

Name: _____

Form: _____



UPPER SCHOOL CURRICULUM 2021–2023

CHOOSING YOUR OPTIONS

Key dates

Thursday 11 February 6 pm to 7:30 pm	Key stage 4 curriculum evening
Monday 25 January to Friday 12 February	Guidance interviews
Thursday 25 February 4 pm to 7 pm	Year 9 parents' consultation evening
Monday 1 March	Electronic options form deadline

The KS4 curriculum

This is your guide to the 2021–2023 key stage 4 curriculum at Comberton Village College. We hope that you find the information interesting, useful and accessible.

The curriculum has undergone very significant changes over recent years, resulting in a much more varied range of choices to suit every pupil's interests and learning styles. It has been the intention of all staff and governors at the college to produce a curriculum which is interesting, exciting and relevant, and it is our hope and belief that we have achieved this. As the curriculum offers more choices, it also has more complexities, and so the following points will be of some help in outlining the structure of the curriculum and some key considerations.

Examination subjects all pupils take

All pupils take GCSEs in the following subjects:

- English language
- English literature
- mathematics
- science

Non-examination subjects all pupils take

Personal social and health education (PSHE)

Whilst years 10 and 11 do not have weekly timetabled PSHE lessons, it nonetheless continues to be an important part of school life that the welfare of pupils is maintained and developed. As such, key stage 4 pupils are given a range of opportunities to engage with education centred around citizenship; careers and futures; and their personal and social health including relationships and sex education.

At points throughout their GCSE years, pupils will have a series of lessons in which they will study a particular PSHE topic. These tend to have a focus on options, career pathways and the application process for moving to their next step – be it further education or otherwise.

To augment this, we are also fortunate to receive a number of visiting speakers who present pupils with stimulating talks, aimed at educating pupils on a broad range of issues, from the risks of alcohol and drugs, to positive mental wellbeing and self-esteem.

Pastoral teams also play a vital role in upholding our values and ensuring that pupils receive a fully-rounded education, exploring pertinent issues in a tutor group context.

Computing

Our key stage 4 computing curriculum is delivered through English, mathematics and science. However, those students who wish to, may also choose to study a GCSE in computer science and/or iMedia.

Religious education

Pupils will have three conference days in year 10 as part of their religious education. On these days, pupils studying religion, philosophy and ethics as a GCSE option may take part in separate activities related to their studies.

Physical education

In core PE, pupils will be given a number of choices and they will pursue these during the whole of year 10. They will choose again for year 11. More information can be found in the [curriculum area of the school website](#).

Subjects pupils choose

All pupils must make option choices as described on the following page. They must choose at least one modern foreign language, except in exceptional circumstances*.

Modern foreign languages

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, it is important that pupils continue to study a foreign language at a level appropriate with their abilities and interest. Therefore, pupils must take at least one of the options in the languages box on the options form unless there are exceptional circumstances. These options offer a range of languages:

- GCSE French
- GCSE Spanish
- GCSE German

Pupils may choose to take two language GCSEs if appropriate.

*An alternative curriculum

For the vast majority of pupils at Comberton, it will be appropriate that they take the full range of core subjects and four options. However, for a small minority, it may be appropriate that they take a slightly reduced number of subjects.

Some pupils also benefit from spending extra time on their literacy to ensure that they are fully prepared for exams and to enable them to achieve the best possible results. Pupils for whom this is recommended will receive a letter inviting them to study English plus and should discuss this at the guidance interview.

Reserve choices

It is assumed that there will be a sufficient number of pupils wishing to take up each option course. However, in the event of insufficient support, certain courses may have to be reorganised. This may mean that some pupils may have to study their reserve choice.

If a particular option choice is oversubscribed, decisions about who should study the course will be taken by the relevant teachers and senior staff. These decisions will be based on teacher assessment, along with consideration of any other factors we believe relevant in determining a student's suitability for a particular course. Behaviour record and past effort may be relevant.

Full information about the subjects you can choose

In the KS4 curriculum section of the Comberton Village College website, you will find full information about each subject, including:

- what you will study in the subject
- the skills you will develop
- what homework you will get
- the syllabus you will follow
- how the course is assessed
- what jobs or further courses of study the option might lead to.

You can find this section on the website at the address below. Alternatively, scan the QR code with your mobile device.

<https://www.combertonvc.org/curriculum/ks4curriculum.php>

Each subject's page is also linked in the table overleaf.



Options summary

MFL or English plus

Pupils must choose at least one modern foreign language except in exceptional circumstances.

- [GCSE Spanish](#)
- [GCSE French](#)
- [GCSE German](#)
- English plus (by invitation only)



Science

Pupils must choose either separate sciences or combined science.

- [Separate sciences](#): GCSE biology, GCSE chemistry and GCSE physics
- [GCSE combined science](#)



Options

Pupils must choose **two** options (if planning to study separate sciences) or **three** options (if planning to study combined science). Pupils are generally able to study a second foreign language as an option.

