



St Swithun's
WINCHESTER



GCSE SUBJECT CHOICES

2024

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GCSE CURRICULUM

At St Swithun's School all students take **9 or 10 subjects** at GCSE level. There are three compulsory subjects: **English language, English literature and mathematics**. In addition, students choose **six or seven subjects** from the following:

Art and design	Design & technology: resistant materials	Geography	Physics
Biology	Drama	German	Religious studies
Chemistry	Fashion and textiles (O level)	Greek	Science (double award)
Classical civilisation	Food preparation and nutrition	History	Spanish
Computer science	French	Music	

The option choices are subject to the following conditions and advice:

1. All students will be required to study a **minimum of two science subjects**. This gives rise to two different possibilities:
 - i) Students may choose to study **two or three separate IGCSE science subjects: biology** and/or **chemistry** and/or **physics**. This allows for further study of those two (or all three) science subjects at A level. Students should be aware, however, that the combination of biology and physics only will not lead to the study of biology at A level, which requires IGCSE chemistry to have been taken.
 - ii) Students may prefer to continue to study all three sciences but not wish to use three of their option choices. For these students a **double award science IGCSE** is available. This counts as two IGCSEs and covers content from all three sciences, but in less depth in each of them than the separate science IGCSEs. This is not our expected pathway for further study at A level, as we expect that students contemplating study of a science subject(s) at A level will select two or more separate science IGCSEs (as above).
2. At least **one subject** must be a modern foreign language: **French** and/or **German** and/or **Spanish**. The **French** and **German** options are for girls who have been studying the languages for three years. **Spanish** is offered for those girls who have already begun their study of the language in L5 or who are new to the school in M5.
3. We strongly advise the inclusion of **at least one** of the humanities or social sciences to keep the curriculum as broad and balanced as possible: **Classical civilisation; geography; history; religious studies**.

It is essential that each student's chosen subjects provide her with a broad curriculum that has sufficient academic rigour. Each girl should think carefully about the choice of nine or ten subjects overall, because we expect her to view her choices as commitments.

Mr CHARLES HAMMEL
Deputy head academic
September 2023

KEY DATES

In FEBRUARY 2024 parents will be asked to complete and return an electronic form indicating their daughter's choice of six or seven IGCSE option subjects.

The key dates are as follows:

Friday 12th & 19th January 2024

L5 parents' meetings to discuss choices and general progress

Wednesday 7th February 2024

Deadline for L5 choices to be submitted

If, after 7th February 2024, a student wishes to alter her choices, adjustments can be made providing there is a sensible reason for the change, room exists in the relevant teaching group(s) and the new combination of subjects can be timetabled.

Mr CHARLES HAMMEL
Deputy head academic



IMPLICATIONS OF SUBJECT CHOICE

By mid-February all members of L5 need to have decided which subjects to follow for GCSE. Making choices at this stage can be difficult, as there are inevitably implications for future options and courses, at A level and beyond. It is important to keep a good balance between the different subject areas (as far as possible), which should help to keep options open in the future.

Thinking a long way ahead, for those considering university entrance there is a general requirement for a pass (minimum grade 5) in five subjects at GCSE/GCE (including English, mathematics and sometimes a language), at least two of which must be at A level. In practice, places are usually offered primarily on the basis of grades achieved at A level. Requirements for particular courses vary, and can be checked in individual prospectuses and on university websites. They do change, so it is wise to check regularly.

If hoping to study a degree in **modern languages** many courses include two languages, so it is wise to study two modern foreign languages at GCSE; it may be possible to start a new language at university (French and Italian is frequently a popular option); some evidence of ability in languages at GCSE and/or A level will be expected. There are also degree courses combining Latin with a modern language.

For careers in areas like the **media** and **law** there are usually no specific requirements at GCSE, other than passes in English and mathematics, although in practice those interested in journalism often choose to study English literature at university. The main concern of admissions tutors is that applicants have studied a broad base of academic subjects at GCSE and that they have developed skills which will be needed in their future studies. Such skills, an ability to analyse and evaluate evidence (both factual and subjective) and to express one's opinion and substantiate it convincingly, can be acquired in any of the humanity or social science options (Classical civilisation, geography, history and religious studies) at GCSE, as well as in perhaps less obvious subjects, such as technology, art or drama.

As a rough guide, with regard to sciences, if considering **medicine** or **dentistry**, then it is usually essential to include all three sciences at GCSE in order to maximise choice later on. Most medical and dental schools look for a very strong science base at GCSE as well as very high grades in other GCSE subjects. The position is virtually identical to that for **veterinary science** and **pharmacy** where science subjects at A level with very high grades are also usually required. A table of current admissions requirements for **medicine**, **dentistry** and **veterinary science** can be found on the student guidance website, accessible via the parent portal. Double award science is an option which might appeal to those wishing to continue all three sciences to GCSE without using up three option choices, but would not be the best foundation for those intending to study sciences at A level, as explained on the curriculum page. When opting for two sciences at GCSE, physics and chemistry or biology and chemistry are generally more useful combinations than physics and biology, which can cause complications for those intending to continue sciences at sixth-form stage (biology A level requires an understanding of chemistry to GCSE level).

