple-three separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)
- Religious Studies (GCSE)
- PE (Non Examined)
- PSHE (Non Examined)

To ensure the highest levels of attainment for all students some may study fewer GCSEs therefore allowing more time for teaching in GCSE English and Maths. This means that students may study between 5 and 10 GCSEs depending on what is appropriate. Bespoke student programmes of study will be discussed with students and parents on an individual basis.

Pathways

Pathway 1: GCSE with EBACC

We are aspirational for all students and we would expect that the vast majority of students would choose this route. This pathway best suits students who aspire to undertake degree courses at universities that are more likely to expect students have studied EBACC subjects at Key Stage 4 and some facilitating subjects (see page 4 of this booklet) at Key Stage 5.

In addition to the compulsory subjects listed above all GCSE EBACC students are required to take a Modern Foreign Language (either French or Spanish)*. Students currently studying one language outside school may in addition study a second language (French or Spanish). The ability to have a GCSE in a language and then perhaps an A Level would put your child at an advantage both in university applications as well as in the workplace. Students are also required to study one EBACC subject of either Geography, History and they may also take Computer Science. Students are able to choose one other option from the remaining block.

Pathway 2: GCSE with elements of EBACC

This pathway is suitable for students who want to also study other GCSEs and EBACC subjects but will not need to study Modern Foreign Languages*. Please note though the ability to have a GCSE in a language and then perhaps an A Level would put your child at an advantage both in university applications as well as in the workplace. It is recommended that students on Pathway 2 choose either Geography or History. Pathway 2 students be able to and will be encouraged to complete their A Levels at St Paul's and apply to university, a Higher Level Apprenticeship or employment.

Pathway 3: GCSE with Vocational programme

This pathway is suitable for students who would like the option of doing GCSE's alongside a Vocational programme which includes studying a course at Leicester College one day a week in Years 10 and 11. Students on Pathway 3 are likely to want to apply to a college to study post 16 but may choose to attend St Paul's Sixth Form if they meet the entrance criteria. Pathway 3 students will not need to study Modern Foreign Languages* OR Geography/History but may do so if they wish.

**Please note that some students may qualify for the EBACC if they successfully complete a MFL GCSE outside of school. A list of these languages is given on P40.*

Year 8 Option Pathways Grid

By the end of the selection process each student should have selected one subject from each of the option blocks listed –there is a paper copy of the option blocks on the next page where they can circle their choices. Students will complete the online options form with their tutor when they have their appointment with them.

Instructions for the grid:

- **All students must make three choices, one from each column**
- **To study for the EBacc students must choose Spanish and History/Geography**
- **All students on Pathway 1 or 2 must choose Geography and/or History.**
- **The Future Pathway's group is a group of pre-selected students. If another student really wants to choose this please speak to Mrs Kean/ Mrs Ankle**
- **Fashion & Textiles, Art Craft & Design and Photography are forbidden combinations due to the heavy coursework commitments of both courses.**
- **We advise against combining any Design Technology and Art due to the workload outside of lessons**
- **Future pathways counts as 2 options**

2025-2026 Year 8 Option Pathways Grid

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
All students on Pathway 1 or 2 must choose at least one of these subjects	History		History
	Geography	History	Geography
To study for the EBacc students must choose Spanish		Spanish	Spanish
Other option subjects where you have a remaining free block	Digital Information Technology	Computer Science	Sociology
	Product Design	Food and nutrition	Food and Nutrition
	Fashion and Textiles	Art, Craft and Design	Photography
	Drama	Business	Drama
	Sports Studies	Future pathways*	Future pathways*
	Dance		Music
	Business		

Digital Information Technology cannot be selected with Computer science.

Only one of Fashion and Textiles, Art Craft and Design and Photography can be selected.

Future pathways counts as 2 options, and therefore will have to be selected in option 2 and 3

**Students will be pre-selected.*

Timeline of the Selection Process

The Year 8 Pathways selection process is challenging and often students find it difficult to make their final decisions about courses and pathways. With the extensive support that is in place we are confident that students will make the right choices and will be confident as they make their transition into Year 9. The table below outlines the processes and support events in place for students and parents.

12th February	Options assembly	Introduction to the options process	Mrs Laidler and Mr Byrne to students
12th February for 4 weeks	Options support and advice programme during PSHE	Guided advice and support with tutors	Students and tutors
27 th February	Options Evening	Parents will see a presentation on the process and be able to talk to subject staff	Parents and students
w/b 3 rd March	Pathways and Careers discussions with tutors and Careers' adviser	Discussions with students about appropriate pathways and post 16 study/careers/apprenticeship plans	Students
w/b 3 rd March	Tutor support with students to make choices	Forms are submitted online	Tutors, Students and parents
28th March	Deadline for option forms to be submitted		

Final Option decisions

Parents and students are advised that we will endeavor to ensure all students gain access to the pathway that best suits them. However, we will work closely with parents and students ensuring that, in our professional judgement, the selections made are appropriate. **If a course has insufficient uptake then that course may not run.** If a student opts for a course that is withdrawn we will contact students and their parents to discuss alternatives.

The process of selecting options can be challenging. It is critical that students (and Parents/Carers) are confident in their choices as this will ensure a smooth transition to Year 9. Students will not be able to change their options in September 2023 as critical subject content will have already been covered and courses may be full.

My notes and questions