



St Mary's School

Gerrards Cross

Sixth Form Options 2020-2022



The Sixth Form at St Mary's is a very special place to complete your school education. You will benefit from a wide choice of subjects, individual attention and engaging tutorial style lessons, which will inspire, challenge and motivate you.

The teaching staff will get to know you well: they will be ideally placed to support you academically and in the crucial decisions regarding career choices and further education. There will also be plenty of leadership opportunities and a wide selection of co-curricular options that will further develop your independence in preparation for university life.

Our Sixth Form experience encompasses a supportive environment for the individual, a conscientious work ethic and a commitment to having fun along the way! It is no surprise that our students get to where they want to be and leave us well prepared to meet the challenges of the next stage of their education.

Choosing your A Levels can be a daunting process. However, a good place to start is by thinking about what subjects you enjoy. A Levels require an ability to study independently and if you enjoy the subject you are much more likely to be motivated to do this. It is also important that you consider your subject combinations. It can be hard to know what you want to do in the future, especially when you are focussing on your GCSE examinations. If you are unsure about what career path you want to take, it is good to keep a broad and varied curriculum. On the other hand, you may have ambitions towards a particular university course. University courses have different entry requirements and it is important that you look at these and see which A Levels and grades are expected. A good example is Medicine. To be accepted onto Medicine, it is imperative that you specialise in Science A Levels.

If you require guidance or advice on which A Level courses are the right choices for you, consider using the following sources:

Subject information Pages	Subject Teachers and Heads of Department	Form Tutors
Current Sixth Form Students	Sixth Form Team	Morrisby Results
UCAS Website	Russell Group 'Informed Choices'	Friends and Family



Mrs Cork—Head of Sixth Form



Mrs Adams—Headmistress

Pathways

Recent years have seen large changes happen across the curriculum and these have been particularly noticeable at A Level. The majority of courses have now moved to a linear model meaning that the examinations are all at the end of the course in Year 13.

We have also seen universities shift their focus away from AS levels. Most university courses require three good results at A Level. Many universities are placing an increasing value on students who have earned a good grade in the Extended Project Qualification.

At St Mary's, we offer three A Level pathways. These are designed to offer a broad range of choices and to suit the individual demands of each student. We build the timetable around each girl's choice.



Gold Pathway

- 3 A Levels and an EPQ
- Designed to maximize university application



Green Pathway

- 3 A Levels
- Designed to help focus on particular subjects and skills



Blue Pathway

- 4 or 5 A Levels
- Designed for those who want a broad range of subjects or intend to take Further Mathematics.

No matter which pathway you decide to take, you will have the chance to participate in a wide range of activities and opportunities outside the classroom.



EPQ

Extended Project Qualification

The EPQ is a stand-alone qualification that students can undertake alongside A Levels. It is an opportunity for you to produce an extended piece of work on a topic of your own choice, with guidance from expert teaching staff. The EPQ extends students' planning, research and critical thinking, as well as their analytical, evaluative and presentation skills.

The EPQ gives A Level students excellent preparation for university-level study and will enhance your UCAS application. To demonstrate the qualities and knowledge that universities look for, students can refer to the EPQ in the UCAS personal statement and on interview.

The EPQ is made up of three components. The production log allows students to record their research and detail how their project develops over time. All EPQ candidates have to present their work to an audience sharing what they found in reflecting on their project. The main bulk of the EPQ is the production of a central piece of work: for most students this is a dissertation. However, some may choose to present a field study based on new research; a performance of something they have created supported by critical commentary and others produce something known as an 'artefact': this could include art projects or architectural plans.



Art & Design

Fine Art

The appreciation and enjoyment of the visual arts enriches all our lives.

The creative industries generate over £91bn to the UK economy and the industry is growing at four times the rate of the UK workforce. Students are now choosing Art and Design as a very sensible career move, or simply because they have a passion and talent for Art.

Students who take Art and Design go on to a wide variety of careers. Just a few examples are Advertising, Film and TV, Architecture, Publishing, Music, Design, Games, Museums and Galleries, Fashion, Crafts, and the creative use of technology. The creative jobs industry is huge!