Aspiring **engineers** and **architects** will often need physics at GCSE (A level is essential for engineering and can be helpful for some architecture courses); technology can also be a very useful option. Physics and chemistry are sensible choices at GCSE if considering a future in **radiography**. Those intending to take biology at A level should take chemistry to GCSE at least. Careers involving food science, nutrition or dietetics usually require chemistry at either GCSE or A level.

Departments of **nursing** prefer entrants with a strong science base at GCSE so biology and chemistry are important. Potential **physiotherapists** will also need a strong science background at GCSE and at least biology at A level.

Art is obviously essential for anyone considering an **artistic** or **creative career**, including graphic design, and is very helpful for the creative side of advertising; the graphics aspect of technology also provides very valuable experience. Potential **architects** usually need to produce a portfolio of work and thus art GCSE can be invaluable here too.

At sixth-form level it is possible to begin subjects not offered for GCSE (currently history of art, economics, politics and psychology) for which no subject requirement at GCSE exists. Girls can also sometimes pick up subjects to study for A level without having taken them for GCSE where their teachers consider that sufficient interest and motivation exists: such subjects in the past have included Classical civilisation, geography, history, music and religious studies, but any decision of this nature can only be reached in consultation with the relevant staff.

It must be said that although some of our U6 go on to take career-related degrees (such as medicine, law, business studies), the majority of subjects which girls choose to read at university are non-vocational ones such as classics, theology, history, English, biology and languages: employers are often more interested in an applicant's skills and the fact that a prospective employee has a good degree from an established university than in the specific subject content. It is also increasingly the case that building up one's CV through part-time employment, internships and voluntary work whilst at university is essential.

All this is a very long way ahead of girls currently at L5 stage. The crucial point to bear in mind is any known career aspirations (which will inevitably have an impact on option choice). However, if there is no definite goal as yet, then what matters most is to ensure that the subjects chosen do not preclude any future choices, by keeping as wide and as balanced a range of subjects as possible. As the girls will be following their subjects for two years it is important that they choose subjects which they enjoy and are good at, as grades obtained at GCSE are recorded on university application forms and are sometimes the first tools used by selectors. It is quite possible, having chosen three sciences for GCSE, to drop most science options and study primarily arts subjects for A level – it is far more difficult to do the reverse. It is important that choices are made with an eye to the sixth form, to ensure that there will be a range of options available to each individual.

All L5 girls are allocated to a nominated student guidance tutor in the spring term, who will arrange to see them on an individual basis and discuss their option choices with them. The student guidance team liaises with L5 form tutors, and parents are very welcome to contact either member of staff at any stage in the decision-making process if there is cause for anxiety or concern.

Mr TIM DIXON
director of student guidance

ART AND DESIGN

“Art is a technique of communication. The image is the most complete technique of all communication.”

Claus Oldenburg

Examination Board: AQA

Component One - portfolio

This accounts for 60% of the overall result and comprises one sustained project and a selection of further work. The sustained project is developed in response to a subject, theme, task or brief evidencing the journey from initial engagement with an idea(s) to the realisation of intentions.

Component Two - externally set assignment

The assignment accounts for 40% of the final GCSE mark. AQA will provide a separate externally set assignment paper with seven different starting points. You must select and respond to one starting point. An unlimited period of preparatory time is followed by 10 hours of supervised time during which you will produce your own unaided work. There is no restriction on the scale of work, media or materials used. You are free to seek advice from your teacher in the selection of your question and in the preparation of your work.

Why choose art and design for GCSE?

It teaches you lots of skills that will help you with all of your studies: undertaking research and investigation, problem solving, confidence building, visual awareness, ability to develop ideas, initiative and cultural understanding.

Who can take GCSE art and design?

You, if you are interested in art, craft or design and have an aptitude for the subject. If you want to explore your creative side or you simply enjoy the subject, then this is the course for you. It is about having an adventurous and enquiring approach to art and design and developing the knowledge to express it.

The practical skills you will develop doing art GCSE will be varied, with drawing underpinning all that you do, from painting, to photography, film-making, animation, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics and textiles. Ultimately, the direction you go in is down to you to choose. You will also:

- Develop the skills to investigate, analyse and experiment using art, craft and design
- Develop your imaginative powers and the skills to express your ideas, feelings and thoughts
- Develop an understanding of the language and conventions of art and design
- Develop an understanding of the place of art, craft and design in history and in society

“The world of reality has its limits; the world of imagination is boundless.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Mrs GERALDINE CLARK
head of art

BIOLOGY

Girls who study biology IGCSE are:

- Empathetic and are concerned for society
- Open-minded and curious about the natural world
- Are enquiring about their own health and physical wellbeing
- Intrigued by the interactions between organisms & what materials they are made of
- Persevere to learn what we can do about loss of biodiversity
- Able to make connections and use big picture thinking to learn about how we evolved
- Can see alternative perspectives and intellectually confident to discuss ethical issues surrounding issues such as cloning and stem cell use

In lessons you might:

- Make a life size diagram of the human digestive system
- Dissect a rat, an eye, kidney and lungs
- Record the respiration rate of maggots
- Test food samples for biological molecules
- Find out how bread and beer are made
- Use critical thinking skills to determine the best treatment for a patient with a deficiency disease
- Analyse the research of the effectiveness of antimicrobials on bacterial growth
- Apply complex and multi-step problem solving to determine the energy content of different types of foods
- Use originality and imagination to make a video of the human impacts on the environment

Biology has a huge number of applications in everyday life. Many of the decisions we make about our own activities and our collaboration with others and the environment have a biological basis. Biologists become highly analytical with data and employ linking skills to be able to use connections and big picture thinking. In addition, they are skilled communicators of challenging and complex ideas.

