



MASCALLS ACADEMY

Academic Excellence
Character | Culture



Mascalls Academy Year 9 Options Guidance Programme

2024 - 2026

Introduction



Your son/daughter is about to enter an important stage in their school life. Over the next two years they will be following a range of examination courses that will provide them with their first school certificates and, hopefully, lead to further success in the Sixth Form, college or in apprenticeships and beyond.

At Mascalls Academy we want to provide your son/daughter with the best possible education. To do this, we set high standards and help them do the very best they can. Our students have enjoyed considerable success in their examinations in the past and we are confident your son/ daughter will maintain this tradition in the future.

During the KS3 years from year 7 to year 9 students have been studying a wide range of subjects as part of a broad and balanced curriculum under the framework of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme that has provided them with a firm foundation for their GCSEs. In September your son/daughter will progress to Key Stage 4, where each of the subjects taught have a specification which takes a certain amount of lesson time to get through. This makes it impossible to study an unlimited number of subjects in Years 10 and 11; they need to make some choices. To reach the best possible solution we make sure they follow courses that they have to do to fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum and English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and then we give a choice of subjects to take up the rest of the time in school. Therefore, some of their subjects will be compulsory (we call them the core subjects), and some are optional.

The compulsory core subjects are **English Language, English Literature, mathematics, combined science, Spanish and core PE (non-examined)**. The optional subjects may be traditional GCSE and/ or vocational qualifications.

'Having language skills under your belt will help make you stand out from the crowd, whether you're applying for an entry level position, a management role or an internal transfer.'

Steve Cassidy, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, UK & Ireland, Hilton

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers. The EBacc is:

- English language and literature
- Maths
- The sciences
- Geography or history
- A language
- Computer Science

Your son/daughter has been identified by the modern foreign language department as having the aptitude to continue to study Spanish during Yr10 and 11 as part of our core curriculum.

Languages are an important part of EBacc. Studying a foreign language can be extremely rewarding and exciting. They provide an insight into other cultures and can open the door to travel and employment opportunities. They can also broaden pupils' horizons, helping them flourish in new environments. If your child finds languages difficult, don't forget that they will have been studying them for much less time than their other subjects and, while it can be a challenge, learning a language will greatly enhance their future opportunities. What's more, we know that employers value languages, as they are increasingly important to make sure we can

compete in the global market, meaning language-related jobs are booming. Because of this, languages are increasingly becoming a requirement for many graduate schemes, such as those offered by Lidl. Languages give you the edge and help you stand out from the crowd.

Mascalls has been recognised for their success in the study of Spanish at GCSE level, earning itself a place in the top 20% of schools nationwide who achieve great results. While your child may not have decided on their future career path yet, choosing the EBacc at GCSE gives them access to a full range of employment options when they leave secondary school and the broad knowledge that employers are looking for. If they are thinking of going to university, the EBacc is also recommended by Britain's most prestigious universities. Studying a Humanities subject of history or geography or both would be advisable as an addition to the compulsory core suite of subjects.

The options process will begin in January with a combined parents and options evening. Students will choose ONE subject from each column and complete this on the upcoming Options Google Form link. Students will also choose three reserve choices in case we cannot accommodate the initial choices.

Remember that staff are able to help including:

- Advisor
- Head of Pastoral
- Subject Teachers
- Mrs S Mahon (Vice Principal)
- Mrs T Banks (Options Co-ordinator)
- Mrs A Fowler (SENCo)

When you are satisfied that the appropriate choices have been made, please complete the Google options form by **Monday 5th February**.

Timetable of events

Year 9 Parents and Options Evening	Thursday 11th January 4pm - 7pm in the 2012 Hall	There will be a 15 minute options process talk at 5pm and 6pm in A Hall
Deadline for final option forms	Monday 5th February	These forms should be returned by this date
Confirmation	Semester 4	Confirmation of choices given to students

Notes for students

Choosing your options for Year 10 is an important step and the first of many you will have to make regarding GCSEs, Sixth Form and the careers you will eventually follow.

You cannot make good decisions without the information this booklet gives. It explains the courses that are available. It shows you how to go about making the decision which is right for you. Read it carefully and talk it over with your parents, teachers and advisor.

Frequently asked questions

Which GCSE subjects are compulsory?

You have to study for GCSEs in English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Combined Science and Spanish. You will also have lessons in PE which are non-examined.

Which GCSE option subjects are available?

You can choose from a list of subjects, but the choice is not completely free. You should aim for a broad selection of subjects to keep your options open in the future. Choose one subject from each column and not the same subject twice!

Not every combination of subjects is possible. Check the options grid carefully before making your choices.

Which vocational qualifications are available?

You can choose from OCR Nationals and BTECs which lead on to level 3 courses.

How many GCSEs will I study?

You will study 9 GCSEs (or equivalent) subjects (combined science counts as two).

Will I get my first choice?

In most cases you will, but this cannot be guaranteed. Although every effort will be made to accommodate your wishes, it is likely that some courses do not attract enough students to go ahead or have minimum criteria for entry. Ensure you have also decided on reserve choices. We will endeavour to meet your needs.

What do I need to know?

Most students in Year 9 have little idea of their career choice and even if you know about a possible career you may change your mind. You should select a balanced range of subjects.