Fine Art is offered at A Level as a linear course. Year 12 includes an introductory skills course, as a series of mini studies and a Personal Investigation. This runs until Term two of Year 13 when the externally-set assignment begins. We aim to provide a rich environment in which we encourage and value creativity through the experience of a wide range of activities and processes. Throughout the course, you will analyse the work of other artists; experiment with media and materials; record ideas and present personal responses that realise your intentions.

The subject is suited to anyone with curiosity, creative flair and an eagerness to explore ideas. You do not need to have studied Art at GCSE.

The course is linear meaning that all work is assessed at the end of Year 13. Component 1 which runs from Year 12 – Year 13 is worth 60% and the externally set assignment set in the February of Year 13 is worth 40% of final marks. The final exam is 15 hours (over three days), after which an external moderator comes in to verify the marks awarded.

Those who take this option will have the chance to experience the annual trip to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and many other ad hoc gallery visits throughout their study.

*“The principles of true art is not to portray, but to evoke”
(Jerzy Kosinski)*

Art & Design

Textiles

Textile Design is ideal for students who enjoy practical work such as drawing, designing and physically making things.

The fashion industry employs nearly one million people across a wide spectrum of roles and provides diverse opportunities for young people (British Fashion Council). Craft is a growing industry worth over £800 million and contributes to the UK's reputation as a world leader in creativity.

Students who take Textile Design go on to a wide variety of careers. Just a few examples are Film and TV, Design, Museums and Galleries, Fashion/Textile Design, Styling, Interior Design, Crafts, and the creative use of technology.

Textile Design is offered at A Level as a linear course. Year 12 includes an introductory skills course, as a series of mini studies and a Personal Investigation. This runs until Term 2 of Year 13 when the externally-set assignment begins. Students will be introduced to a variety of experiences that explore a range of textile media, processes and techniques in both traditional and new media. Students will explore drawing and the use of colour for different purposes, as well as artists and designers from the past and present. Students will learn to demonstrate skills in textile design such as line, scale, colour, texture, pattern, working to a brief and understanding a variety of textile methods such as tie-dye, batik, stitching and embroidery.

The subject is suited to anyone with curiosity, creative flair and an eagerness to explore ideas. You do not need to have studied Art at GCSE, although it is beneficial.

All work is assessed at the end of Year 13. Component 1 which runs across the two years is worth 60% and the externally set assignment is announced in the February of Year 13 and is worth 40%. The final exam is 15 hours (over three days).

Those who take this option will have the chance to experience the annual trip to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition and many other ad hoc gallery visits throughout their study.

*“In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different”
(Coco Chanel)*

Biology

“Science is not meant to cure us of mystery, but to reinvent and reinvigorate it....When you study Science and especially these realms of the biology of what makes us human, what’s clear is that every time you find out something, that brings up ten new questions, and half of those are better questions than you started with”. Robert Sapolsky (Professor of Biology at Stanford School of Medicine)

Biology will enable you to make informed decisions about your lifestyle and well-being throughout your life. It is an exciting and rapidly developing subject which often features in topical articles and raises countless ethical debates.

Almost any career you can pursue with a degree in an Arts subject, you can pursue equally well with a Science degree, for example Law, Accounting or Advertising. Of course, you may already know you wish to pursue a scientific career, for example in Medicine, Environmental Science, Microbiology, Food Technology, Genetic Engineering, Pharmacology, Biochemistry, Biotechnology or Nursing. Studying Biology at A Level certainly doesn’t close any doors!

The A Level Biology course has been designed to naturally progress from Biology GCSE. The course covers topics including biological molecules, cells, organisms, genetic information, genetics, gene expression, evolution and ecosystems. There are also opportunities to go off-syllabus by participating in national competitions such as the Biology Olympiad and by attending lectures in London given by eminent biologists.

This course would suit you if your curiosity about human physiology and the wider natural world have been piqued but you are frustrated by the superficial explanations offered at GCSE. You can study A Level Biology with GCSE Combined Science but you will need to ‘bridge the gap’ for the topics studied in the separate Biology specification before they are studied in more depth during the A Level course. It is essential you achieve a minimum of a grade 6 in Biology or in Combined Science (including a 6 in the Biology element of the Combined Science) and a grade 6 in Mathematics.