The **Pearson Edexcel IGCSE** is examined by two papers:

Paper 1	61%	2 hours
Paper 2	39%	1 hour 15 minutes

The course topics include:

- The nature and variety of living organisms
- Structures and functions in living organisms
- Reproduction and inheritance
- Ecology and the environment
- Use of biological resources

The course is examined in the summer term of U5. Practical work is conducted throughout the course and the theory papers will contain questions that relate to practical activities. Ecological field work is carried out during a day trip to Leeson House in Dorset, working at river and beach locations. The Royal Society Biology Challenge competition, to assess overall biological subject knowledge, takes place during M5.

Students tell us that they enjoy the subject because it is fascinating, challenging and relevant.

Dr REBECCA TOPLEY
head of biology

CHEMISTRY

Chemistry is a fantastic choice for students who wish to understand more about the world around them and enjoy the challenge of questions like “why?” and “what happens if?”

Through studying chemistry, students improve their logical thinking skills, make educated predications and critically evaluate theories and data. Through discussion and written tasks, students become more adept at articulating points succinctly and using accurate and specific terminology. Students are encouraged to ask questions and we indulge their curiosity through open-ended tasks and relating the theories studied to relevant, contemporary issues. The development of numerical skills is integral the course, as students learn to master balancing complex equations and solving multi-step problems. Practical work is frequently used to support theoretical knowledge, as students learn to strategically plan and carry out investigations.

Course topics include:

- Atomic structure
- Chemical structure and bonding
- Acids, bases and preparation of salts
- Energy changes and chemical equilibria
- Rates of reactions
- Forensic analysis
- Organic chemistry, including fuels and plastics
- Calculations, formulae and equations
- Reactions of elements, predicting behaviour and useful products
- Gases in our atmosphere, including types of pollution

The **Pearson Edexcel IGCSE** course followed is examined by two papers:

Students studying chemistry find the course challenging, fascinating and very satisfying.

Paper 1	Core topics	61%	2 hours
Paper 2	Advanced topics	39%	1 hour 15 minutes

Mr JAMES COPLEY
head of chemistry

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

Examination Board: OCR

Paper 1: Thematic Study

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 50%

You will study the topic of Women in the Ancient World. This study will begin by exploring a variety of individual women, looking at the representation of women in myth, key historical figures and the everyday lives and experiences of nameless women in Athens, Sparta and across the Roman World. By learning to interpret both material and literary sources you will be equipped to move from the concrete to the abstract, analysing and making deductions both about what it was like to be a woman in the ancient world and about how women were viewed by the men in control of their world. You will also focus on making informed comparisons between women's experiences in Greece and their very different lives in Rome, transferring your knowledge and your skills between the two societies. You will be able to articulate your personal views in an intellectual way by using evidence to support them, and you will begin to be able to extrapolate from ancient society to see where many of our own society's beliefs originate.

Paper 2: Literature and Culture

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 50%

You will study the Homeric world, by considering firstly the life and culture of Mycenaean society, including particular archaeological sites and the artefacts they yielded; you will hypothesise about and deduce what these can tell us about everyday life in the Mycenaean world. You will connect this society to the literature arising from it, reading part of one of the greatest works of Western literature, Homer's *Odyssey*, helping you to understand it as both a product of and a reflection on that world and its values. You will learn to deal with alternative readings of this work, and to articulate your own views of events and characters by pinpointing specific evidence for your ideas. You will also have the opportunity to explore concepts such as heroism and vengeance, both still key issues in our society today.

Girls who take Classical civilisation are:

- Excited about the ancient world
- Intrigued by the societies of the past and eager to learn about where we come from
- Prepared to read and discuss literature in a lively way
- Willing to take risks in class and explore ideas flexibly
- Interested in linking our world to the world of the past

In lessons you might...

- Perform part of Aristophanes' comedy *Assemblywomen*
- Discover the history behind the love affair of Antony and Cleopatra
- Write captions giving a voice to the women on the Bassae frieze in the British Museum
- Take a virtual tour of the royal palace at Mycenae or Tiryns
- Re-imagine one of the books of the *Odyssey* in a modern setting
- Create a collage to help you remember the key events of Odysseus' travels

Dr LIZA MARTIN
head of Classics

DRAMA

Examination Board: Eduqas (WJEC)

Why choose drama at GCSE?

