

Name: _____

Tutor group: _____



UPPER SCHOOL CURRICULUM 2024–2026

CHOOSING YOUR OPTIONS

Key dates

Thursday 15 February 6 pm to 8 pm	Key stage 4 curriculum evening
Monday 22 January to Friday 9 February	Guidance interviews
Thursday 29 February 4 pm to 7 pm	Year 9 parents' consultation evening
Wednesday 6 March	Electronic options form deadline

The KS4 curriculum

This is your guide to the 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 taken by all pupils

All pupils take GCSEs in the following subjects:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Combined Sciences (2 GCSEs), unless pupils choose to take GCSEs in the 3 separate sciences

Non-examination subjects taken by all pupils

In addition to their examined courses, pupils study a curriculum in the following areas:

Careers education, information, advice and guidance, including work related learning: This is covered via our pastoral curriculum through assemblies and tutorial activities and through collapsed days. It also includes a period of work experience at the end of year 10.

Computing: Our Key Stage 4 Computing curriculum is studied in a cross-curricular way, through PE, English, Maths and Science, with additional content covered on our collapsed days. Pupils work towards gaining the Bronze Inspiring Digital Excellence Award (iDEA). Those pupils who progress well can also achieve the Silver Award or above. Those pupils who wish to, may also choose to study a GCSE in computer science and/or iMedia.

Physical Education: Core PE is delivered through timetabled weekly lessons. Pupils are given a number of choices and they will pursue these during the whole of year 10. They will choose again for year 11. Further information may be found here: <https://www.combertonvc.org/curriculum/PE-and-Sport.php>

Personal social and health education (PSHE): All Key Stage 4 pupils receive a discreet PSHE curriculum taught by our Head of PSHE. Our curriculum includes 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. Our curriculum may be found here: <https://www.combertonvc.org/curriculum/pshe.php>

Relationships and Sex Education: All aspects of the RSE curriculum are addressed through our dedicated PSHE lessons and our pastoral curriculum.

Religion, Philosophy and Ethics: All pupils benefit from 24 sessions over 6 conference days across Key Stage 4 for their core RPE curriculum, covering themes such as prejudice and discrimination, crime and punishment and religion in the wider world. Further details may be found here: <https://www.combertonvc.org/curriculum/rpe.php>

Within our year 7 to 11 pastoral curriculum, pupils follow a programme of activities that includes Active Form Time (learning about health, diet and exercise) and work related to the Rights Respecting School. Pastoral teams also play a vital role in upholding our values and ensuring that pupils receive a full curriculum, exploring pertinent issues in a tutor group context.

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.

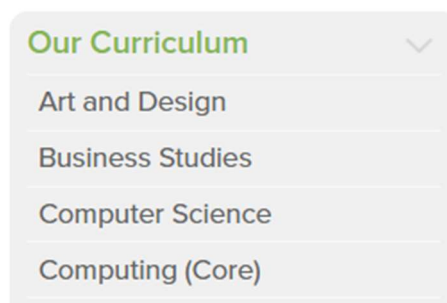
Full information about the subjects you can choose

In the **our 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.

<https://www.combertonvc.org/curriculum/ourcurriculum.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 | | |
| • GCSE design and technology | • 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 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 1st choice option: 2nd choice option: 3rd choice option (if choosing combined science): Reserve option:	After guidance interview 1st choice option: 2nd choice option: 3rd choice option (if choosing combined science): 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 shown on the front of this brochure.

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, computing, 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	A*
8	
7	
6	B
5	
4	
3	C
2	
1	
U	U