



Thornhill
Academy

Year 9

Curriculum preferences

Part 1



What is this booklet about?

We understand the importance of supporting your child through the preferences in Year 9, as this determines their journey into the next stage of their time in education. Our process is designed to provide advice and guidance to both you and your child to make informed decisions about the subjects they will study for the next two years. The purpose of this booklet is to provide pupils in Year 9, and their parents, with information about Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) at Thornhill Academy. It also provides an indication of the progression routes which are currently available. Pupils should choose subjects that they enjoy and will achieve good grades in. This means they need to do their research into what the subjects will be like in Years 10 and 11. It is important to realise that subject choices made now constitute a serious commitment for two years. We strongly advise that you and your child discuss the options process very carefully. This booklet has been designed to give you three key pieces of information about the subjects to help you make your choices:

- Information about the subject
- What the course content is
- How the course is assessed

You need to read the booklet carefully and use this information to help you and your child make your decisions. The school offers 'Core' and 'Optional' subjects. As you will see from this booklet all pupils study the 'core' subjects and have some choice from the 'optional' subjects. Some pupils will be guided towards courses which are suited to their styles of learning. It is important that, if you have any questions or queries, to make the most of the individual parents' consultation and/or speak to your child's Head of Year for further information. We are committed to getting the options process right for each single pupil.

It needs to be noted that children make a preference, we will determine the best curriculum for them. Additionally, courses run subject to demand.

Who will help me choose?

Each pupil will get the chance to discuss their 'options' with a variety of staff.

Subject Teachers	Named on the subject page	On going support
Head of Year	Mr Armstrong	On going Support
Year 9 Parents Evening	All Year 9 Teachers	Parents 5th March 2026

Guidance for Pupils

Use this checklist to make sure you have given enough thought to your choices:

- Read this booklet thoroughly and research all your options before you decide
- Talk to your teachers about the course and your suitability for it
- Don't be afraid to ask for advice from teachers, friends, family or students that are currently studying subjects you are thinking about choosing – you cannot have too much information to help you make your choices!



What makes a good preference?

- ☺ Ask yourself; 'How do I learn best?'... 'Do I prefer practical subjects?'
- ☺ Ask yourself; 'What are my strongest subjects?'
- ☺ Which career would you like? Find out which subjects are best for this.
- ☺ Look at new choices that will interest you?

What makes a bad preference?

- Do not choose a subject because a friend has chosen it.
- Do not choose a subject because you like the teacher.
- Do not choose a subject without care and thought.
- Do not choose a subject because you think it will be easy.
- Do not ignore a subject that may be new to you. Find out about it



Core subjects

The courses that you must follow in Years 10 and 11 are:

- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- Physical Education (non-exam)
- Personal Development

Personal development is delivered to all pupils once every week, supported by Information, Advice and



What do we need to do?

Pupils make 4 preferences

First Choice: Humanities - all children must do history or geography

All students must choose either Geography or History so please rank, with 1 being highest preference.

After this, rank all other subjects, with 1 being your highest preference. The top 3 ranked options will be classed as your preferred subjects and then the remaining ranked options will be considered in case of over/under subscriptions to options. You



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The following are core
subjects



English Language

GCSE English Language is a core subject and is studied by all pupils. All pupils follow the Eduqas Specification for English Language and English Literature	
Course Description	It enables pupils to develop the skills they need to read, understand, and analyse a wide range of different texts and write clearly.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualification	GCSE
Examinations	2 external examinations – Paper 1: Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing and Paper 2: Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives
Coursework	No Coursework
Non-examination assessment	Spoken Language Assessment - a verbal presentation on a topic of your choice, followed by a question-and-answer session.
Post 16 Education	English Language A level
Careers	English underpins virtually any career: any profession which requires written or verbal communication will be enhanced by your study of English Language
Skills and attributes	Close language analysis, Evaluation, Comparison of viewpoints, Clarity and precision of communication, Comprehension and reasoning, Constructing a coherent line of argument, Logical organisation and explanation of ideas and opinions
For further information please see Ms Anderson (Head of English)	



English Literature

GCSE English Literature is a core subject and is studied by all pupils. All pupils follow the Eduqas Specification for English Language and English Literature.	
Course Description	This course intends to inspire and enthuse pupils through study of a wide range of modern and traditional literature and aims to cultivate a love of reading.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualifications	GCSE
Examinations	2 external examinations - Paper 1: Shakespeare and the 19th Century Novel and Paper 2: Modern Texts and Poetry
Coursework	No coursework
Assessment	No controlled assessment
Post 16 Education	English Literature A level
Career	Teaching, Journalism, Broadcasting, Freelance Writing, Publishing, Information and Research, Social Media editor.
Skills and Attributes	Close language analysis, Evaluation, Comparison of viewpoints, Clarity and precision of communication, Comprehension and reasoning, Constructing a coherent line of argument, Logical organisation and explanation of ideas and opinions.
For further information please see Ms Anderson (Head of English)	



Mathematics

GCSE Mathematics is a core subject studied by all pupils. Pupils following the Higher Tier sit the Edexcel GCSE Mathematics specification, while pupils studying the Foundation Tier sit the OCR GCSE Mathematics specification.