All examinations are at the end of the second year and consist of three two hour papers. These examinations will test your knowledge on the course content as well as the twelve practicals which you will have conducted during the course.

“An understanding of the natural world and what’s in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfilment.”

(David Attenborough)

Business

Money makes the world go round, and Business is what creates and generates that money.

It is a dynamic and ever changing topic. It focusses on decision making and asks you to argue and reason about the real world of business. Using a variety of case studies and current news, we discuss how businesses can improve and reflect on the mistakes they make. We also get the chance to explore the external environment in which businesses operate, such as the economy or technological change.

It could be argued that every single job in the world requires some business knowledge and understanding. It may be as simple as needing to budget, it may be learning how to lead and manage people or it could be helping to promote and sell. Business opens the door to a variety of careers. It leads naturally on to studying many courses at university or an apprenticeship scheme. Those who have aspirations of careers in Advertising, Public Relations, Accounting, Consultancy, HR and Logistics, would be at an advantage if they had studied Business. Business and its related subjects are consistently some of the most popular choices at undergraduate level due to their excellent employability skills.

The course covers the main functional areas of business: marketing, finance, human resources and operations. This includes theory on everything from leadership, balance sheets, advertising and the stock market. The subject is deeply rooted in the world around us and we will explore a large number of examples from the world around us.

The subject is suited to those with a curiosity about the business environment or who are eager to understand corporate life. You do not need to have studied Business at GCSE to take it at A Level and we have no specific requirements about your GCSE results. However, the course does include some numerical work and you should feel comfortable with your mathematical ability. The large number of essays will also require you feel to feel comfortable writing extended pieces of work.

Business students attend a variety of trips and most recently have enjoyed a trip to London to see the Bank of England. We always encourage those studying Business to get involved in the Young Enterprise scheme.

Assessment is based around three exam papers all at the end of the two year course. The papers are mostly essay based, although they also contain multiple choice and short answer questions. Many of these will be based around unseen case studies putting you in the role of decision maker.

**“What do you need to start a business? Three simple things:
know your product better than anyone, know your customer,
and have a burning desire to succeed.”**

(Dave Thomas)

Chemistry

A subject which increases your skill set to open up many career opportunities in the future, A Level Chemistry will enable you to delve deeper into some of the concepts you studied at GCSE and further your understanding of why they happen, rather than just having to accept them as you did at GCSE. You will learn a lot more about how Chemistry is applied in industry today and the benefits we have in our lives right now because of the advances in the field.

There are many careers which require you to have the analytical, problem solving and numerical skills you will gain from A Level Chemistry. A couple of examples are: environmental protection and health and safety. There are also a number of degree courses which you can apply onto to continue your Chemistry studies: Medicine, Veterinary Science, Pharmaceuticals, Biomedical Sciences, Natural Sciences and more.

The course will cover the three main areas of Chemistry: Organic, Inorganic and Physical. You will cover a number of the topics you did at GCSE again, but you will take the concepts further to fully understand why things happen the way they do. The first year will be spent covering the basics and the second year will enable you to develop your knowledge much more deeply, continually building on what you already know.

Your practical skills will also constantly be worked on throughout the two year course. By the end of the two years, you should feel confident to complete practical work by yourself with very little teacher support.

This course is suitable for someone with a keen interest in Chemistry and a willingness to want to understand how Chemistry explains the world around you. You need to get a grade 6 in GCSE Separate Science Chemistry or a 6-6 overall if you took Combined Science at GCSE.

The assessment will be via three examination papers at the end of the two year course. They will include a mixture of short and long answer questions and there are also some multiple choice questions. In addition, there is a practical aspect, which is assessed internally and then moderated externally. The practical work enables the girls to build up their skills throughout the course.

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”
(Marie Curie)

Dance

This is a creative, challenging and specialist course, combining practical and theoretical study. Through technique classes, choreography workshops, rehearsals and theory sessions, you will develop skills as both a choreographer and performer. In addition, you will broaden your knowledge of professional dance and extend your critical skills.

