



Oundle School

The Fourth and Fifth Form GCSE Options

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Introduction

We aim to provide a broad and challenging curriculum for all pupils in the Fourth and Fifth Forms. The core curriculum is supplemented by the choice of five option subjects.

The Core Subjects

The qualifications for all of the core subjects are IGCSEs. IGCSEs are an international equivalent of GCSEs and are recognised as such by universities and employers. The following subjects are taken by all pupils:

English

All pupils are prepared for the Edexcel IGCSE in English Language. Pupils also follow an expansive English Literature course developed by the English Department, for which there is no external assessment.

Mathematics

All pupils will take the IGCSE course, normally taking the examination in the Fifth Form.

Sciences

All pupils are prepared for the IGCSE in Science. Biology, Chemistry and Physics are taught as separate subjects to all pupils. In the Fifth Form the decision will be made as to which pupils take the three Sciences as separate subjects (Triple Award) and which take the Dual Award Science examination, which is equivalent to two GCSEs.

Ethical Issues

In addition to their examined courses, all pupils follow an Ethical Issues course for one lesson a week in the Fourth Form. This course has several elements: moral issues facing society today (the beginning and end of life, war, race relations, human rights) and a short course on the formation of human relationships. There is no formal assessment of this course.

The Option Subjects

Pupils choose five subjects from the following list:

Art	German*
Chinese*§	Greek
Computing	History
Design Technology	Latin
Drama	Music
Electronics	Religious Studies
French*	Spanish*
Geography	Sport Science

*We require all pupils to take at least one modern foreign language (French, Spanish, German or Chinese). Please note that the GCSE and subsequent examinations in French, German and Spanish have similar requirements and are of comparable standards of difficulty in all three languages. It is usually advantageous for pupils to continue to study the language which they have studied the longest. Please note that the Chinese course does not lead to a GCSE.

§The Chinese course is designed for beginners. Pupils take the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualifications at Beginner and Intermediate level. These qualifications are recognised by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Places on the Chinese course are limited and the Director of Studies will take the final decision on who follows the course.

We encourage pupils to keep an open mind, and to consider all subjects and all possible subject combinations equally. The pupils' primary consideration should be which subjects they have the most interest in. However, it is important that the combination of subjects is well balanced and pupils should be aware of the implications of their subject choices on future career possibilities. Pupils who maintain breadth in their curriculum are unlikely to find themselves constrained later on in their careers and university course choices.

Pupils should discuss their options with their Tutors, Hsms and parents. Pupils are also encouraged to speak to their subject teachers and to Heads of Departments about how subjects develop in the Fourth and Fifth Forms. The Careers Department (which is housed in Old Dryden) will help pupils seeking advice about subjects needed for various careers. In the rare situation that a chosen combination of subjects is not possible, pupils will be asked to re-select options.

Preliminary discussions will take place before the Parents' Reception on **Sunday 4 May** with final choices submitted to Hsms during their House period the following **Wednesday 7 May**.

Art

Art is a very rewarding option which concentrates on the development of practical skills over the two year course. Pupils who feel that, at this stage, they lack the talent to choose Art at GCSE should not be put off as genuine interest, organisation and self-discipline are the most important prerequisites and will improve proficiency. The first part of the course is based on set projects, but after that pupils have the opportunity to follow their own personal paths. The Art Department at Oundle is very much based on Fine Art and concentrates on the following disciplines; drawing, painting, printing, sculpture and fabrics. Three pieces of course work have to be produced over the two year period. Coursework (60%) and the final exam (40%) can be submitted in any of the disciplines listed above.

Chinese

Chinese is offered to linguistically able, determined and ambitious pupils in the Fourth Form. The aim is not to reach Chinese GCSE in two years, but rather the course will focus on the new Asset languages scheme (www.assetlanguages.org.uk) with Preliminary level Asset the target after two years, and the possibility of sitting Chinese GCSE in the Lower Sixth. Audio-visual and online resources will complement the *Ni Hao* and *Chinese Made Easy* textbooks. Pupils will develop good skills in speaking and listening, and make a start at the extremely challenging written language. They will learn to read and write characters, and will be introduced to the art of calligraphy. History, current affairs and the culture of the Chinese will form an important part of the curriculum. Young people with an understanding of this vast, fascinating country will be better prepared for the international workplace and the society of the future. Chinese can be continued into the Sixth Form as an Extension Course. This course is only suitable for pupils with an aptitude for languages.

