



**Alderbrook School
& Sixth Form**

AMBITION | BRAVERY | KINDNESS

**Year 9
Key Stage 4**

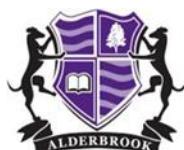
OPTIONS BOOKLET

FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

2026 - 2028

ALDERBROOK





Art & Design

Q. Is there an exam.

A. Yes, there is an exam and it runs for 10 hours over two days of school time. The artists know what they are doing because they have responded, planned and prepared for it 10 weeks earlier than the exam days. There is an exam Question/theme.

Q. What is the weighting for final marks and grade? Or how do I get a grade?

A. **60%** of your mark is **coursework**, started in year 10.

40% of your mark is the **exam**. Done in year 11

There are 4 areas that make up assessment. All equal in Marks.

A01- artist research

A02- development of ideas

A03- drawing skills

A04- outcomes.

Q. Do I need to be good at drawing?

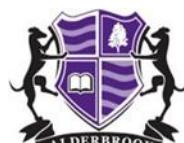
A. Yes or at least to have a passion and improve your skills. We are a coursework subject and there are deadlines and key skills and capabilities to cover. You can do 3D work too. We don't have revision. Same for Art and Photography. You need to be doing regular homework. Some students study because they enjoy subject, some because they are good at it and can get a great grade through skills and developing creativity, others because it is crucial to their potential career.

Q. What do I need Art for?

A. For any career base in Design, Architecture, Fashion and Digital media/film/games design you need in the first instance Art and second Photography, refer back to the careers/option video.

Q. What does the work look like?

A. Please see the video and careers video. There is an example for both Art and Photography. Plenty of examples in school too. Art requires; Research and analysis (written component), drawing and art work, showing progression independence and variety of media/competences and an ability to present a body of work or Portfolio.



Q. Do I need to write?

A. Yes, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the marks are annotated or written analysis relating and explaining and this is for both Art and photography.

NB: there is an art pack available to purchase for all students to support independent study and homework tasks.

Art & Design Photography

Q. Is there an exam.

A. Yes, there is an exam and it runs for 10 hours over two days of school time. The Photographers know what they are doing because they have responded, planned and prepared for it 10 weeks earlier than the exam days. There is an exam Question/theme.

Q. What is the weighting for final marks and grade? Or how do I get a grade?

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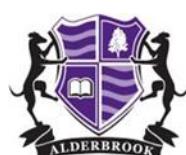


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Photography needs technical skill with the kit and IT skills with editing. 100% digital. We also analyze images, annotate and respond to works of art, present and create, so imagination is important.

Do I need a camera?

No, school has the equipment, however if you do develop a real passion then to have your own and add to your work is great! Roughly 1 in 4 opted students have their own at home, most use cameras to support study. There is a compulsory Pack for all photographers £35.

Do I need to write?

Yes, about ¼ of the marks are annotated or written analysis relating and explaining and this is for both Art and photography.

NB: there is an art pack available to purchase for all students to support independent study and homework tasks.

Business GCSE



Q. Do I need to be good at maths?

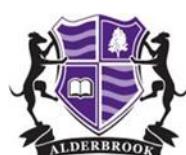
A. In the course there is the need to be able to calculate percentages, ratios, revenue, profits, cash flow forecasts and average rate of return. You also need to interpret and use quantitative data in business contexts to support, inform and justify business decisions. You need to be able to take the skills learnt in your maths lessons and transfer them to Business.

Q. Is there a lot of writing involved in the course?

A. Yes, you will be working towards an exam assessed via 100% exam and therefore lots of preparation is needed to enable you to complete these exams. The longest mark question is 12 marks.

Q. Is there any coursework? Answer

A. No, it is 100% exam.



Q. 4) How useful will this course be for my future?

A. Business is a very useful subject to study because at some point in your working life you will either be an entrepreneur, working for another business, a manager of people or a consumer/customer. Business will enable you to understand how the different areas of business work and how it is affected by external issues such as Government actions, the economy and issues of use operating in a much more global way.

Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) – now known as King's Trust



Q. Can anyone do the CoPE - King's Trust course?

A. Students who we believe can best benefit from it will be invited.

Q. What is CoPE - King's Trust?

A. King's Trust is a nationally recognised provider of courses for young people. The qualification offers imaginative ways of accrediting young people's activities. It promotes, and allows centres to record, a wide range of personal qualities, abilities, and achievements of young people, as well as introducing them to new activities and challenges.

Q. Do you have to take an exam?

A. There is no exam for the CoPE - King's Trust course as it is all coursework based. Students will produce a portfolio of coursework to evidence and demonstrate their achievements.

Computer Science – J277



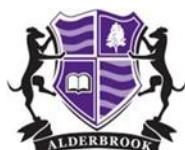
Q. What is the difference between Information Technology and Computer Science?

A. The main difference is Computer Science is a traditional GCSE and part of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) award. Computer Science allows students to develop computational thinking and problem skills, which is why we recommend students should be a high ability maths set.

Whereas in Information Technology students develop skills on how to use software like databases, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word and other programs. Utilising these skills by working on a project, R013, usually associated with a business.

Q. Is it all programming in Computer Science?

A. Computer Science looks at the hardware in a computer and in a network, to see how all devices can communicate and how processes are carried out on any computer system. Students are



expected to develop computational thinking skills, this is all to do with how a problem can be broken down and solved by a program. This is what will be assessed, not just student's ability to code.

Q. Is all of the work done on the computer?

A. The course will be assessed with two traditional exams at the end of year 11, with two papers component 1 and component 2 each worth 50% of the course. The students will develop computational thinking skills by using a programming language called Python in year 9.



Dance

Q. Do I need to have taken dance lessons outside of school in order to study Dance at Alderbrook?

A. No, all you need is an interest and passion in the subject and the willingness to challenge your physical and mental capacity.

Q. Is there any written work?

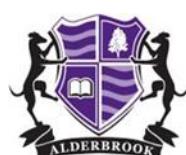
A. Yes, you will have 5 lessons of dance in your two week timetable. Two of those lessons will be a theory lesson. You have to know and understand the theory content in order to fulfil the requirements of each component.

Q. Can't I just do Dance as part of P.E GCSE?

A. Activity versus Subject: Whilst Dance does exist in P.E GCSE, it is taught as a physical activity. BTEC Dance however, is taught as an artistic and creative subject. BTEC Dance will challenge you physically and you will develop skills such as strength, flexibility, coordination etc. but you will also learn and experience how to engage with creativity and emotional expression particularly, to topical issues that impact on humanity.

Q. What styles of dance will I learn?

A. You will study and learn a range of styles such as Contemporary, Streetdance, Jazz and fusion styles.



Design & Technology

Q. Do I need to have good practical skills to do well in Design and Technology?



A. No, all you need is an interest in the subject and the willingness to learn new skills. Furthermore, persevering when there are challenges.

Q. Is there any written work?

A. Yes, you will sit a 2-hour exam at the end of the two years. This accounts to 50% of the overall GCSE. The other 50% is a coursework unit, which is also predominantly written based, with some practical elements like sketching and making.

Q. What does the NEA involve?

A. The NEA is the coursework module of the course which gets completed throughout year 11. It consists of speaking to clients, finding a gap in the design market, creating a range of ideas then streamlining these down into a final concept. You will then make this design using skills and techniques learnt throughout year 7-year 10. Finally evaluating the design of the product.

Q. What do you learn about for the exam part of the course?

A. You will be focussing mainly on timbers, polymers and metals, paper and board. Then looking at the influences that led to great designs as well as the social/moral/environmental limitations in design.

Drama GCSE



Q What's the breakdown between practical work and written work on the Drama Courses?

A. GCSE is 64% written work, 36% practical work. However, most lessons are practical because the best way to understand and explore plays is to act them out. 40% of the GCSE is assessed through a written exam. Written coursework tends to be completed at home, with some support in lessons.