The creative industries are the fastest growing economic sector in the UK, responsible for 5.6% of jobs. This course prepares students to enter this ever growing industry whilst building their creative and analytical skills. Most importantly though, it provides a creative platform for students to express themselves. Studying Dance can open the doors to the arts or Dance in Higher Education, or as support for any course requiring good communication and group work skills. In addition to performing, choreographing and teaching, this course might lead to such diverse careers as Dance Therapy or Journalism.

The A Level Dance course is divided into three main areas: performance, choreography and critical engagement. The course involves studying Dance in both practical and academic contexts. Technical training, predominantly in contemporary and Jazz dance, will focus on developing physical and performance skills. Choreography and repertory performance, which are central to the course, are developed in the studio through workshops and rehearsal in preparation for the practical exam. Classroom based analysis of professional works, and contextual study of significant companies and choreographers, will inspire practical development and prepare students for an essay based written exam. Theoretical content includes two areas of study in the first year (Rambert Dance Company & 1940's American Jazz). In the second year, students will go on to study two set professional works which will extend knowledge, understanding and critical skills.

You do not need to have GCSE Dance to study A Level. All you need is a passion for dance, some experience of dancing either inside or outside of school and a love for performing and creating dance.

A Level assessment consists of a practical exam (worth 50%). The practical examination consists of a solo performance, a performance in a quartet and a group choreography. The other 50% is a written paper lasting 2 ½ hours. The written paper contains some short answer questions as well as two longer essays questions.

As well as many trips to the theatre, you will also have the opportunity to choreograph and perform pieces for various events throughout the year and work with various visiting practitioners and choreographers.

“Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion.”
(Martha Graham)



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Drama & Theatre

This is a subject which will be interesting, exciting and inspiring, combining the practical and theoretical aspects of performance, providing you with essential transferable skills.

As humans we have an innate need to tell stories to make sense of the world around us, to learn about the possibilities of life and to learn about human nature. Drama and Theatre is part of who we all are. It is an ever changing and developing landscape, which makes it exciting and interesting. Theatre can be life changing. Theatre can make people laugh, cry, feel anger or passion. It can teach people about something they have never experienced. Theatre is powerful.

Drama and Theatre A Level provides you with knowledge and understanding about theatre and performance, but it also provides you with a wide range of transferable skills such as collaboration, analysis and researching, which are applicable to any higher education course or profession. You will grow in confidence and maturity as you successfully realise your own ideas, developing your creativity and problem solving. You will learn to evaluate objectively and develop a sound appreciation of the influences that cultural and social contexts can have on decision making. Whatever the future holds you will emerge with a toolkit of transferable skills.

You will explore a range of theatre practitioners and apply these to three different scripts for performance. You will practically study two set texts and explore ways of performing, directing and designing extracts of these text. You will also devise your own original piece of theatre.

This subject would suit those who have a genuine interest in Theatre and Performance either as a performer, designer or director. It is preferable that you have a minimum of a grade 6 in Drama GCSE. However, depending on your experience in performance, a Drama GCSE qualification may not be necessary. However, you would be required to have a minimum of grade 4 in English.

The fantastic aspect of Drama is the range of assessment styles. Two components are practical assessments, one devised and one scripted; both are complemented by coursework. The final component is a three hour written exam taken at the end of the two year course.

As a Drama student, you will attend a range of trips to experience various different styles of theatre. You will also have the opportunity to audition and take part in the school productions and competitions; run your own Drama Club for lower school, and direct your own productions. You can also take part in LAMDA examinations which can add to your UCAS points.

“That’s the magic of theatre: it has the power to transform...
and give an epiphanal experience”
(Brian Stokes Mitchell)

Economics

The study of economics provides valuable knowledge for making critical decisions in everyday life.

Economics provides a fascinating insight into some of the most important forces that are transforming our ever-changing world. As an intellectually demanding subject, it cultivates a wide range of skills and prepares you for a large selection of careers and courses, as well as giving you an important framework for understanding current affairs.