Perhaps because you've enjoyed drama so far, you like going to the theatre and/or you are looking for some variety next year: you'd like a lesson where you're not sitting behind a desk all the time but, as often as possible, you're learning practically with others and sharing your work, rehearsals and performances with them. This course is varied and engaging and provides many opportunities for individual development and group awareness. If you choose drama, you will develop your understanding of current practitioners and your ability to analyse and evaluate the work of others. You will expand your knowledge and understanding of a range of texts and dramatic techniques in an active way. You will increase your knowledge and understanding of the social, cultural and historical contexts of theatre. You will improve your vital skills of creativity, self-confidence, presentation and communication.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT

Component one: 40%

60% of the total assessment

Devising from a choice of given stimuli. This means spending time developing your own piece of theatre. This is an interesting and stimulating process which creates fascinating results.

Component two: 20%

Performing from a text. As a group you will rehearse and perform sections from a relevant and exciting text.

WRITTEN PAPER

Component three: 40%

40% of the total assessment

Interpreting theatre. Section A: short and long questions on a set text. Section B: live theatre review. A fantastic element of the course is that you have to go to the theatre to see productions in order to comment on these in the final exam. We try to find the most current and engaging productions which are on so that you can be excited, interested and enthused by what you see.

Please note: *Travel tickets to the theatre may be subsidised by the department. Also note that choosing drama as a GCSE option may have implications for your co-curricular activity choices. We try very hard to avoid clashes with other activities, but where these occur drama as a curricular subject takes precedence.*

Mr PEPE GUDIÑO-RESÉNDIZ
head of Drama

ENGLISH

“No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.”

Dead Poets' Society

At the heart of the study of English is the will to make a difference. Studying literature can enrich our understanding and experience; developing ideas in speech and writing can afford us confidence and the opportunity to exceed our expectations.

Examination Board: AQA

All girls will take both the GCSE English language and GCSE English literature examinations.

GCSE English Language consists of examined units. Paper One (Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing) tests students on their ability to read and analyse a piece of unseen literature before writing a creative piece responding to some stimulus material. Paper Two (Writers' Viewpoints and Perspectives) asks them to answer questions responding to two pieces of literary non-fiction which might be journalistic or epistolary. They are then required to produce a piece of non-fiction writing showing skills of adapting to the appropriate audience and purpose. Reading and writing skills are equally weighted in this GCSE with 20% of the marks overall available for accuracy. Both examinations are 1 hour and 45 minutes long.

Alongside preparation for the two examinations, the English Language GCSE also requires that students undertake a speaking and listening assessment. This is marked internally and moderated by AQA and carries a separate endorsement not related to the overall grade of the GCSE.

GCSE English literature involves the study of texts leading towards two externally examined units. Paper One accounts for 40% of the GCSE and examines students on their response to one Shakespeare play and one nineteenth century novel. The examination is 1 hour and 45 minutes long. Paper Two accounts for 60% of the GCSE and examines students on their response to a modern prose or drama text, an anthology provided by the board and unseen poetry. This paper tests them particularly on their comparative skills and is 2 hours and 15 minutes long.

Skills and qualities addressed through the study of English:

- Communicating accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and in writing
- Understanding and responding imaginatively, and at times originally, to what is heard, read and experienced in a variety of media
- Enjoying and appreciating literature, whether read, spoken or acted
- Being critical of language and effect
- Understanding English grammar, spelling, punctuation and general usage as an aid to achieving efficient communication
- Developing empathy, confidence and respect for others and ourselves

Mrs NAOMI ANSON
head of English

Examination Board: Cambridge International O level

Why study fashion and textiles?

Fashion and textiles is a practical-based subject, which will **appeal to girls who are keen to develop creative skills**. It provides an opportunity to consider patterns, fitting and assembly of garments as well as build on decorative skills such as embroidery and appliqué. Textile lessons will involve practical sample work using the sewing machines as well as exploring textile techniques. Pupils will be able to develop an understanding of fibres and the selection of fabrics and components. Girls will also complete a study of a fashion designer and an accessory designer. These are practical skills that will last a lifetime.

You will be studying:

- Dressmaking processes – seams, collars, cuffs, sleeves, darts, pleats, pockets, etc.;
- Application of colour – tie and dye, applique, embroidery patchwork, etc.;
- Fibres and fabrics – properties of common fabrics, how they are constructed and how this makes it suitable for its end use;
- Style and fashion – study of a fashion designer, shopping patterns;
- How textile products are mass-produced – the use of CAD/CAM, consideration of environmental issues.

Scheme of Assessment

Girls will learn to work with precision and self regulate in order to achieve the highest result.

Method of assessment	Percentage	What's involved
Exam paper	50	This consists of a two-hour written examination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section A consists of short answer questions. • Section B consists of structured questions. Girls will have to complete 3 out of 5 possible questions.
Coursework – Fashion item	25	Design and make a skirt with decorative machine embroidery Accompanying folder
Coursework – Fashion accessory	25	Design and make a colourful bag using the technique of quilting Accompanying folder

Ms RACHEL MEMERY
head of food and textiles

Why study the new food GCSE?

This exciting new GCSE will equip students with the knowledge, understanding and skills required to cook and apply the principles of food science, nutrition and healthy eating.