Q. Why should I take drama?

A. Drama is the most important subject in curriculum! It includes the study of literature (plays), it improves your writing skills/helps your English, and it will give you essential skills that will help you in the world of work- like presenting to others, working in a team, working to a project deadline, events management, self-confidence.



Q. Who should or shouldn't take Drama?

A. If your love acting, plays, stories, theatre, film, performance, Drama is the subject for you.

If you are interested in technical theatre- stage lighting, sound, costume, set design- Drama is the subject for you.

If you really struggle to perform in your drama lessons, only take Drama if you know you want to focus on technical theatre/design. Drama can help someone become more confident, but it can be a poor choice for someone who is really shy and doesn't like attention. Drama won't make a shy person an extravert!

English Language and English Literature

Q. When do students sit their English Literature exam?

A. Whereas in previous years, students have sat their English Literature exam at the end of Year 10, due to current circumstances, students going forward will be sitting their English Literature exam alongside their English Language exam at the end of Year 11.



Q. How many papers are there for GCSE English Literature and Language?

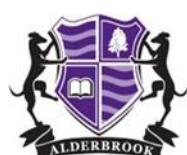
A. There are two examinations papers for each GCSE.

Q. Are the GCSE English Literature texts prescribed to the students?

A. Yes. All texts studied will form part of the English Faculty Long Term Plan which is linked to the AQA criteria for study.

Q. What does the Year 9 course look like?

A. The course in Year 9 builds and strengthens the skills taught in Year 8 and enables students to be 'GCSE ready' by engaging them with a variety of GCSE English Literature and English Language texts.



Food Preparation and Nutrition

Q. How often do we cook?

A. Once a fortnight in the double lesson



Q. Do we have a written Exam?

A. At the end of Year 11 and it is worth 50% of the GCSE mark

Q. What are NEA's?

A. These are non-exam assessments. There are 2 which you will complete in Year 11. NEA 1 is worth 15% and is based on a food investigation and NEA 2 is worth 35% and is based on practical skills.

Q. Is the GCSE mainly cooking?

No, the GCSE has 5 areas of study:

Food, nutrition, and health

Food science

Food safety

Food choice

Food provenance

As far as possible we teach the theory through practical work but there will still be written activities to check understanding and progress.

Geography

Q. How many marks is the longest style GCSE question?

A. 9 marks with some given an extra 3 for SpaG

Q. What trips do you run at GCSE?

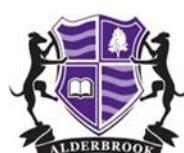
A. There will be 2 compulsory trips in year 10, one to Carding Mill in Shropshire where we conduct a river study and one to Birmingham for an urban study and these fieldwork studies are examined in paper 3

Q. What exams are taken and is there any fieldwork coursework?

A. There is no coursework as fieldwork studies are examined in paper 3 along with geographical skills and some pre-released case study material released 10 weeks before the paper is due to be sat. Paper 1 covers the 3 Physical topics and paper 2 covers the 3 human topics.

Q. What exam board do you use?

A. AQA



Q. What topics do you cover?

A. In year 9 - The Living World (physical) and Resource Management (Human). In year 10 - UK Physical Environments (physical) and Changing Urban Environments (human), and these two topics link to our fieldwork studies. In year 11 - Natural Hazards (Physical) and The Changing Economic World (Human)

Health & Social Care

Q. Is Health and Social Care classed as a GCSE?

A. Yes, successful completion of the course at Level 2 is the equivalent to one GCSE



Q. How is the qualification graded?

A. Upon completion of the course, students will obtain either a L2 Distinction, Merit or Pass

Health Q. Is there an exam in and Social Care?

