



The Astley Cooper School

o Responsibility o Respect o Resilience

Preferences Booklet 2025



Use this Booklet to help you navigate through the Preferences process

Contents Page

Pages

The Process	3
Introduction	4
Frequently Asked Questions	5
GCSE Art	8
BTEC Business / GCSE Business	10
GCSE Computer Science	14
GCSE Design and Technology	16
GCSE English Language and Literature	18
GCSE Hospitality and Catering (Food Studies Technical Award)	20
GCSE Geography	22
GCSE History	24
GCSE Mathematics	26
GCSE Media Studies	28
GCSE Religious Studies: Philosophy, Ethics and Religion	30
GCSE Spanish	32
GCSE Physical Education	34
BTEC Dance (Performing Arts)	36
BTEC Drama (Performing Arts)	38
GCSE Music (Performing Arts)	40
GCSE Combined Science	42

The Process

Use this booklet along with the preference evening to research which subjects you would like to do. Read carefully through each section of this booklet. Even if you think you are sure you want to pick certain subjects, spend time considering the suitability of each subject and combinations of subjects.

Once fully satisfied, complete the Google form by the end of Thursday 6 March.

Google Form: (<https://forms.gle/HemuM4VyZt5TohtF6>)

The Preference Form requires you to select 5 choices with 3 main choices and 2 backup choices.

You must select 5 subject choices. Although we try to ensure that you get your top 3 choices, there are some occasions where we cannot secure this.

Introduction

Students in Year 9 have reached the stage where they will be choosing their preferences for GCSE or BTEC courses which they will follow for the next two years. Making the right choices for Key Stage 4 is important for your child as they work towards achieving the grades that will improve their life chances when they leave the Astley Cooper School and enable them to reach their full potential. These preferences, therefore, represent an important milestone.

This preference booklet contains important information about each of the GCSE and BTEC courses that we offer.

Compulsory	Choice of 3 subjects from below:	
English Language English Literature Mathematics Science (Counts for 2 GCSE) Relationships and Sex Education Core Philosophy Ethics and Religion Core Physical Education A choice between History OR Geography*	GCSE Art, Craft and Design BTEC Business/ GCSE Business GCSE Computer Science GCSE Design and Technology GCSE Geography GCSE History GCSE Hospitality and Catering (Food Studies / Technical Award)	GCSE Media Studies GCSE PE GCSE Spanish GCSE Religious Studies "Philosophy, Ethics and Religion" BTEC Dance Drama (Technical Award) GCSE Music

Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1: How should I choose my subjects?

Answer: You should choose your subjects based on the following criteria:

- 1) What do you enjoy?
- 2) What are you good at?
- 3) What do you think you might like to do after Year 11?

Use this guide plus discussions with subject teachers and your form tutors to make an informed decision.

Question 2: What is the difference between GCSE, BTEC and Technical qualifications?

Answer: GCSE are as the name suggests a “General certificate” whereas BTEC and Technical qualifications are more vocational in their approach to study and assessment. BTEC involves more independent project work assessed throughout the two years in comparison to GCSE where you are assessed at the end of the course.

Question 3: How will I be assessed?

Answer: Read each of the subject overviews to find out how you will be assessed. However, throughout the two years, you will be involved in several mock examinations to prepare for your finals.

Question 4: Will I get exactly what I pick?

Answer: Whilst we will do the best to give students their preferred options, there are sometimes timetable constraints that mean you will not get all of your preferences.

Question 5: Can I change my subjects once I have started?

Answer: Generally speaking, no. However, if in the first three weeks, you think a subject that you have picked is not for you, then please speak to Ms Noquet, Mr Siu or Mr Tilbury.

Question 6: How many hours a week will I study these subjects?

Answer: All lessons that you choose will be taught 5 times over 2 weeks.

Question 7: What if I'm not sure which subjects to pick?

Answer: use the criteria outlined in question 1 and if you still can't make up your mind speak to your tutor, Ms Noquet, Mr Siu or Mr Tilbury.

Subject overviews

Read each of the subject overviews to help you with your preferences.

Art, Craft & Design GCSE - Edexcel

Reasons for studying the subject

You may wish to study Art because you enjoy drawing, making things, and playing with ideas and materials to create imaginative art objects. The practical and creative skills you develop in this course could lead to a future career in areas such as fine art, architecture, graphic design and illustration, fashion and textile design, games design, film production and more. Whichever you choose, it has immense value as a GCSE subject where you develop transferable skills that you can take into any career or job.

What the course entails

You will carry out projects with broad themes that allow you to develop your own interests and artistic strengths. Using a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional materials, techniques and processes, you will learn to apply a creative approach to problem-solving. You will investigate how artists and designers from different times, cultures and societies have communicated meanings in their work. Drawing is at the heart of art, craft and design and, therefore, is a core element of the course. All project work will lead to final pieces that may take the form of painting, printed works, digital media or sculpture.