During the course you will have opportunities to

- Plan, prepare and cook using a variety of food commodities, cooking techniques and equipment. You will learn to make choux pastry, fresh pasta, bread, pastry, many desserts and healthy savoury products.
- Understand the relationship between diet, nutrition and health: for example, how to maintain healthy body weight throughout life and diet related health risks including obesity, iron deficiency anaemia, bone health and cardiovascular health.
- Develop an understanding of the functional properties of starch, sugar, protein and fat: for example, how a sauce gelatinises, how a cake aerates and the importance of coagulation when making a custard.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of functional and nutritional properties, sensory qualities and microbiological food safety considerations when preparing, processing, storing, cooking and serving food.
- Understand the social, economic, cultural and environmental influences of food availability, production processes and diet and health choices: for example, understanding how multicultural factors affect food production and considering organic farming, fair-trade, farm assured and reducing food miles when buying foods.
- Understand and explore a range of ingredients and processes from different culinary traditions, to inspire new ideas or modify existing recipes.
- Develop an understanding of the various factors that influence food choice and learn how to make informed choices about foods to achieve a varied and balanced diet.

Scheme of Assessment

1. Written paper (50%) – 20 multiple choice questions followed by longer answer questions.

2. Non-examination assessment – theme is set by the exam board. Girls will learn to work with precision and self-regulate in order to achieve the highest result.

35% food practical exam –this will test students' knowledge, skills & understanding of the planning, cooking and presentation of food. The students will plan a menu of three dishes and then prepare, cook and present it in a three hour period.

15% food investigation task –students will be investigating and evaluating the working characteristics, functional and chemical properties of ingredients to achieve a particular result related to the preparation and cooking of food, and produce a 2,000-word report setting out their findings.

Ms RACHEL MEMERY
head of food and textiles

GEOGRAPHY

“Geography is the ‘world subject’: it helps us develop knowledge and understanding of the world, and our place in it. Through its study we develop the knowledge, understanding and skills that enable us to grasp our common humanity and our relationships - with each other and the environmental resources on which life depends. By thinking geographically about the past and the present we are better equipped to imagine our possible futures. It should be an entitlement for all young people.”

John Hopkin and David Lambert, 2010.

Examination Board: AQA

The GCSE qualification will consist of three examinations: one physical geography paper, one human geography, and one based on geographical skills and coursework.

Paper 1 Living with the physical environment.

Duration 1hr 30mins Weighting 35%

The topics we study are the challenge of natural hazards, the living world, and physical landscapes in the UK.

Paper 2 Human Geography

Duration 1hr 30mins Weighting 35%

The topics we study are urban issues and challenges, the changing economic world, and the challenge of resource management.

Paper 3

Duration 1hr 15mins Weighting 30%

This includes an issue evaluation based on pre-released material and generic questions on fieldwork as well as the application of geographical skills

In order to complete the compulsory fieldwork element of the course in preparation for paper 3 we take the students on a four-night, five-day residential fieldtrip to the Lake District at the start of the second half of the summer term. This usually costs around £400 depending on the number of students opting for geography.

Geography is all around us and it provides a useful link between the social sciences and pure sciences allowing you to see the ‘bigger picture’. The course we follow provides a balanced mix of human and physical geography, and looks at how our world is shaped and affected by the interaction between people and the natural environment.

The aim of GCSE geography is to acquire knowledge and understanding of a range of places throughout the world as well as an understanding of physical and human processes affecting their development. Throughout the course there is a strong emphasis on key geographical themes and issues as well as people, their varied environments and the ways in which they interact.

“Geography graduates are highly employable.” -- The Times Educational Supplement

Geographers develop a wide range of cartographic, analytical and graphical skills that are highly valued by employers. They also learn to synthesise material from a variety of sources, which is invaluable in making decisions that shape our future world.

Mr JONATHAN BROWN
head of geography

GREEK

Examination Board: OCR

N.B. There is one compulsory paper (paper 1) and then a choice of two papers from a possible four more. We will be preparing candidates for papers 2 and 4.

Paper 1: Language Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes Weighting: 50%

This language paper has two sections. The first, worth 30 marks, will ask you to answer comprehension questions and EITHER answer some grammar questions OR translate three short sentences into Greek. The second section, worth 70 marks, will ask you to answer some more comprehension questions and then translate a short passage from Greek to English. In order to achieve highly, you will have spent two years honing and perfecting your analytical skills, focusing on precise analysis of grammar and unravelling complex sentences through a step-by-step approach. You will find that some aspects of the paper will not require active thinking, because your knowledge of Greek forms and vocabulary will be automatic by that point; and your ability to think flexibly about how to express the language, and how to check and self-correct, will be invaluable in the timed situation.

Paper 2: Prose literature Duration: 1 hour Weighting: 25%

This paper offers you the opportunity to read and respond to a real Greek text, written in prose – usually passages by Herodotus, the father of history. You will be highly familiar with the text before the exam, and you will be able to make connections between the different themes and ideas it explores. You will also be confident in articulating ideas about the text, both on a detailed linguistic level and a more abstract holistic one; and you will be eager to generate your own responses to it, based on deductions from specific evidence.