A. Yes, there is one exam students normally take this exam in year 10.

Q. How much coursework do students complete?

A. The course is made up of 75% coursework (3 units) and 25% exam (1 unit)

History

Q. What will I study in GCSE History?

A. At Alderbrook School we follow the AQA exam board. The topics studied are

- Britain, Health and the People
- Elizabethan England
- Conflict and Tension 1918 - 1939
- America 1920 – 1973



Q. Is GCSE History difficult?

A. GCSE History involves extended writing. We will of course support students with our very engaging subject but students must be aware of the literacy demands of the subject.

Q. Will I be with the same teacher for GCSE as I was with in year 8?

A. GCSE history is taught by five teachers who deliver a popular and engaging subject. You will not be able to choose your teacher.

Q. Do students get a good grade in History?

A. Since the introduction of the new GCSE, The History Department has continually achieved a positive overall outcome for the GCSE results. However, the key to success is of course student's hard work.

Media Studies

Q. What is Media Studies?

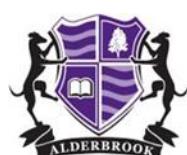
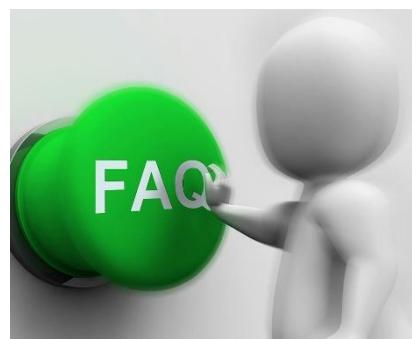
A. Media Studies involves the study of a wide range of media platforms, old and new, e.g. advertisements, film posters, newspapers, magazines, websites and video games. We analyse these in order to better understand how they appeal to audiences and the types of messages they communicate to us, often without us realising.

Q. How much of the course is written and how much is practical?

A. 30% of the course is practical and will involve the students using various IT software to design their own original media products (e.g. their own magazines or film posters). As 70% of the course focuses on written work, students should expect to have to do a fair bit of writing on this course too and will have to get used to writing longer-form answers, similar to what they do in English.

Q. Where can Media take you in the future?

A. Increasingly, the Media is all around us - especially digital media - and as such more and more jobs are becoming available in this field. Whether you are interested in a career in social media marketing, in advertising, branding or journalism - there are plenty of career pathways available to you with this subject



Modern Foreign Languages

Q. Do have to continue with the language that you have studied in Year 8?

A. Yes. You cannot start a second language from scratch and there is currently no option to study two languages (dual linguists).

Q. Do you run study trips?

A. Surprisingly, the last few trips we tried to run to France and Spain did not attract enough interest to make them viable.

We focus on cultural experiences that are more inclusive and largely take place at school. For example, we run Onatti Theatre Company visits for KS3/4. We have also taken Year 11 students to London to attend the GCSE student workshops run by AQA. These trips were very well received by the students who went. We also promote a range of competitions across KS3/4 to promote French/Spanish.

Q. Are languages hard?

A. Admittedly, learning a language is challenging. Pupils must have a good commitment to study and be prepared to do regular language learning at home to be successful. That said, it is extremely rewarding and develops a wide range of transferable skills. A good GCSE grade in a language is a valuable commodity in the marketplace. Employers appreciate that it represents hard work and perseverance!

Q. What can we do to support our child?

A. We will let you know which revision guides and materials we recommend and would urge all pupils to have a pocket sized bilingual dictionary. These should be brought to every lesson. All pupils should have set up a Quizlet account in year 7. This is an excellent language tool for independent study at home. There are several, excellent websites that support language learning at home. The French/Spanish teachers will advise your child accordingly. In addition, we pride ourselves on producing high quality work booklets and reference resources in order to support and develop language skills with a view to securing the highest grade possible at GCSE.

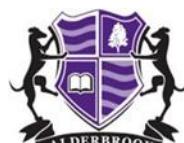


Music GCSE

Q. Does my child need to be able to play an instrument?

A. Yes, or sing. All students learn an array of instruments in year 7 and 8 including keyboard and ukulele. This standard of playing is acceptable but students must commit to improving their skills in year 9 whether this is on an instrument or by singing.