Coursework requirements

The course consists of two components: the Personal Portfolio (component 1), worth 60%, and an Externally Set Assignment (component 2), worth 40%. The Personal Portfolio is the body of work you produce in Year 10 and a mock exam project in Year 11. This will show the results of activities designed to encourage you to:

- Generate and develop ideas informed by primary and contextual sources
- Refine your ideas through experimenting with media, developing and applying skills
- Research, record, analyse and review your own and others' work select, create, realise and present personally developed final pieces

Examination requirements

The Externally Set Assignment is undertaken in January during Year 11. You will be required to develop your project in response to a broad theme. For example, 'Fragments' or 'Event', which will be set by the exam board. You will be provided with suggestions for possible starting points to help you develop your response and ideas for research. You will have approximately eight weeks to explore the theme, develop your practical work and plan a final piece. You will be expected to work more independently under the guidance of your teacher.

Homework requirements

Homework is timetabled once every two weeks. You will be expected to spend a minimum of one hour completing homework. Typical tasks include observational drawing, research, developing ideas or experimenting with different techniques.

Opportunities for further study

There are many things you can go on to do with a GCSE in Art and Design. At The Astley Cooper School, we offer courses in A Level Photography and Art & Design.

Miss R Padam - Subject Leader: Art

r.padam@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Business (Enterprise) BTEC Tech Award

Reasons for studying the subject

This qualification is for those who want to learn about the world of business. This qualification teaches students how to research, plan and pitch a business idea and then review the process. The course looks at what makes a successful entrepreneur and students will explore the different businesses that entrepreneurs have set up. Students will then create an idea for a business and then plan and pitch this idea for their business.

Examination requirements

The course is split into three units. Two of these are coursework and one unit is an externally marked exam.

Unit 1: Exploring Enterprises (30%) - This unit is coursework assessed.

In this unit, students will:

- Examine the characteristics of enterprises
- Explore how market research helps enterprises meet customer needs and understand competitor behaviour
- Investigate the factors that contribute to the success of an enterprise

Unit 2: Planning for and Pitching an Enterprise (30%) This unit is coursework assessed.

In this unit, students will:

- Explore ideas and plan for a micro-enterprise activity
- Pitch a micro-enterprise activity
- Review own pitch for a micro-enterprise activity

Unit 3: Promotion and Finance for Enterprise (40%)

In this unit, students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of elements of promotion and financial records Interpret and use promotional and financial information about a given enterprise
- Make connections between different factors influencing a given enterprise
- Be able to advise and provide recommendations to a given enterprise on ways to improve its performance

Unit 3 is a two-hour external assessment under supervised conditions.

Homework requirements

Homework will be set throughout the course, usually between one to two hours per two-week cycle. Opportunities for further study

Mr Mahmood - Subject Leader: Business

r.dannell@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Business GCSE - Edexcel

Reasons for studying the subject

This dynamic qualification guides students studying the GCSE business course on the essential aspects of Business Studies. Students will learn how to research, plan, and analyse business ideas. Students will also look at what makes an entrepreneur successful and analyse different types of businesses.

Examination Requirements

The course is split into two themes which both have an internally assessed exam.

Theme 1: Investigating small businesses

Written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes

50% of the qualification 90 marks

Content overview

- Topic 1.1 Enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Topic 1.2 Spotting a business opportunity
- Topic 1.3 Putting a business idea into practice
- Topic 1.4 Making the business effective
- Topic 1.5 Understanding external influences on business

Assessment overview

The paper is divided into three sections:

Section A: 35 marks

Section B: 30 marks

Section C: 25 marks.

Theme 2: Building a business

Written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes

50% of the qualification

Content overview

- Topic 2.1 Growing the business
- Topic 2.2 Making marketing decisions
- Topic 2.3 Making operational decisions
- Topic 2.4 Making financial decisions
- Topic 2.5 Making human resource decisions

Assessment overview

The paper is divided into three sections:

Section A: 35 marks

Section B: 30 marks

Section C: 25 marks.

Homework requirements

Homework will be set throughout the course, usually between one to two hours per two-week cycle. Opportunities for further study

Mr Mahmood - Subject Leader: Business

r.dannell@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Computer Science GCSE - OCR

Reasons for studying the subject

The qualification will build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established through the Computer Science elements of the Key Stage 3 programme of study. The content has been designed not only to allow for a solid basis of understanding but to engage learners and get them thinking about real-world applications. Students who want to go on to higher study and employment in the field of computer science will find it provides a superb stepping stone.

Examination Requirements

Two written papers (50% each of the overall course):

J277/01: Computer systems

This is assessed by a one hour and 30 minutes written paper, which has a mixture of short and long answer questions.

This component covers:

Systems Architecture; Memory; Storage; Wired and wireless networks; Network topologies, protocols and layers; System security; System software; Ethical, legal, cultural and environmental concerns

J277/02: Computational thinking, algorithms and programming

This is assessed by a one hour and 30 minutes written paper, which has a mixture of short and long answer questions, some of which require students to write program code.