Paper 3: Poetry literature Duration: 1 hour Weighting: 25%

This paper is the real treat – it offers the opportunity to read and respond to a passage of Homer, exploring the earliest (and some say, never bettered) literature of western civilisation. You will again have a familiarity with the text before the exam; and this will enable you to express your own views of the characters who people it and the themes it explores. You will need to think about big ideas as well as the key details which create them; and you will have the opportunity to create new readings, considering the complexities and ambiguities inherent in Homeric scholarship.

Girls who take Greek are:

- Excited about the ancient world
- Intrigued by the structures of language and eager to learn about words
- Prepared to read and discuss literature in a lively way
- Keen to discover the world of ancient Greece through its language
- Interested in immersing themselves in a new linguistic challenge

In lessons you will...

- Gain a full and thorough knowledge of Greek grammar
- Explore how much of English comes from Greek roots
- Learn to recognise the patterns of Greek to help you translate with ease

In lessons you might...

- Learn how the Greeks regarded other cultures
- Explore how the stories the Greeks told about themselves explain their own society
- Learn about the values of warriors, focused on undying fame
- Discuss how Greek ideals still form a key part of our world today

Dr LIZA MARTIN
head of classics

HISTORY

“Those who do not know history are destined to repeat it.”

Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

Studying history at GCSE level appeals to pupils who are:

- Curious and open-minded about the modern world and want to understand some of the key ideas that shaped it
- Interested in people and the problems they have faced in the past
- Prepared to go beyond the basic facts and consider an issue from different perspectives

Some of the skills and qualities developed from studying history at GCSE level are:

- The ability to think logically and critically
- The ability to make connections
- The ability to think flexibly
- The ability to construct an argument and support it with relevant information
- The ability to express ideas concisely and convincingly
- The habit of asking probing questions
- Being better informed about the world in which we live

Examination Board: Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (IGCSE)

Paper 1: Germany: development of dictatorship, 1918-45

A world divided: superpower relations, 1943-72

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 50%

In the Germany unit pupils study the establishment, difficult beginnings and subsequent Golden Years of the Weimar Republic, the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, life in Nazi Germany and how it changed with the coming of war.

In the superpower relations unit pupils learn about why the Cold War developed, three crises in that War and reasons for Détente.

Paper 2: The USA, 1918-41 Changes in medicine, c.1848-c.1948

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 50%

In the America unit pupils learn about the Roaring Twenties (reasons for, and effects of, the economic boom, and increasing social tensions), causes and consequences of the Wall Street Crash, the impact of the Depression and the New Deal.

In the medicine unit pupils study how medical knowledge and understanding, surgery, hospital treatment, the role of women, and public health provision changed and the reasons for those changes.

Dr DAVID FILTNESS
head of history

LATIN

Examination Board: OCR

N.B. There is one compulsory paper (paper 1) and then a choice of two papers from a possible four more. We will be preparing candidates for papers 3 and 4.

Paper 1: Language

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Weighting: 50%

This language paper has two sections. The first, worth 30 marks, will ask you to answer comprehension questions and EITHER answer some grammar questions OR translate three short sentences into Latin. The second section, worth 70 marks, will ask you to answer some more comprehension questions and then translate a short passage from Latin to English. In order to achieve highly, you will have spent two years honing and perfecting your analytical skills, focusing on precise analysis of grammar and unravelling complex sentences through a step-by-step approach. You will find that some aspects of the paper will not require active thinking, because your knowledge of Latin forms and vocabulary will be automatic by that point; and your ability to think flexibly about how to express the language, and how to check and self-correct, will be invaluable in the timed situation.

Paper 2: Prose literature

Duration: 1 hour

Weighting: 25%

This paper offers you a chance to read and respond to a real Latin text, written in prose – usually passages exploring a key area of Roman history. Your familiarity with the text before the exam will enhance your ability to make connections between the different themes and ideas it explores. You will also be confident in articulating ideas about the text, both on a detailed linguistic level and a more abstract holistic one; and you will be eager to generate your own responses to it, based on deductions from specific evidence.

Paper 3: Poetry literature

Duration: 1 hour

Weighting: 25%

This paper offers the chance to read and study some Latin poetry, exploring the topics of life, love and loss as they were depicted by a variety of Roman poets. You will again have the opportunity to get to know the text in a very thorough way before the exam; and this will enable you to express your own views of the way meaning is precisely created through the poet's linguistic choices as well as exploring on a larger scale the key issues under discussion. You will also be encouraged to generate your own ideas, and to seek evidence for them from close reading of the text as well as wider consideration of the society which produced it.

Girls who take Latin are:

- Excited about the ancient world
- Intrigued by the structures of language and eager to learn about words
- Prepared to read and discuss literature in a lively way
- Keen to discover the world of Rome through its language and in linguistic challenge

In lessons you will...

- Gain a full and thorough knowledge of Latin grammar
- Explore how much of English comes from Latin roots
- Learn to recognise the patterns of Latin to help you translate with ease

In lessons you might...

- Learn how the Romans regarded other cultures
- Explore how the stories the Romans told about themselves explain their own society
- Learn about the key values of Rome and how they changed through time
- Discuss how Roman ideals still form a key part of our world today

Dr LIZA MARTIN
head of Classics

MATHEMATICS

Examination Board: Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (IGCSE)

All students take this subject.