If students are having individual lessons on their instrument, this is beneficial but not required. If you are interested in your child starting individual instrument lessons, please contact Miss Rafferty via the school contact page. We work closely with the Solihull Music Service to offer guitar, vocal, keyboard, string, woodwind, drum and brass lessons.*



*Instrumental lessons are school funded for Pupil Premium students. Please see Miss Rafferty/Miss Saunders for more details.

Q. What extracurricular activities do you offer?

A. We offer a wide array of extracurricular opportunities. Choir, year group bands, pop ensemble and Arts Award. Students are encouraged to rehearse their solo pieces as well. We offered a concert per term to give the students' performance opportunities as well as an annual musical, which we have a 'house' band of our current students selected from all groups. The Performing Arts department have worked closely over the past few years to offer these amazing opportunities. Shows have included Hairspray, School of Rock, Beauty and the Beast and We Will Rock You.



In the past, we have offered many trips to our students including Abbey Road, The Cavern Club, Wembley Arena, Royal Albert Hall, annual theatre trip to London, Symphony Hall, Birmingham as well as a residential trip to New York.

Q. Will my child need to perform?

A. Yes. there is a performance unit. As musicians, all students will be required to perform to an audience, whether this is in class or to a bigger audience at the termly concerts. This can be overwhelming for some students but also a great way to overcome nerves and can also be an amazing confidence booster. I have seen this, many times throughout the courses and we will ensure that all students are prepared and coached to perform. If there any concerns or worries about this, these will be taken into consideration.

Physical Education GCSE

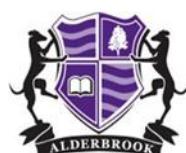
Q. What's the difference between GCSE PE and The Cambridge National in Sport Studies?

A. The key difference between the two courses lies in the weighting of the final exam. For Cambridge National, the exam accounts for 40% of the overall grade, whereas for GCSE PE, it makes up 60%. In GCSE PE, the remaining 40% comes from written coursework and practical assessment. In contrast, Cambridge National includes two assignment-based units, which together contribute 40% to the final grade.

Q2: Where do the following sports qualifications lead on to at KS5?

A. The natural progression of GCSE PE is the A-Level PE at Alderbrook Sixth Form or the Level Sport Extended Certificate (equivalent to one A-Level).

The Cambridge National in Sports Science progresses to the Level Sport Extended Certificate (equivalent to one A-Level) at Alderbrook Sixth Form. Exceptional grades complimented with high level of practical performance may qualify for the A-Level in



PE. There are many other level 3 sports specific full-time courses available at local colleges.

Religious Studies

Q. If I don't pick Religious Studies: Philosophy and Ethics for an option, will I still sit the subject in some form at GCSE.

Answer: No. You need to select Religious Studies: Philosophy and Ethics in order to gain any qualification in the subject.

Q. If I do not select Religious Studies: Philosophy and Ethics for an option, will I still study the subject?

Answer: Yes. You will study Religious Education which will cover some of the same content. You will not however gain a qualification. It is a legal requirement, just like core PE.



Science GCSE

Q. Do I need to select Science as an option choice?

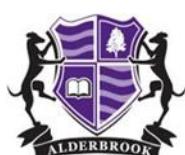
A. NO - all students will study Science as part of their core curriculum.

Q. How many Science GCSE's does a student get?

A. 2 or 3 - most students will earn 2 GCSE grades in 'COMBINED SCIENCE' - this covers topics in all areas of science to a depth that allows students to progress to A-level. Some students may choose to earn 3 separate grades in Biology, Chemistry and Physics - there is 50% more content and 50% more exams - students who take separate sciences cover all areas of science in more depth and learn a number of extra topics.

Q. When do students make the choice to study 'combined' or 'separate' sciences?

A. This choice is only open to students who are both doing well and who teachers feel would be suitable for the course, those students are given the chance to opt for 'TRIPLE' part way through year 9.



Sport Studies

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