This component covers:

Algorithms; Programming Fundamentals; Producing Robust Programs; Boolean Logic; Programming Languages and Integrated Development Environments

Homework requirements

Throughout the course, homework will be set between one to two hours per two-week cycle.

Opportunities for further study

The OCR GCSE Computing qualification is the ideal foundation for the A Level Computer Science course that the school also runs.

Dr M Ryde Associate Assistant Headteacher/Computer Science Lead
m.ryde@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

GCSE Design and Technology - AQA

Reasons for studying this subject

GCSE Design and Technology is a perfect starting block for those who enjoy designing and making activities. During the course, you will gain the knowledge and understanding of problem-solving, developing ideas and producing solutions. The course will give you many experiences in using modern-day methods of production as well as building general workshop skills. These skills not only form the foundations for progressing on to higher education and careers in design but can be used to build on general life skills.

What the course entails

In the first year of GCSE Design & Technology, you will develop a working knowledge and understanding of a range of specified materials and their working properties- (papers and boards, natural and manufactured timbers, metals and alloys, polymers, textiles.) This will be learnt through a range of mini projects with set outcomes and time scales to prepare you for your final major project. You will also learn about a variety of machinery and practices used within a workshop environment. This is to embed the skills and knowledge for you to answer the written exam paper and begin the NEA, enabling you to produce a quality product made from your chosen materials. Through specific theory lessons, you will practise exam techniques in answering a range of questions on the topics studied.

During Year 11 you will complete your NEA securing 50% of your final grade before external moderation. You will also develop an understanding and gain confidence in exam techniques and practise exam skills required for the written paper.

You will be required to purchase an A3 plastic wallet to keep your work in and an A4 arch lever folder and A4 dividers for your theory work. There will also be a contribution towards the cost of materials (amount dependent on your project size).

Assessment

The course is assessed in two areas:

Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) - One practical activity which involves designing and making. This will be presented as a Google Slide document, approximately 20/30 pages, to showcase the research, designing, testing, making and evaluation skills.

(Coursework starting 1st June, this is released by AQA and will be a new theme each year.)

50% of the total GCSE.

Exam- 1 paper - There will be a two-hour written exam in the summer of Year 11. This exam counts for 50% of your overall grade. 15% of the exam will be testing maths and science skills related to your subject area).

<u>NEA Assessment Criteria (50% of overall GCSE Grade)</u>	Written Paper (50% of overall GCSE Grade)
<p>A01 - Identifying, investigate & outline design possibilities:</p> <p>Section A - Identifying & Investigating design possibilities Section B - Producing a design brief & specification</p> <p>A02 - Design & make prototypes that are fit for purpose:</p> <p>Section C - Generating design ideas Section D - Developing design ideas Section E - Realising design ideas</p> <p>A03 - Analyse & Evaluate:</p> <p>Section F - Analysing & evaluating</p>	<p>Section A – Core technical principles (20 marks)</p> <p>A mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions assessing a breadth of technical knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>Section B – Specialist technical principles (30 marks)</p> <p>Several short answer questions (2-5 marks) and one extended response to assess a more in-depth knowledge of technical principles.</p> <p>Section C – Designing and making principles (50 marks)</p> <p>A mixture of short answer and extended response questions.</p>

Homework requirements

You will be expected to do about one hour of homework per week, this will include; theory, research, planning, designing & evaluation

Miss K. Dareve - Subject Leader: Design & Technology

k.dareve@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

English Literature & Language

GCSE - AQA

The importance of studying the subject

GCSE English Language equips you with the tools to become confident readers and writers. You will experience a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and develop the skills to analyse and interpret these texts independently. You will also focus on developing your confidence and ability to write in a variety of writing styles, from persuasive writing to creative fiction. Speaking and listening skills will still be important, though these will be assessed and reported separately to your GCSE.

GCSE English Literature involves the study of a diverse range of texts: Shakespeare, classic novels, poetry and drama. In studying these, you will understand the themes, ideas, characters, relationships and language, as well as the enduring appeal of these texts today.

What are the qualifications?

At the end of Year 11, your child will leave with two separate GCSEs in English: English Literature and English Language.

How would it help me in future?

English is a fundamental, core demand of all employers and further education institutions. It is invaluable for your future, no matter what career you are aiming for. A good understanding of the English language, and the ability to produce these texts effectively, will help you every day – and benefit all your other GCSE subjects too!

Whatever you end up doing, English is a must-have subject for sixth form, college, university, work and - most importantly - life!

How will my work be assessed?

English Language:

- Paper 1 exam (50% of marks) involves reading **Literature prose fiction** and writing to describe/narrate.
- Paper 2 exam (50% of marks) involves **reading non-fiction and writing** to present a viewpoint.

- A **Speaking and Listening** assessment, students will write a speech and perform it in a lesson to their peers. Students are expected to ask questions on the topics of others' speech.