The IGCSE Mathematics qualification will be graded on a nine-grade scale from 9 to 1 where 9 is the highest grade. For Foundation Tier grades 5–1 are available, and for Higher Tier grades 9–4 are available. At St Swithun's we expect to enter all our divisions for the Higher tier. There is no controlled or non-examination assessment.

Mathematics International GCSE aims to provide students with opportunities to:

- Develop their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and techniques
- Acquire a foundation of mathematical skills for further study in the subject or related areas
- Enjoy using and applying mathematical techniques and concepts, and become confident in using mathematics to solve problems
- Appreciate the importance of mathematics in society, employment and study

What will be learned in studying this course? First and foremost, students will be gaining experience of solving problems. The skills of analysing a situation, coming up with a plan as to how to solve the problem and then carrying this through, dealing with any difficulties on the way, are highly prized.

Secondly, students will encounter powerful ideas and techniques that have evolved over thousands of years – including algebra, trigonometry, geometry and even calculus. They will learn how to apply the principles, choosing the right technique for the given situation.

It is true that this sounds like hard work. But anything worth learning takes effort and mathematics is no different. What makes the process special is that the students will meet wonderful challenges along the way: the problems that at first sight look hard, but with thought and application, can be solved. People like challenges. Challenges are good. If things are too easy then most people will in fact be de-motivated. Why do so many people do Su Doku puzzles? Or crosswords? The buzz that you get after each minor triumph and, if you can get there, the burst of satisfaction when a problem has been solved is wonderful. It is like scoring the winning goal or hitting a six. If you could bottle it, you would make millions.

Our aim in the department is that every student studying mathematics at St Swithun's will have an enjoyable and successful experience. All students will face challenges over the two years but they will also learn how to overcome them.

Mr TINU KURIAN
head of mathematics

MODERN LANGUAGES FRENCH, GERMAN AND SPANISH

Examination Board: AQA

The syllabus is changing in 2024 - Final confirmation tbc – first examination in 2026

Paper 1: Listening **Duration: 45 minutes** **Weighting: 25%**

Section A: You will hear a series of conversations and interviews, with questions to answer in English.
Section B: You will hear 5 sentences in the target language, read out 3 times, which you must write down correctly in the target language.

Paper 2: Reading **Duration: 1 hour** **Weighting: 25%**

Section A: You will read a series of texts and answer questions on them in English. Section B: You will also do a translation of 5 sentences from French, Spanish or German into English.

Paper 3: Speaking **Duration: 10-12 minutes plus** **Paper 3: Speaking**
preparation time beforehand

You will do one role-play, answer questions on a photo-card and have short conversations on two GCSE topics, one of which you will have chosen in advance.

Paper 4: Writing **Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes** **Weighting: 25%**

At St Swithun's, we believe that all girls should achieve a qualification in at least one foreign language. Learning a foreign language to GCSE level will enable you to:

- Be open-minded and embrace cultural differences as enriching and intellectually intriguing;
- Making connections between different grammar and syntax systems compared to your mother tongue(s), in other words, your analytical skills improve;
- Become a master in self-regulation and strive for ever greater speed and accuracy in your vocabulary recall;
- Be risk-friendly towards a range of real-life situations abroad, orally and on paper;
- Make yourself understood while visiting or receiving visitors from neighbouring countries;
- Enhance your employment chances in an international marketplace;
- Bridge the gap between GCSE and A-level with ease, as we use AQA for both levels.

Keen linguists, particularly those who are thinking of languages at university or those with aspirations to work in Europe and beyond, are encouraged to take two languages at GCSE. We strongly advise that girls opting for MFL GCSE participate in the available study visits or exchanges.

Ms STEPHANIE STRATFORD
head of French

Mrs ANNE STEER
head of German

Mrs NELLY PORTER
head of Spanish

MUSIC

Examination Board: Pearson Edexcel GCSE

This course will allow you to develop skills and gain musical knowledge through listening, performing and composing, understanding the connections between the disciplines to develop your all-round musicianship. You will study western and non-western styles of music, also developing an appreciation of cultural similarities and differences.

There are three components:

1. Performing (30%)

- This part of the course will develop your resilience, perseverance and confidence to express yourself musically.
- You will perform two separate pieces of at least 4 minutes combined duration.
- Your solo and ensemble performances must each be at least 1 minute in duration
- Performances are recorded and marked in school, then sent for external moderation.

2. Composing (30%)

- Composing will encourage you to take risks, create and evolve your ideas and solve complex problems.
- You will compose two compositions of at least 3 minutes combined duration.
- One free composition and one composition based on a brief set by the exam board, each of which must be at least 1 minute in duration.
- Compositions are marked internally and then sent for external moderation.

3. Listening and Appraising (40%)

- This unit will encourage you to use your imagination to describe music in concrete and abstract terms, as you think analyse and think critically about the piece.
- You will study eight set works, chosen from four Areas of Study: Instrumental Music 1700-1820, Vocal Music, Music for Stage and Screen and Fusions.
- This component is assessed through a written examination of 1 hour and 45 minutes. In Section A there are 6 short answer questions, one melody/rhythm completion exercise and one question on an unfamiliar piece. In Section B students compare and evaluate the musical elements, contexts and language of one set work with one unfamiliar piece.