- [GCSE geography](#)
- [GCSE history](#)
- [GCSE computer science](#)
- [GCSE Spanish](#)
- [GCSE French](#)
- [GCSE German](#)
- [GCSE art and design](#)
- [GCSE drama](#)
- [GCSE graphic communication](#)
- [GCSE music](#)
- [GCSE photography](#)
- [L1/2 creative iMedia](#)
- [GCSE business studies](#)
- [GCSE religion, philosophy and ethics](#)
- [GCSE physical education or L1/2 sport](#)
- [L1/2 engineering design](#)
- [L1/2 hospitality and catering](#)
- [L1/2 health and social care](#)
- [L1/2 constructing the built environment](#)

All pupils will need to also choose a reserve option. This will only be used if the chosen combination of subjects proves impossible to allocate.



After-school option

Pupils may choose **one** of these after-school options. There is no requirement to do so.

- [GCSE art and design](#)
- [GCSE economics](#)
- [GCSE psychology](#)
- [GCSE Spanish](#)
- [GCSE statistics](#)

Varied costs apply to these courses. Please check subject pages on the website for more details. Where this may be a concern, please discuss this with the college: some support may be possible.

Your notes

MFL or English plus	
Initial thoughts	After guidance interview



Science	
Initial thoughts	After guidance interview



Options	
Initial thoughts	After guidance interview
1st choice option:	1st choice option:
2nd choice option:	2nd choice option:
3rd choice option (if choosing combined science):	3rd choice option (if choosing combined science):
Reserve option:	Reserve option:



After-school option	
Initial thoughts	After guidance interview

Frequently asked questions

Why do I have to make choices?

That is a really good question! As you made your way through key stage 3, you studied all the available subjects, but now we ask you to choose some to stop studying, and we offer you a couple of subjects you haven't previously studied.

The reason is that we want you to concentrate on subjects that are:

- vital to your future – this is why we all continue to study maths, science, PE and English, and
- interesting and relevant to your future: you have the chance to 'specialise' a little bit.

As you travel through key stage 4, you may decide to study further by taking A levels and then you will be asked to 'specialise' even more.

How do I tell you what my choices are?

Following the guidance interviews and curriculum evening, parents will be sent a link to an online form. You will state what your options are using this form by the deadline of Monday 1 March 2021.

Pupils will need to log in to their school account when accessing this form. This is so that the options choices are linked to the correct pupil.

If a pupil submits the form more than once, we will look at the most recent submission when allocating choices.

What is the core curriculum that all pupils take in years 10 and 11?

All pupils continue to study English, mathematics, science and PE through timetabled lessons. RPE, work-related learning, citizenship and personal development also form part of the curriculum through collapsed days, cross-curricular links and other experiences (such as work experience).

What are the core qualifications?

Most pupils will take [GCSEs in English language and English literature](#), [GCSE mathematics](#) and GCSEs in science.

How many option choices do I have?

Pupils must first choose their language (or English plus option if invited), then their science option, then either 2 or 3 further options, depending on whether they choose to study separate or combined sciences.

How much time does each option get?

Each single option choice is taken as three lessons each week (usually one single and one double period).

Are there any after-school options?

Yes – these are GCSEs in Spanish, art, economics, psychology and statistics. In order to take one of these options you may have to meet certain entry requirements because of the extra work involved.

Can I take more than one after-school option?

We usually don't recommend this. You will need to allow enough time in your week to complete homework and other independent learning tasks for your in-school subjects. Some pupils can manage to add one after-school option to these subjects, but we don't recommend that you try to take two of these.

Is PE in the core or an option?

Both. All pupils have four periods of PE lessons per fortnight. Within that time, it is possible to follow a range of PE activities. It is also possible to opt for a qualification in PE (where you will either study GCSE PE or BTEC sport) as one of your option choices if you want to.

How do I know what subjects to take?

There is lots of guidance available and you will have a guidance interview to discuss your option choices. Read the options brochure, look at the subject pages on the website, come to the curriculum evening and talk to your teachers and parents! As a general rule, choose the subjects which you like most and work hardest in, whilst aiming to keep a broad range.

What happens after I have submitted my online form?

All the options are collected and everybody's option choices are entered into a computer. We then use this to work out the 'best fit' model for the classes. We try to get everybody's first choice to fit together. However, every year we have to speak to a few pupils because of a few things:

- perhaps not enough people want an option so we cannot make a class
- perhaps too many people want an option and we haven't got enough teachers to put on an extra class
- perhaps somebody has made option choices that are inappropriate for them.

We do try our best to allocate all pupils their requested options choices. If we have to speak to you, we will ask if we can use your reserve choice in place of one of the first four choices, so we don't just do it without letting you know.

What is the difference between GCSEs and the other courses offered (L1/2 courses with longer names)?

GCSEs are qualifications where the full range of grades (from 9 to 1) are achievable. Other courses are equivalent to GCSEs but have other titles such as Certificate or Award or Diploma. Some of these can be offered at level 1 (GCSE grades 1 to 3) or level 2 (GCSE grades 4 to 9). However, all of the courses we offer at Comberton are available at **both** levels and so are suitable for all levels of pupil.

How are GCSEs graded these days?

Gone are the letters A to G: we now talk about 9 to 1 (nine to one). The diagram shows how these compare to the old letter system.

New grade system	Old grade system
9	
8	A*
7	A
6	B
5	C
4	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U