English Literature:

- Paper 1 exam (40% of marks) involves studying Shakespeare (**Macbeth**) and a 19th-century novel (**A Christmas Carol**).
- Paper 2 exam (60% of marks) involves the study of a **Poetry Anthology**, a modern drama text (**An Inspector Calls**) and other **unseen poetry**.

All assessments now occur through a terminal exam at the end of Year 11. Don't worry though; we'll make sure you have plenty of practice over the two years leading up to this to ensure you are confident with taking the exams at the end of the course.

Will all my studies be in school?

Home learning is an important part of the course. Homework is set via Seneca and your class teacher may set supplementary homework tasks as well. You will be encouraged to familiarise yourself with a diverse range of literature including non-fiction. We truly believe that the more you read outside of school, the more you will succeed in school. You will also be expected to complete regular, relevant personal studies and develop revision techniques for assessments to monitor your progress.

How will it be similar to what I have done in Year 9?

Everything you have been working on in year 9 is in preparation for the demands of GCSE study so nothing should be a shock to you. We are always looking for opportunities to take students to the theatre to enable you to see the texts being brought to life. There will be internal and external opportunities to ensure the best outcomes at the end of KS4.

Mr. L. Footman - Subject Leader: English

l.footman@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Hospitality and Catering Technical Award - Eduqas

Reasons for studying this subject

You will use a variety of practical cooking techniques to prepare and cook food healthily while gaining an understanding of the hospitality and catering industry. The course allows you to release your creative flair by modifying recipes to improve their nutritional profile and sensory properties. It also allows you to develop vital life skills that enable you to feed yourself and others affordably and nutritiously, now and later in life. It promotes independent thinking, planning and organisational skills.

Catering students will be expected to bring their ingredients and products for practical-based lessons, usually weekly and therefore must be well organised.

What the course entails

A great deal of the course will be taught through practical sessions (approximately four out of every five hours) to ensure a greater understanding of the working characteristics of food materials. You will develop knowledge and understanding of the functional properties and chemical processes as well as the nutritional content of food and drink. Using current media information and various media techniques, you will investigate and debate the relationship between diet, nutrition and health, including the physiological and psychological effects of poor diet and health. You will enjoy exploring food through its sensory qualities whilst at the same time using food safety and hygiene considerations to manage your environment.

Assessment requirements

The course is examined as follows:

One on-screen examination - 40% of the final grade

One controlled assessment task - 60% of the final grade

The grades available in this course are Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction *

Opportunities for further study

Students taking Hospitality and Catering can develop their skills further in the Sixth Form environment. The course provides an ideal foundation if you wish to study Food Science and Nutrition at Level 3. It also prepares you for study towards degrees with a focus on Food and Nutrition Science, Food Manufacturing, and Food Biotechnology and links in well with Sports Science degrees. Of course, this Technical Award also prepares you if you are looking for apprenticeships in the catering industry and qualifies you for a range of catering courses very well, due to its practical nature.

The Food Industry and the area of Health and Nutrition are at the forefront of our society today. Opportunities in this field are continually growing, as is the need to address the issue of obesity and other diet-related medical issues. Career opportunities can include Dietician, Midwife, General Practice Nurse, Nutritionist, and Paediatrician.

In addition, should creativity be your strength, your career path may include Food Journalism and Photography; Food Demonstration; Retail Sales and Marketing or a rewarding career in Food Product Development (Food Technologist). Other possibilities include social work, Teaching or Environmental Health Officer. You could also combine catering with science, media or psychology for some interesting career paths.

Miss G Hodges - Subject Leader: Food Studies

g.hodges@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Geography GCSE – Edexcel A

Reasons for studying the subject

Geography excites and stimulates by enabling you to understand the world we live in and investigate the issues facing human beings at a local, national and global level. In studying Geography, you also acquire skills essential for the workplace such as the ability to analyse different sources of information (e.g. graphs, maps and satellite imagery) investigative and reporting skills through fieldwork on a topical, local issue using independent research, ICT skills and statistical analysis the development of both literacy and numeracy skills

What this course entails

	Unit Title	Unit Content
1	The Physical Environment	Topic 1: The changing landscapes of the UK (geology, coastal and river processes) Topic 2: Weather hazards and climate change Topic 3: Ecosystems, biodiversity and management
2	The Human Environment	Topic 4: Changing cities Topic 5: Global development Topic 6: Resource management
3	Geographical Investigations: Fieldwork and UK Challenges	Topic 7: Geographical investigations – fieldwork · Topic 8: Geographical investigations – UK challenges Topic 8:

Examination requirements

Each unit is assessed with a written examination of one and a half hours.

Papers 1 and 2 are each worth 37.5% of the GCSE and Paper 3 the remaining 25%.

Assessment in Paper 3 is supported with two field trips. A day at Brighton Beach to sample and measure a coastal environment and a second day in London around the Brick Lane area, to undertake urban fieldwork through land use and environmental sampling methods.

Homework requirements

Homework is an integral part of the course and is set at least once a week. Homework aims to encourage you to be an independent learner and to make use of the wealth of information available to you via libraries, local and national organisations and the internet. Practice exam questions and revision are also given as homework to help you develop your examination skills.