Careers in Economics are as diverse as they come, with job roles covering everything from Food and Agriculture to Business and Banking. Depending on your area of interest, Economics will help you develop specialised analytical skills, enabling you to successfully enter multiple industries as a professional economist, or as another type of professional with an eye for Economics. Studying the subject further will boost your employability in many areas, regardless of the industry you work within. This reflects strong demand for highly numerate graduates throughout the global labour market, and the widely transferable analytical and problem-solving skills developed by Economics students.

The A Level course looks at a range of questions and concepts, and will leave students with a broad understanding of the key issues. In microeconomics students will start with simple analyses of markets, before advancing to externalities and public goods, and then on to studying the organisation of firms and the structure of markets. Students will also study the key subjects in contemporary macroeconomics, starting with aggregate supply and demand, and moving on from this to explore monetary and fiscal policy in the context of the UK today. In the Year 13, students will also study globalisation, international trade, and the difficulties faced by developing economies.

This subject is recommended to inquisitive students who want to gain a strong understanding of how the world around them operates. As this is an essay-based subject, we do require you to have a minimum of a grade 6 for GCSE English Language and due to the logical nature of the course, at least a grade 5 for GCSE Mathematics.

Assessment is based around three exam papers, which include a microeconomics paper, macroeconomics paper and a synoptic paper: all at the end of the two year course. The papers are mostly essay based, although they also contain multiple choice and short answer questions, including some math based questions.

“It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interest.”

(Adam Smith)

English

The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go. (Dr. Seuss)

Studying English Literature encourages students to understand literature from a genre base, focusing on aspects of comedy or tragedy, as well as learning how to apply critical approaches to texts. Students will, over the course of all the units, study a range of poetry, prose and drama, ensuring a broad coverage and appreciation of the major forms of literature. They will develop the ability to analyse in depth, and be able to interpret in critical and discerning ways, as well as become adept at engaging with multiplicity of meaning.

English opens doors into many fields and disciplines. It often leads to successful careers in Publishing, Academia, Heritage and Culture. In the world of business, English can facilitate entry into Advertising, Administration, PR, Journalism, Marketing and even the Intelligence Services. English Literature students go on to university to study a wide range of subjects: English Literature, Creative Writing, History, Psychology, Marketing, Education, Modern Languages, Theology and many more. It acts as a facilitating subject in many disciplines and Russell Group universities value the subject as such.

Students will develop the ability to articulate arguments; plan successful essays and responses; engage in critical debates; criticise and evaluate authorial methods; learn about social/historical contexts; communicate successfully in speech and writing and work effectively - whether in a group or individually. Not to mention, it will engender a life-long love of reading!

Component 1: Drama

Students will study aspects of the form of drama via two plays and will explore the use of literary and dramatic devices and the shaping of meanings in their chosen plays. Students will study a tragedy or comedy drama by Shakespeare (King Lear or Twelfth Night) and another tragedy or comedy by a second playwright (The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, or A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams). Teaching and wider reading will address the significance and influence of contextual factors of both texts, and will engage with different interpretations of the chosen Shakespeare play by studying critical writing.

Component 2: Prose

Students will study aspects of prose via two thematically linked texts, at least one of which must be pre-1900. Literary study of both texts selected for this component should incorporate the links and connections between them, and the contexts in which they were written and received. Students will study A Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood and Frankenstein by Mary Shelley.

English

Component 3: Poetry

Students will study a selection of poems from two published poetry texts. Students will consider the concerns and choices of modern-day poets in a selection of contemporary poems. They will apply their knowledge of poetic form, content and meaning, and develop their skills in comparing an unseen poem with an example of studied poetry. Students will develop depth of knowledge about poetic style by studying a selection from the work of a single named poet (John Donne). Literary study of the chosen set poems will be enhanced by study of the contexts in which they were written and received.

In the non-examination assessment students have a free choice of two texts to study which they will create a comparative essay on. Chosen texts, must be different from those studied in Components 1, 2 and 3, must be complete texts and may be linked by theme, movement, author or period and can be selected from poetry, drama, prose or literary non-fiction. This course is suited to those who enjoy reading and have a passion for literature in all of its forms. We require students to have achieved a minimum of grade 6 in both Language and Literature GCSE in order to be accepted on this course.