- English is a key subject.
- Maths is another key subject.
- Science helps us to understand the world around us. It is a key subject.
- Foreign languages are useful for developing ever closer ties with Europe. They are helpful in widening the scope of career opportunities as Britain expands trade with our European partners.
- Visual art subjects such as art and design, technology and media studies help us to understand the world around us and communicate ideas in order to interact with it.
- Humanities e.g. history, geography and business studies help us to understand the way people live and act.
- Information & communication technology (ICT) provides a vital skill which is useful in all careers and important in supporting work in all your subjects.
- Performing Arts and Vocational Studies help us explore and respond to the world around us as well as enabling us to express ourselves, grow in confidence and shape our identity.

It will help to have a broad selection of subjects which will help give you a wider choice of courses and careers. Employers and Further/Higher Education institutions look for a balance of subjects!

How do I choose which subjects to study?

There are two key questions to ask when choosing subjects for the next two years. These are:

What am I good at?

- You will be given the opportunity in advisory time to examine your strengths and weaknesses in the subjects you currently follow.
- You should not necessarily choose only your best subjects, but it may be foolish to choose subjects in which you are not likely to be successful (discuss if you are unsure).

What do I like?

- Enjoying a subject can make a big difference to how well you do, so what you like is particularly important.

Choosing what you are *good at* and what you *like* is strongly advised and much better than jumping at a career idea and working backwards.

Sources of information

You must seek out people with whom you can discuss your choice of subject. They may recommend certain choices knowing your strengths and weaknesses.

- Your subject teachers
- Your parents
- Your Advisor
- Family
- Friends
- Employer contacts
- Mrs Mahon (Vice Principal)
- Head of Pastoral

You cannot do any combination of subjects. You will be given an 'Option Choice Sheet'. Read it carefully to understand how to use it.

A word of advice... key do's and don'ts

DO

read about all the subjects on offer. Many courses are different or new. Find out whether they will suit your needs or not.

DON'T

be influenced by your friends as to what you choose. It **MUST** be your choice.

DO

ask questions and discuss the choices with teachers, parents and careers staff.

DON'T

choose subjects because you may like or dislike your present teacher.

DO

aim for a balanced choice to keep your career and future course options open.

DON'T

choose a subject for a certain career if you are weak at that subject.

DO

look at yourself honestly and discover what sort of person you are, i.e. your interests, abilities and personality.

DON'T

be totally influenced by any one perspective — take a range of views when you make your choice.

DON'T

choose a subject because it is 'new' and it must be 'better' than what you know. Make sure you check it out!

Above all - choose wisely and well!

Final notes for parents

Courses / Further information

The information in this booklet is based on such advanced information as is available at the time of writing. However, some of the courses are new and not all the details are yet available. We have tried to provide enough information to help you make decisions but it is possible that some details given will change.

Parents may be aware that the GCSE grades changed in 2017 from A*-G to numerical gradings of 1-9 with grade 8/9 ranking as the highest.

Independent study

Independent study is an integral part of most courses. Some subjects still set independent study on a regular weekly pattern to prepare for or to consolidate the work in lesson time. Increasingly however, GCSE, OCR Nationals and Diplomas require projects to be completed over several weeks usually to a deadline. These may be part of the required assessment. Sometimes students are required to plan their own independent study.

It is normal for students to have two independent study assignments on most evenings. Parents who feel that their son or daughter is significantly over or under-burdened are encouraged to contact the advisor at an early stage.

Coursework deadlines

Some courses include an element of coursework. There will be coursework deadlines and mid-course modular examinations. It is important that candidates understand that failure to meet these deadlines can seriously reduce the grade. Parents will be notified of the main assessment deadlines, as far as they are known, in the third Semester.

Costs

In most cases there are no significant additional costs to be borne by parents because textbooks and some other materials are supplied. Limited costs, such as occasional school trips will fall to parents. If students wish to annotate their textbooks (as is often the case in English Literature), they will be asked to pay for the books themselves. Subjects where students may require specialist materials and high levels of photocopying will need to supply these or contribute to the costs.

Parental support

Many examination courses involve large amounts of continuous assessment, which can require work to be produced to a deadline. Those who develop a regular working habit are rewarded, but students who fall behind can find themselves ungraded at the end of the course. In these cases, parental support can be invaluable in helping a student plan their workload at home, and develop regular working patterns.

If you have any questions about the options process, please do not hesitate to contact us at the school.

Email: enquiries@mascallsacademy.org.uk

Phone: 01892 835366

Website: mascallsacademy.org.uk



Subject listings

GCSE (compulsory subjects)

English Language and English Literature

Maths

Science

Spanish

Physical Education

Vocational qualifications

BTEC Music

Level 2 Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering

OCR Cambridge National Sports Science

GCSE (option subjects)

Art and Design (Fine Art)

Art and Design (Graphic Design)

Art and Design (Photography)

Art and Design (Textiles/Fashion)

Business Studies

Computer Science

Drama

Film Studies

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Geography

History

Media Studies

Music

Design and Technology

Philosophy, Religion and Ethics

Sociology

Sport Science

To view full details of all courses, including requirements, please scan the QR code or visit our website:

mascallsacademy.org.uk/year-9-options