Opportunities for further study

You can continue from GCSE to the successful A-level Geography course in our Sixth Form.

Miss S Frame - Subject Leader: Geography

s.frame@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

History GCSE – Edexcel

Reasons to study the subject

History is a qualification which is highly valued by employers and universities. Analytical skills are invaluable in many jobs, and the ability to analyse and then prioritise information is vital to decision-making. You will learn to develop your own opinions, which helps you to respect others and keep an open mind. You can make sense of current affairs and why the world is the way it is today. It is an investment in your future – research shows that those who study History tend to have higher job prospects than those who do not. It encourages you to be independent, to think critically, to develop and express your opinions and to develop skills in argument and debate.

You will develop cultural awareness by enabling you to understand different cultures and societies and why people act in the way they do. Most importantly, it enables you to recognise, challenge and stand up against things which aren't right in today's society, such as discrimination, hatred, oppression and prejudice. George Santayana famously said: 'Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.' Sadly, this is still true in today's world.

Lastly, history is interesting, looking at how people lived in the past, and how and why things changed. History is a department that loves a trip, and there will be more opportunities for you to travel across Europe, and even further if you continue into A-Level.

Careers for history students include journalism, historian, archaeologist, law, education, sociology, politics, police and criminology, museum and heritage sector and many more. Remember though, all careers, especially if you want to progress into management roles, will require you to make decisions based on evidence, and the possible outcomes of those decisions. History is the best subject to help you learn these skills.

What the course entails

This is an exciting and interesting course which will help you develop and extend your knowledge of different events, periods and societies. The course will help you to develop as an independent learner and as a critical and reflective thinker. It will enable you to develop the ability to ask relevant questions about the past, to investigate issues critically and to make valid historical claims by using a range of sources in their historical context. Skills will be developed in historical interpretations, significance and reaching supported judgements

The GCSE consists of three units:

Unit	Focus	Unit Content	Examinations
1	Thematic study and historic environmental	Medicine in Britain, c1250 - present The British sector of the Western Front, 1914-18: injuries, treatment and the trenches.	One hour 15 mins (30% of course)
2	Period Study and British Depth Study	Early Elizabethan England, 1558-88 British America, 1713-83, empire and revolution	One hour 45 mins (40% of course)
3	Modern Depth Study	Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39	One hour 20 mins (30% of course)

Homework Requirements

History is a literacy-based subject; homework focuses mainly on written work, research and the completion of practice exam questions. In addition, you will need to develop your source skills and an emphasis is placed upon this in homework.

Opportunities for further Study

Studying GCSE History leads on to both A Level History, and A Level Politics, which you can study in our Sixth Form. You can go from there to university to study a variety of historical degrees.

Mrs R Waters - Subject Leader: Humanities

r.waters@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Mathematics GCSE - Edexcel

The importance of studying Mathematics

The course provides a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and employment, to give students the appropriate mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding to help them progress to a full range of courses in further and higher education. This includes Level 3 mathematics courses as well as Level 3 and undergraduate courses in other disciplines such as biology, geography and psychology, where the understanding and application of mathematics are crucial.

Qualification aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the Pearson Edexcel Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Mathematics are to enable students to:

- Develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts
- Acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems
- Reason mathematically, make deductions and inferences and draw conclusions
- Comprehend, interpret and communicate mathematical information in a variety of forms appropriate to the information and context.

Qualification at a glance

The assessments will cover:

- 1) Number
- 2) Algebra
- 3) Ratio, proportion and rates of change
- 4) Geometry and measures
- 5) Probability
- 6) Statistics

There are two tiers of study:

Foundation tier: grades 1 to 5.

Higher tier: grades 4 to 9 (grade 3 allowed).

There are three papers to complete at the end of the two years:

Paper 1 - Non-calculator - 1.5 hours (80 marks)

Paper 2 - Calculator - 1.5 hours (80 marks)

Paper 3 - Calculator - 1.5 hours (80 marks)

Overview

The table below illustrates the topic areas covered in this qualification and the topic area weightings for the assessment of the Foundation tier and the assessment of the Higher tier.

Tier	Topic area	Weighting
Foundation	Number	22 - 28%
	Algebra	17 - 23%
	Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	22 - 28%
	Geometry and Measures	12 - 18%
	Statistics & Probability	12 - 18%
Higher	Number	12 - 18%
	Algebra	27 - 33%
	Ratio, Proportion and Rates of change	17 - 23%
	Geometry and Measures	17 - 23%
	Statistics & Probability	12 - 18%

Progression from GCSE

This qualification prepares students for progression to further study of mathematics at AS and A level, and also to the study of Core Mathematics. These Level 3 qualifications prepare students for a variety of further progression routes. Students should seek advice about which of these qualifications best prepares them for their intended progression routes. GCSE Mathematics is a requirement for progression to a wide range of courses at Level 3. Students are expected to continue with their study of GCSE Mathematics after the age of 16 if they have not achieved the qualification at Key Stage 4.