The course is assessed via three examinations (all Open Book) and one non-examination piece of work. Component 1, (30% of the course) lasts 2 hours 15 minutes, Component 2, (20% of the course) lasts for 1 hour and Component 3, (30% of the course) lasts 2 hours 15 minutes. The non-examination assessment is worth 20% of the course.

Students get many opportunities to explore Literature beyond the classroom. We often visit the theatre as well as the cinema to enjoy productions of key texts. In addition, we give the students opportunities to attend academic conferences, held by respected English professors and speakers, which are applicable to their respective units.

“If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.”
(Haruki Murakami)

Food Science & Nutrition

If you have a genuine passion for food and want to be part of an exciting, dynamic and growing industry, then this could be the course for you.

Food Science and Nutrition is never dull. It is a diverse subject that allows you to be creative and demonstrate a high level of technical skill when preparing and cooking food. It provides opportunities to use your nutritional understanding when developing, planning and evaluating dishes for a range of different needs. In addition, it requires you to apply your knowledge of the functions and working characteristics of ingredients.

This is an Applied General qualification. This means it is designed primarily to support learners progressing to university. Together with other relevant qualifications at Level 3, such as A Levels in Biology, Chemistry, and Maths, learners will gain the required knowledge to be able to use the qualification to support entry to higher education courses such as: BSc Food and Nutrition; BSc Human Nutrition; BSc Public Health Nutrition; BSc Food Science and Technology.

During the course, you will gain an understanding of the science of food, safety, nutrition and nutritional needs in a wide range of contexts. There is an emphasis on developing practical skills to produce quality food items to meet the needs of individuals.

This course would suit anyone with an interest in food and health. There is a strong emphasis on practical work, making this an ideal choice for you if you prefer to learn by doing. There is no specific requirement to have studied Food at GCSE but this would be an advantage.

All students will study the Level 3 Certificate in Food Science and Nutrition in Year 12 as a standalone qualification and will then study two further units for the full Level 3 Diploma in Food Science and Nutrition in Year 13. It is assessed through a combination of a written exam, an external assignment set and marked by the exam board, and centre-marked assignments.

“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.”
(Hippocrates)

Geography

If you have an interest in the world, its people and current affairs then Geography is the subject for you.

Geography studies the world and its people, looking at how the physical and human worlds interact over both space and time. Geography is evident in our daily lives. As a geographer, you will study how you fit into the big picture and begin to see how your actions could lead to change and affect the world's future.

Students who have studied A Level Geography will have a wide range of possible career and higher education opportunities especially as the Russell Group of universities considers it as a 'facilitating' subject. Geography is regarded as a subject with a wide range of transferable skills. These include analytical, creative, statistical and ICT skills, which are often demanded by many employers and universities.

Geography provides opportunities to find employment in many fields including Business, Law, Education, Urban Planning, Land and Environmental Management, Engineering and Surveying, Public Services, Travel and Tourism. All candidates will study both human and physical Geography. In each topic, candidates will consider their own values and attitudes to the issues being studied and support their learning through specific case studies. Candidates will also develop a variety of geographical skills, which broaden and deepen existing knowledge and they will be expected to work with a greater degree of independence.

Topics are split into two categories. Physical Geography explores water and carbon cycles, hazards, coastal systems and landscapes. Human Geography examines global systems and global governance, changing places, population and the environment.

It is strongly recommended that you should have studied Geography at GCSE and attained a grade 5 grade or higher. It may be possible for new students to the subject to study this course following a personal interview.

The course is assessed via a mix of examination and coursework. The examinations are made up of two 2.5 hour examinations. One in Physical Geography and one in Human Geography. Questions on both papers include multiple choice, short answers and extended prose with up to four levels of response. The coursework is a 3000-4000 word individual geographical investigation based on fieldwork.

**“Geography is the subject which holds the key to our future”
(Michael Palin)**

History

Studying History makes us aware that we can take nothing for granted; everything changes so we must be prepared for all eventualities.

Understanding History is the root to understanding what it means to be human. The past and the present are necessarily linked. History is therefore essential to understanding what is happening today, who we are and our role within our community.