Course Description	Mathematics GCSE covers the following topics areas: Number, algebra, ratio and proportion, geometry and measures, probability, statistics. These areas are looked at in depth, as well as how they are interconnected. The course develops and builds on concepts taught at Key Stage 3.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualification	GCSE
Examinations	3 papers, each lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes. One paper is a non-calculator assessment, while calculators are permitted for the remaining two papers.
Coursework	No coursework
Assessment	No controlled assessment
Post 16 Education	Mathematics A Level, Further Mathematics A Level
Careers	GCSE Mathematics is essential for many careers including engineering and manufacturing, business, healthcare, law, media and many more.
Skills and attributes	The course will enable learners to develop fluent knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematical methods and concepts. Learners will be able to acquire, select and apply mathematical techniques to solve problems from the real world. The ability to reason mathematically, make deductions and draw conclusions will be developed thoroughly.



Science

GCSE Science is a core subject and is studied by all pupils. All pupils follow the AQA Specification.

Course Description	AQA GCSE Combined Science: Trilogy is a broad science course that covers Biology, Chemistry, and Physics together. Students learn how science explains the world around them, from living organisms and chemical reactions to energy, forces, and the universe.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualification	2 GCSE grades in AQA Combined Science: Trilogy
Examinations	Science: Trilogy: 2 exams per subject: 6 examinations in total (1 hour 15 minutes each) at the end of Year 11.
Assessment	<p>Each of the six units will be assessed by an examination. These units are assessed through six one hour 15 minute, 70 marks, tiered written examinations, containing six questions.</p> <p>Each examination will contain a mixture of question styles, including multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, calculations and extended open response questions.</p> <p>Each of the units is 16.7% of the qualification.</p> <p>Students must complete all assessments in the same tier.</p>
Post 16 Education	A Level Biology, A Level Chemistry, A Level Physics, Pearson's BTEC Level 3 Extended Certificate in Applied Science.
Careers	Medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, biomedical, physics, chemist, sports science, forensics, research, accountancy.
Skills and attributes	Practical, analytical, evaluative and problem-solving skills creating logical thinkers.
For further information please see Ms McIlwraith (Head of Science)	



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You must choose history or
geography



History

GCSE History follows the Pearson Specification.	
Course Description	History is a challenging but rewarding course that allows you to study key periods of time in depth. It also helps you develop key employability skills.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualifications	GCSE
Examinations	Paper 1: Thematic study (30 %, 1 hour 20-minute exam.) This paper involves the study of Crime and punishment through time with a key study on Whitechapel Paper 2: Period study and British depth study (40 % 1 hour and 50minute exam) This paper requires the study of the Cold War 1945-1991. For the second part of paper 2 you will study the changing relations between Elizabeth I. Paper 3: Modern Depth Study (30% 1 hour and 30-minute exam) Weimar and Nazi Germany
Coursework	None
Assessment	All examination assessment is at the end of year 11.
Post 16 Education	A Level History
Careers	Education, journalism, museum curator, academic librarian, archaeologist, archivist, broadcast journalist, editorial assistant, and solicitor.
Skills and Attributes	Excellent communication and writing abilities, investigation and analytical skills
For further information please see Ms Gray (Head of History)	



Geography

GCSE Geography follows the AQA Specification.	
Course Description	An exploration into Physical and Human Geography and the ways in which they are interlinked. Pupils will cover three Physical topics and three Human topics. A wide breadth of content is covered from mountains and rivers to health and transport. Very topical and very current.
Course Level	Level 2
Course Qualifications	GCSE
Examinations	AQA Paper 1 - Physical, Paper 2 - Human, Paper 3 - Geographical Skills and Investigation
Course Work	None
Assessment	Examination: 100%
Post 16 Education	A Level Geography
Careers	Highly employable as so many topics are covered: economics, sociology, politics, volcanology, topography, weather and climate and more...
Skills and Attributes	Knowledge of topical issues and current affairs, map skills, data collection experience and skills
For further information please see Ms Oliver (Assistant Principal)	