Miss S. Fernando - Subject Leader: Mathematics

s.fernando@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Media Studies GCSE – WJEC Eduqas

Reasons for studying the subject

Media Studies is a great choice for you because of the discussions and you will enjoy hearing others' opinions on media texts and issues. You will find researching and analysing the set products interesting and particularly enjoy learning about the historical context and how much society and the media have changed. Finding out about the historical context of the Quality Street advert and the James Bond franchise will help you understand how representations changed over time. You will also learn a lot from studying the viewpoints of different newspapers.

Media has become the biggest employment industry in the world and you will be surprised how much you and your family engage with it daily. We offer this subject at A Level and over 100 universities offer it as a degree, alongside exciting apprenticeship offers. Every lesson is different and engaging and the topic is very modern and relevant to your life and the world you live in.

Qualification at a glance

The course is split into three units. Two of these are a written exam and one unit is coursework.

Component 1: Exploring the Media Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes 40% of qualification

Section A: Exploring Media Language and Representation

This section assesses media language and representation of two of the following print media forms: magazines, marketing (film posters), newspapers, or print advertisements. There are two questions in this section: • one question assessing media language about one set product (reference to relevant contexts may be required) • one two-part question assessing representation about one set product and one unseen resource in the same media form. Part (a) is based on media contexts. Part (b) requires comparison through an extended response.

Section B: Exploring Media Industries and Audiences This section assesses two of the following media forms: film, newspapers, radio, and video games. It includes: • one stepped question on media industries • one stepped question on audiences.

Component 2: Understanding Media Forms and Products Written examination: 1 hour 30 minutes 30% of qualification

This component assesses all areas of the theoretical framework and contexts of the media about television and music.

Section A: Television • one question on either media language or representation, which will be based on an extract from one of the set television programme episodes to be viewed in the examination (reference to relevant contexts may be required) • one question on media industries, audiences or media contexts.

Section B: Music (music videos and online media) • one question on either media language or representation (a reference to relevant contexts may be required) • one question on media industries, audiences or media contexts.

Component 3: Creating Media Products Non-exam assessment 30% of qualification

Individual media production for an intended audience in response to a choice of briefs set by WJEC, applying knowledge and understanding of media language and representation.

Opportunities for further study

Students can use this qualification to study A Level Media Studies at Sixth Form. Apply for a Media Studies degree at university or apply for an apprenticeship with companies such as Google or Formula One on a fantastic starting salary.

Ms Z Smith - Subject Leader: Media Studies

z.smith@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

GCSE Religious Studies – AQA

Reasons for studying the subject

The GCSE Religious Studies specification offers a range of faith-specific options and a variety of relevant and contemporary themes, ensuring you have a diverse choice of intriguing subjects to explore and discuss. You will learn how religion, philosophy and ethics form the basis of our culture, and develop valuable skills that will help prepare you for further study. Included in this specification are familiar topics that you will have engaged with at KS3 as well as inspiring new ones, meaning that the subject is enjoyable to teach and engaging for students of all abilities.

What the course entails

This is an exciting and interesting course which will help you develop and extend your knowledge of different world faiths and ethical issues which have an impact on society. The course will help you to develop as an independent learner and as a critical and reflective thinker. It will enable you to develop the ability to ask relevant questions about society, to investigate issues critically and to give developed opinions on ethical and religious issues.

The GCSE consists of two units:

Unit	Focus	Unit Content
1	Beliefs, teachings and practices of two world religions	Christianity and Islam
2	Four ethical study themes	Theme A: Relationships and families Theme B: Religion and life Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment

Assessment requirements

There are two written examinations, one on each unit. Each examination is one hour and 45 minutes long and is worth 50% of your GCSE. There is no coursework to complete.

Opportunities for further Study

This GCSE provides the knowledge base to move on to an A level in Philosophy and Ethics, a course you can study in our Sixth Form.

Mr H Shah - Subject Leader: RS

h.shah@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Spanish GCSE – AQA

Reasons for studying the subject

It is a compulsory course for the English Baccalaureate. In addition, you may wish to work in a sector where languages are useful e.g. the travel industry, in law or business or working in an international company. Alternatively, you may wish to use your linguistic skills whilst on holiday, not only in Spain but also in Central and South America. Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world.

What the course entails

There are four disciplines: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing.

They are taught through three areas of study. These are:

- Identity and culture
- Local, national, international and global areas of interest
- Current and future study and employment

Examination requirements

This course is linear and culminates in a terminal examination assessing all four skill areas: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing at either the Foundation tier (grades 5 - 1) or Higher tier (grades 9 - 4). All skills will be equally weighted at 25%. Students must take all four question papers at the same tier and in the same year.

Homework requirements:

Homework will be set at least once a week. It may be to learn vocabulary and grammar, complete a comprehension exercise, compose a descriptive writing piece or prepare and practise a speaking task.