Computing

This is an exciting and challenging course which provides scope for students to really explore complex elements of computing. It leads to an IGCSE in Computing and does not require any previous study of the subject. The practical element (25%) of the course is focused on the development of computer programming skills and techniques, in this case using Visual Basic. Students will also be taught algorithm design and the fundamentals of computer architecture. Pupils will develop good systems analysis, design, implementation, testing and evaluation techniques. Problem solving skills and methods are explored and used as part of the process of producing a programmed and fully documented project. For the theory element (75%, 2½ hour written examination) pupils learn about the applications of computers, the social and economic implications of their use, including computer related law, and the different types of system. The most able programmers will be given the opportunity to compete in the prestigious British Informatics Olympiad.

Design Technology

This GCSE option aims to develop practical workshop skills in combination with those of communication and presentation. The course offers the opportunity for pupils to develop the fundamentals of design and innovation: how to design, how to communicate design, production techniques, computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), workshop skills, materials, structures and basic mechanisms. The coursework project (60%) provides scope for creativity and allows individuals to explore their particular interests, culminating in a design- and-make project. The course is a mix of classroom and practical sessions that require an organised, steady commitment over the two-year period.

Drama

This course develops the vital skills of communication, teamwork and presentation, as well as investigating the performance and technical disciplines of drama, both through practical application and observation of professional theatre. There are three coursework modules and a written examination. The coursework modules include: a piece of theatre criticism, the preparation and performance of a devised piece of theatre, and the preparation and performance of an extract of text. For the latter two it is possible to take a design option (e.g. lighting, costume, sound) rather than acting. The written examination is based on the study of two texts, with the emphasis on how they transfer from the page to the stage. The course requires all candidates to see some professional theatre.

Electronics

The GCSE Electronics course covers all aspects of digital (e.g. computer) and analogue (e.g. audio) electronics, and does not require any previous knowledge of the subject. Emphasis is placed on microprocessor systems, computers, and micro-controllers. The course builds on the work done in the Third Form. However, pupils who did not take that course will not be at a disadvantage. After simple circuits are understood they can be linked together to form more sophisticated systems such as hi-fi amplifiers, sound-to-light-converters, disco faders and even computers.

Although the course involves a certain amount of theory, the majority of the work will be of a practical nature: designing, building, testing and evaluating circuits. Some circuits will be explored using simulation software such as Livewire, and project work will be undertaken where pupils design and make their own printed circuit boards using Livewire and PCB Wizard e.g. a remote controlled light switch.

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The GCSE examination requires a project to be undertaken which results in a finished electronic system: this takes about twenty hours of lesson time and is worth up to 25% of the total marks. The other coursework component is a research assignment on Electronics in Society (15%). There is one two-hour written paper which contributes the other 60% of the marks.

French

Pupils are examined in four skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing (25% each), with most pupils sitting the writing exam and small number of pupils opting for coursework. Lessons place strong emphasis on comprehension and oral work. Pupils are encouraged to practise their skills in France, for example by taking part in exchange visits, which can be arranged by the School, or in the GCSE revision trip at Easter.

Geography

The course (OCR Specification A 1986) includes the study of both Physical and Human Geography organised into four units of work as follows: (1) People and the Physical World (Plate Tectonics, Rivers and Coasts); (2) People and Places to Live (Population and Settlement); (3) People and their Needs (Quality of Life, Economic Activities and Energy); (4) People and the Environment (Tropical Rainforest Ecosystem, Pollution, Acid Rain, Global Warming and management of National Parks.)

There are two written papers, both based upon structured questions. Paper 2 counts for 50% of the total marks and assesses knowledge and understanding of the topics studied in a two-hour exam. Paper 4 counts for 25% of the total marks and is mainly a skills-based paper, one hour in length. There is one piece of coursework (Paper 5; 25% of the final mark). This consists of an individual project of up to 2000 words in length, based on group fieldwork and completed in lesson/prep time in the Michaelmas/Christmas Quarters of the Fifth Form. Two days of fieldwork are organised, one in the Fourth Form (to East Yorkshire or Norfolk) and one in the Fifth Form (to Stamford).

German

Four linguistic skills are examined: speaking, writing, reading and listening. The syllabus allows time to explore some areas of wider interest beyond the required practical topics, and pupils will gain the opportunity to enjoy some of the more intellectual and artistic aspects of German-speaking societies. Short works of literary fiction, poems, music and film will all provide challenges to begin to discover the extraordinary chemistry of the German world. Pupils will be strongly encouraged to advance their oral skills and confidence by taking part in the long-established exchange programme with Hamburg.