Girls who opt for music GCSE...

- Find they can gain a qualification in a subject that they already greatly enjoy;
- Have the opportunity to perform and compose in a variety of styles;
- Take part in trips to concerts and operas.

Mr IAIN SANSOM
assistant director of music

PHYSICS

Students will enjoy studying physics if they are curious about how the Universe and want to understand why the world works the way it does. They will have opportunities to understand the abstract concepts that underpin our understanding of physics and see how to use the concepts to explain similar situations.

Students will develop their ability to

- Problem solve by choosing appropriate concepts and combining them to form something new.
- Connect concepts to data in order to explain why patterns are seen.
- Think and write logically about physics.
- Work precisely and accurately through thoroughly understanding how to use the concept effectively.
- Be curious by asking 'why' when they see something new.

Examination: Pearson Edexcel International GCSE (IGCSE)

The course is examined through two papers. The first is based on the core syllabus (61%), the second tests both core and extension topics (39%). You will sit these exams in the summer term of U5.

Some of the topics studied are as follows

- Matter – What is the structure of atoms? What are the dangers associated with radioactivity? How do fusion and fission work?
- Light - What is it and how do we use it? What exactly are X-rays, radio waves, infra-red waves and microwaves?
- Sound and ultrasound – How does music work? Will an iPod damage your hearing?
- Electricity – Is static electricity dangerous? What is electric current and how is it used?
- Astronomy – How do stars form and how did the universe evolve?

The course has been designed so that even if you do not study physics beyond this level you will still have seen some of the vitality of this important subject and will have useful knowledge and skills for any future study or work. Physics teaches students how to question and think about everything in the fascinating physical world around them and gives them an excellent grounding in how to begin to explain it all. Our course is also an excellent basis for A-level physics and the many career opportunities this opens up.

Dr SUSAN STURTON
head of physics

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The course

We follow the *AQA Religious Studies A (The Study of Religions and Thematic Studies)* GCSE specification, which critically analyses key religious teachings and practices from Christian and Hindu perspectives, as well as the place of religion, philosophy and ethics in the modern world.

In *The Study of Religions*, we ask....

Is the accepted nature of God a logical one?

Why do some people believe, when others do not?

Do miracles happen today?

What happens when we die?

Has science made religion irrelevant in the 21st century?

Why does suffering happen?

In *Thematic Studies*, we ask.....

What makes a good relationship?

What is the role of women in society?

Should abortion be banned?

Where does life come from?

Do we have a duty to look after the Earth?

What is injustice?

When is war right?

Who takes religious studies GCSE?

You do not have to belong to a religious tradition to study religious studies: anyone can enjoy studying the subject. Whether you are thinking about a career in law or medicine, science or the arts, or even if you haven't got a clue about your future studies yet, everyone can benefit from exploring philosophical and ethical ideas.

Do you want to develop an enquiring and critical mind?

Do you want to broaden your understanding of contemporary ethical and social issues?

Are you interested in looking at the values and ideals that underpin our culture and the culture of others?

Are you ready to develop your analytical skills and ability to evaluate complex issues?

The religious studies GCSE gives you a great opportunity to do all these things.

Mr JEREMY YOUNG
head of religion, philosophy and ethics

SCIENCE (DOUBLE AWARD)

Students studying the double award course continue with all three strands of science: biology, chemistry and physics. It is therefore a fantastic choice for students who have really enjoyed their study of science but may not wish to devote the time that three separate IGCSEs would take, as they can use the additional time to study another subject.

The course is delivered in a modular form, with complete topics from each of the sciences being studied as self-contained units. The course is varied, stimulating and has a great deal of 'hands-on' practical work and activities. Students develop thinking skills and the ability to articulate explanations with clarity using accurate and precise terminology.

Topics studied include:

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE course followed is examined by three papers, each at higher level, in the three strands of science: biology, chemistry and physics.

Biology

- Nature and variety of living organisms
- Structures and functions in living organisms
- Reproduction and inheritance
- Ecology and the environment
- Use of biological resources

Chemistry

- Principles of chemistry: bonding and structures
- Chemistry of the elements
- Organic chemistry
- Physical chemistry
- Chemistry in Industry

Physics

- Forces and motion
- Electricity and waves
- Energy resources and transfer
- Solids, liquids and gases
- Magnetism
- Radioactivity and particles

The Pearson Edexcel International GCSE course followed is examined by three papers, each at higher level, in the three strands of science: biology, chemistry and physics.

Each paper lasts 2 hours, and the average score across the three papers will be used to award two IGCSE grades for science, hence double science. The grades may be identical, or may be different, e.g. grades 8+7 indicates a better performance in IGCSE double science than grades 7+7.

Students studying double science have a wonderful opportunity to achieve the national expectation for science study by continuing with all three strands. It is fun, stimulating, relevant and a great grounding in the basics needed for everyday life.

Dr REBECCA TOPLEY, Mr JAMES COPLEY
joint heads of science



St Swithun's

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