

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why do you recommend students take a creative or vocational course?

GCSE courses generally have their exams at the end of the course. Creative and vocational courses allow students the chance to spread out their assessments across the three years and reduce pressure at the end of the course. If a student would prefer not to take a creative or vocational course as one of their options, then that is fine.

Can I take both History and Geography?

Yes. Students must either take History or Geography as part of the balanced core curriculum. If students would like to take both subjects, then that is fine. Just select the second subject as one of the free course choices.

Can I study two languages?

If you wish to take both French and Spanish then this is possible with agreement from the Head of Department, Mrs Roberts at aroberts@hbk.acesmat.uk

What is Triple Science?

All students are required to study Combined Science as part of their core curriculum. This awards a double grade GCSE, for example, a 6-5. Combined Science is a combination of Physics, Chemistry and Biology. In Triple Science (also known as Single Sciences), students take three separate GCSEs in Physics, Chemistry and Biology and receive individual grades for each subject.

I am on the Green Pathway; do I have to take Triple Science?

We strongly recommend Triple Science as a subject for students on this Pathway as they have the mathematical skills and understanding to excel in this area. The analytical and problem-solving skills developed in Triple Science are useful in a wide range of careers. Should a student on the Green Pathway wish to look at swapping this for another subject then they should email coursechoices@hbk.acesmat.uk and request a guidance interview.

Do I have to take a Modern Foreign Language?

In line with government expectations of a broad and balanced curriculum we include a Modern Foreign Language as part of our core curriculum, and it is compulsory for most of our students. Students who have not studied a Modern Foreign Language at Key Stage 3, or who require additional support in Mathematics and English will follow the Pathway where this is not required. A study by the UCL Institute of Education shows that studying our core range of subjects have greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that they will stay on in full-time education. Sutton Trust research reveals that studying our core curriculum subjects can help improve a young person's performance in English and Mathematics. French and Spanish form part of our core curriculum and cannot be changed.

What does English Language and Literature mean?

All students study English as part of their core curriculum. English consists of two separate GCSEs with separate grades; these are English Language and English Literature.

When thinking about options, where can I go to get further help about careers for my child?

All students have an account with Unifrog. Please see pages 37-39 (Careers section) for further information.

Why are Computer Science, Triple Science and Astronomy not available in all Pathways?

These subjects require the ability to understand and apply more complex Mathematics as part of their content, including algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Students who find Mathematics more challenging tend not to achieve their full potential in these subjects. Should a student wish to take one of these subjects and it is not on their Pathway, then they will need to contact the Head of Department to discuss this (contact details are shown on the Subject Information pages). With the Head of Department agreement, students can opt for these courses.

I would like to study ASDAN or take Additional English and Mathematics – can I do this?

ASDAN is our alternative qualification for students who have not taken French or Spanish as part of their Key Stage 3 curriculum. Please email coursechoices@hbk.acesmat.uk if you would like to be considered for this course and you are on a different Pathway. Additional English and Mathematics provides students with 1 extra Mathematics and English lesson each week to build confidence and success in these core subjects. If you would like to be considered to join one of these groups, please discuss this with the Heads of Department in English and Mathematics in the first instance and then email your request to coursechoices@hbk.acesmat.uk

Why do I need to choose a reserve?

There are several reasons for this. Courses are offered subject to sufficient uptake (typically a minimum of 10 students) and availability of staffing (the number of groups for a subject is limited by the availability of staff). Options are all taught in blocks, with all lessons in each block taught at the same time. This means that there is a limit to the number of subject combinations which can be offered. After students make their choices, the subjects are grouped together to maximise the number of students gaining their preferred courses. However, this is not always possible and each year a small number of students will need to use their reserve choice (this typically affects 10 students).

What happens if I change my mind?

We hope that the information provided will allow you to make suitable choices. However, we recognise that things can change. We offer an opportunity in October of Year 9 for students to apply to change courses. Changes will be subject to group capacity, option Pathway and timetabling. For example, if you decide that BTEC Dance is not for you, then you would be able to swap it for DT or Catering. If you decide that History is not for you, then your swap would be limited to Geography as this is a preference (unless you are already taking Geography of course). From November of Year 9, course choices are fixed and cannot be changed.

Will I keep the same English, Mathematics and Science groups?

This is very unlikely; in Year 8 these subjects are taught in 3 blocks and mainly in mixed ability groups. In Year 9, these subjects are taught in 2 blocks. This means that all students will be in lessons with different members of the year group than in Year 8. In addition, English, RPE, French/Spanish, and Science groups are set from Year 9 onwards and are no longer taught in the same classes, so all students will be in different classes with different students from Year 8.

Will I keep the same form group?

Yes, you will keep the same form group no matter how your lessons are organised.

Who do I contact if I have any general queries?

Email the team at coursechoices@hbk.acesmat.uk and someone will get back to you within 48 hours.