Greek

The necessary grammar is completed in the Fourth Form, and a selection of original Greek literature is read and considered in the Fifth Form. Translation and comprehension skills for Paper 1 (50%) are developed with the steady consolidation of vocabulary (there is a defined vocabulary list) and grammatical knowledge. The set text for the verse literature paper (30%) is currently either Book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey* or a Euripides' tragedy; 180 lines are read in the Greek and the rest studied in English. The prose literature paper (20%) currently offers the opportunity to read either extracts from two speeches by Demosthenes and from Aristotle's *Poetics*, or extracts from the work of the first literary historian, Herodotus. In the Fifth Form pupils will be able to have some say in choosing between the texts on offer for their year. There is no coursework.

History

The course is divided into three papers. The Depth Study Paper covers Germany 1919-1939 and Russia 1914-1941. This is complemented by an Outline Paper which takes the form of a wider study of International Relations, 1919-1963 as well as looking at Britain's role in the First World War. The coursework exercises (25%) are based on a study of the Second World War.

Latin

The course leads to four short papers, the first two of 1 hour 15 minutes (60%), and the second two of 45 minutes (40%). The first language paper has a graded translation and comprehensions (questions in English to answer in English) on connected passages of unseen Latin. For this paper there is a defined vocabulary list. The verse literature paper involves translation and comment on context, background and literary content on about 180 lines of set text (either from Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* or a selection of short pieces by a number of poets).

The second language paper offers a choice between either another unseen (with 125 extra words in the defined vocabulary) or a translation from English into Latin. The prose literature paper questions involve translation and commentary on context, background and literary content of some 120 lines of either Pliny or Caesar and Tacitus. There is no coursework.

Music

The course covers a diversity of skills through the integration of performing, composing, listening and appraising, including opportunities to become familiar with and utilise music technology. Work is based on four prescribed Areas of Study. These cover a wide range of topics, including the Western Classical Tradition and Popular Music in Context. Music from films and musicals will also be included. Through learning compositional techniques, and how to use sequencing and notation software, as well as analysing music and learning to place it in its social and historical context, pupils will be prepared for GCSE as well as more advanced study.

The examination consists of:

- a) Performance: *A solo performance (15%) and performance during the course (15%)*
- b) Composition: *Two compositions based on two different areas of study (30%)*
- c) Listening and Appraising: *A 1½ hour written examination based on recorded extracts taken from the Areas of Study (40%)*

Religious Studies

The course examines the diversity of traditions and practices within Christianity and Islam, from Eastern Orthodox to Non-Conformist, and from Sunni to Shi'ah. It does not presuppose a Christian or Muslim commitment. By investigating these faiths it attempts to bring the pupils to a deeper understanding of what it would be like to be a member of each of the different traditions. A range of topics, such as the role and status of women, wealth and poverty, abortion, euthanasia and suffering, are examined. On each topic Christian, Muslim and secular perspectives are discussed and evaluated. There are two pieces of coursework of about 1500 words each (20%) and two examination papers.

Spanish

The emphasis is on spoken Spanish and aural comprehension, ensuring that the GCSE qualification is of real practical value. Pupils who take this subject are encouraged to take part in the Spanish Exchange to Rota near Cádiz at Easter. Coursework is an option for the written component, although good linguists will be encouraged to take the written examination.

Sport Science

This course is assessed by two components: a terminal examination (40%) and a practical internally assessed coursework component (60%). The written paper is divided into four sections: Section A (health, fitness and the factors affecting performance in games), Section B (principles of training for games activities), Section C (factors affecting individual performance and participation in games) and Section D (social and cultural factors affecting participation in games). The coursework component consists of planning, performing and evaluating a health related exercise programme to improve performance in a game and also by participating in four different games of the pupil's choosing, with ongoing internal assessment and a final external assessment.

A Note about GCSE Coursework

Many GCSE courses contain a coursework element. Coursework is independent work completed by pupils during the course which is submitted for formal assessment to the examination boards. Marks from coursework are combined with marks from examinations to form the overall grade. The proportion assessed by coursework varies from subject to subject. Similarly, rules for completion of coursework vary from subject to subject, including the amount of preparation, help available from teachers, the possibility of re-submission of marked pieces of work and time available for working on the piece outside the classroom. There is one fundamental rule for all pieces of coursework which is that the work submitted must be the pupil's own. Pupils who do not adhere to the rules for one subject may be considered to be cheating by the examination boards with the possible result that they will be failed for all of their GCSEs.

A Note about Educational Support

Educational Support continues to be available to pupils on an individual basis in the Fourth and Fifth Form.