Miss T Babouri - Subject Leader: MFL

t.babouri@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Physical Education GCSE - Edexcel

Reasons for studying the subject

This course is designed for students who have a passion for Physical Education and are considering continuing it during further education or as a career.

- You will understand the benefits of living a healthy and active lifestyle
- You will learn how the body works and responds to exercise
- You will learn how to analyse and evaluate performance
- You will develop your practical sports ability

What the course entails

- Developing your skills across a range of practical team and individual sports
- Social - cultural influence Health, fitness and well-being Introduction to anatomy and physiology
- Anatomy & Physiology
- Movement analysis
- Physical Training
- Analysis of performance (10% of GCSE)

Examination requirements

Paper 1 - Applied Anatomy & Physiology, movement analysis, physical training, use of data - one hour and 15 minutes (30% of GCSE)

Paper 2 - Sports Psychology, socio-cultural influences, health, fitness and well-being, use of data – one hour and 15 minutes (30% of GCSE)

Opportunities for further study

This course would enable you to go on and study any of the following:

A Level Physical Education. BTEC National Certificate in Sport. Various National Governing Body Coaching Awards. We currently offer BTEC Sport in our Sixth Form, studied as either a double (two A level) or triple award (three A level equivalent).

Mr M Gatenby - Subject Leader: PE

m.gatenby@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Dance - BTEC Level 1/2 Technical Award in Performing Arts - Edexcel

Reasons for studying the subject

This subject is ideal for those of you who have some background or interest in dance. It is designed to provide an engaging and stimulating introduction to the world of performing arts. The course is mainly practical and covers a range of dance styles. We use class assessment as well as assessment in performances and written coursework. The course will build up your confidence as a dancer and as a performer, as well as develop your knowledge of dance within the industry.

What the course entails

This is a three-component qualification:

Component 1: Exploring the Performing Arts

You will look at the industry and explore professional dance repertoire, styles, roles and how practitioners create their work. You will create a blog, journal, written or PowerPoint presentation on your research findings. (30%).

Component 2: Developing Skills and Techniques in the Performing Arts

You will study a range of styles such as Contemporary, Jazz and Street Dance, review your development, and showcase a performance piece in the Dance Show (30%).

The above components will be studied and assessed internally (60%).

Component 3: Responding to a Brief

You will work as part of a group to create a dance performance in response to a brief /stimulus, which is externally assessed (40%).

Coursework requirements

Each unit consists of practical work which is supported by written assignments. Practical work is assessed internally through either class assessment or performance-based assessment. Assessment is individual but candidates will be assessed performing in groups. 40% of the course is externally assessed and this consists of a group choreography lasting 7-10 minutes, and a choreographic log book. Written work and performances will be completed in controlled conditions before being externally assessed.

Examination requirements

There are three written controlled assessments in Year 11.

Homework requirements

Homework will consist of completing written assignments for the logbooks and rehearsing practical work. Students will be expected to catch up on work that has been missed due to absences. As this course relies heavily on coursework you must have excellent attendance to lessons and hand in work on time.

Opportunities for further study

This course prepares you for further education in the subject either with BTEC level 3 Extended Certificate in Performing Arts or with A-level study in our Sixth Form. It can also provide basic knowledge before commencing vocational training at Performing Arts College.

Mrs H Harley - Dance and Lead Teacher of Performing Arts

h.harley@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

Drama - Level 1/2 Vocational Award in Performing Arts (Technical Award) - Eduqas

Reasons for studying the subject

You will enjoy this course if you are interested in Drama as it is designed to provide an engaging and stimulating introduction to the world of performing arts. You will gather the subject knowledge to know how the magic of theatre is created and gain the opportunity to utilise the school's specialist professional equipment as a major part of your units of work. You will gain an understanding of different career paths and roles within the Performing Arts industry. The course is highly practical and offers you the opportunity to regularly demonstrate your skills in live situations.

What the course entails

This is a three-component qualification:

Unit 1: Performing

You will learn the skills and techniques needed to produce a successful performance of an existing work, such as an extract from a play or show.

Unit 2: Creating

You will learn how to create and refine your own original work in performing arts, through devised drama based upon a stimulus

Unit 3: Performing Arts in Practice

You will learn about areas of the performing arts industry that need to be considered when responding to a commission, and will consider these when coming up with and pitching your own idea.

Coursework requirements

For Units 1 and 2 you will undertake projects (not exams) in response to briefs. The project for each Unit will take 10 hours and be worth 30% of your qualification. For each one you will be given a scenario and will need to undertake a number of tasks.

In Unit 3 you will undertake another project (no exam) in response to a brief, which will take 20 hours and be worth 40% of your qualification. You will be given a scenario and will need to undertake a number of tasks.

Examination requirements

There are no final exams in this qualification, however some elements of the projects mentioned above will need to be completed in exam conditions.

Homework requirements

Homework will be mainly based around the development of practical skills and knowledge such as logging new information learned and having evidence of practical work for tasks you have completed. Each unit will require project-based work such as research, design, planning and technical performance evaluations.

Opportunities for further study

This course is excellent preparation for BTEC Performing Arts Level 3 or A Level Drama/Theatre Studies which are offered in our Sixth Form or a career in the theatre or television industry. It can also provide basic knowledge before commencing vocational training.

Mr D Roberts - Lead Drama Teacher

d.roberts@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

GCSE Music - Edquas

GCSE Music is about making and listening to music. Students will be introduced to a wide variety of musical styles, from popular music to jazz, and film music to western classical music. They will also be given opportunities to use music technology such as sequencing, mixing and recording.

Course Outline

Component 1: Performing (30%)

Two performances; one solo performance and one ensemble performance Together, both performances must last for a total minimum of 4 minutes and be at grade 3 standard

Component 2: Composing (30%)

Two compositions; one set to a brief and one free composition. Together, both compositions must last for a total of 3 minutes

Component 3: Appraising (40%)

Four areas of study are explored with two set works. This component is assessed in an exam (1hr 15mins)

Areas of Study

The GCSE Music course is broken down into 4 areas of study, with 2 set works.

Musical forms and devices, (*Badinerie* by J.S.Bach for Flute and String

Orchestra with Harpsichord. Final movement, Orchestral Suite No.2 in B minor, BWV 1067)

Music for ensemble

Film Music

Popular Music (Africa Toto)

Assessment

The course is 100% externally assessed and consists of one written paper and two non-examined assessment components (1 and 2). Students must submit their non-examined assessment (NEA) and complete the exam in May/June of Year 11.

Career Progression

The music industry is a big business and offers a huge range of opportunities in many different careers. GCSE Music also offers a wealth of transferable skills relevant to ongoing musical and non-musical study as well as to future career development. These include literacy, critical thinking, social skills and teamwork, leadership and communication, and time management and organisational skills.

Homework

Homework will be set once a week to learn vocabulary, and music theory, as well as to practice writing essay-style questions, pieces, and writing compositions.

Mr. A.O'Grady - Subject Leader: Science

a.ogrady@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

GCSE Combined Science Trilogy - AQA

GCSE Combined Science (Trilogy) is a double GCSE taken by all of the students. It builds on the Key Stage 3 curriculum and covers the National Curriculum Programme of Study for Science at Key Stage 4. It encourages students to explore, explain, theorise and model in science and develops a critical approach to scientific evidence. At The Astley Cooper School students start studying towards their GCSE Combined Science in Year 9.

Course Outline

Students will study the three disciplines of Science; Biology, Chemistry and Physics which are then broken down into topics.

Biology	Chemistry	Physics
1. Cell biology	1. Atomic structure and the properties of matter	1. Energy
2. Organisation	2. Bonding, structure, and the periodic table	2. Electricity
3. Infection and response	3. Quantitative chemistry	3. Particle model of matter
4. Bioenergetics	4. Chemical changes	4. Atomic structure
5. Homeostasis and response	5. Energy changes	5. Forces
6. Inheritance, variation and evolution	6. The rate and extent of chemical change	6. Waves
7. Ecology	7. Organic chemistry	7. Magnetism and electromagnetism
	8. Chemical analysis	
	9. Chemistry of the atmosphere	
	10. Using resources	

Assessment

The course is 100% externally assessed and consists of one written paper and two non-examined assessment components (1 and 2). Students must submit their non-examined assessment (NEA) and complete the exam in May/June of Year 11. The qualification consists of **six equally-weighted** written examination papers at either Foundation tier or Higher tier.

Each paper is 1 hour and 15 minutes long, each worth 70 marks.

Paper 1	Paper 2
Biology	Biology
Chemistry	Chemistry
Physics	Physics

The qualification will be externally graded and certificated and students will receive an award worth two GCSE's. It will consist of two identical or adjacent grades from 9 to 1 so 9-9; 9-8; 8-8, 8-7, 7-7 down to 1-1.

There are 21 required practical's that are delivered throughout the course. There will be questions relating to these practical's on the written exam papers.

Career Progression

GCSE Core Science gives you a good grounding in Science. Success in Combined Science can provide access to AS/A2 Science courses, including Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Applied Science and Psychology. In the long term, if you decide to pursue your scientific studies, it can lead to an almost limitless number of job opportunities. Highly qualified scientists are very much in demand and their skills are required in many jobs.

If you are seeking to further your study of Biology, Chemistry or Physics at A-level, this course also helps form an essential basis when looking for jobs in this field such as medicine, paramedic, chemical engineer, sports physiotherapist, forensic researcher and medical illustrator to name just a few.

Homework

Homework aims to encourage you to be an independent learner and to consolidate your understanding of in school lessons. In Science, homework will be set on a weekly basis through our online platform Seneca. Additional homework may also be set and include GCSEpod, spellings, research tasks, revision and exam questions.

Miss L White - Subject Leader: Science

l.white@astleycooper.herts.sch.uk