Historians have critical minds, who can adapt their understanding to new situations. They analyse information and data, then they are able to debate and present this material so that it is understandable to others.

History really does open doors. Historians have the research skills to find and evaluate sources of information; they can identify and evaluate a range of interpretations and they gain the ability to present their ideas succinctly orally and in written form. These are all skills that are essential to many professional careers. Of course, it may lead you to a life of academia but also possibly Journalism, Politics, Human Resources, Analyst, Marketing, Communications or PR. History is a highly valued 'facilitating' subject.

We aim to provide a broad course of study, spanning the medieval world as well as the modern. You will study: conquest, control and resistance in the medieval world, by focusing on the Crusades c1095-1204 and Anglo-Saxon England and the Anglo-Norman kingdom, c1053-1106; civil rights and race relations in the USA, 1850-2009; in addition you will conduct an independent study on a historical controversy of your own choosing.

Studying History will suit those students who are intrinsically curious about society and who are enthusiastic about understanding why things happen in the way they do.

Studying History at GCSE will give you an advantage in understanding the concepts and skills required but as none of the content is repeated it is not an essential requirement in order to take A Level History. You will need though to have achieved a grade 6 in History or a similar relevant subject, such as English or Religious Studies.

This course is assessed on 3 examinations and one piece of coursework. All questions are essay based and may require you to use primary sources and historical interpretations in your answer.

We enter students into a range of competitions, such as the Historical Association 'Great Debate' and the Peterhouse Cambridge, Vellacott History essay competition. We run an enrichment trip every other year: the next trip is to Krakow in Poland. We also attend A Level conference lectures related to our studied topics.

“The more you know of history, the more liberated you are.”
(Maya Angelou)

ICT

As well as being essential to modern life today, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an excellent choice of A Level. It is one of the fastest growing areas of employment with data from The Independent, the CBI and Znet showing ICT as an area where there are skills shortages.

ICT is in every aspect of our lives. You can develop your own apps or you can simply use the technology in your social life. Either way, you will need to know how to use the technology effectively and efficiently. This may mean you become a Programmer, Games Developer, Technical Author, or it could mean you simply use databases to access data stored within an organisation, or you create a spreadsheet to store data for others to analyse or you create a letter to send to an employer. You will need ICT skills, but more importantly you will need to know how to problem solve and this course will enable you to do that.

Girls taking the AS or A Level in ICT will be more:

- Confident in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others
- Responsible for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
- Reflective as learners, developing their ability to learn
- Innovative and equipped for new and future challenges
- Engaged intellectually and socially ready to make a difference

ICT enables students to develop a broad range of skills ranging from the use and applications of IT systems to how IT systems affect society in general. Specifically, we will study topics on 19 different aspects including but not limited to data processing, hardware and software, E-safety, networks, spreadsheets, sound and video editing, graphics creation, animation and programming for the web.

You do not need to have studied ICT at GCSE to take it at A level and we have no specific requirements regarding GCSE results. The course is appropriate for logical thinkers, but there are also creative aspects with Graphics and Animation units of work. You should have a desire to understand technology and feel comfortable using a range of technology.

The nature of assessment is that you will take one theory examination and one practical assessment at the end of both years: each assessment/examination is worth 25% of your grade. The examination comprises a combination of longer and short answer questions. ICT is not an essay based subject.

Those who take ICT will be taken to conferences to engage with university research or company developments in IT. As well as have the opportunity to become E-Safety ambassador, who work with other local schools.

*“The science of today is the technology of tomorrow.”
(Edward Teller)*

Languages

In our globalised world, choosing to study a foreign language at A Level is incredibly rewarding, engaging and highly beneficial for your future careers.

Through studying Spanish, French, or German, you will develop your ability to a high level in the four key language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading & Writing. This will help you to become a more confident and effective communicator. Alongside the study of a literary work and film in the target language, you will deepen your intercultural awareness of the countries and societies in which the language is spoken. You will also develop a greater understanding of how, in our multicultural and multilingual society, we can build bridges between communities. A wealth of current issues will be explored throughout the course to develop your critical thinking.

As UK employers and business leaders report growing concern with graduates' international cultural awareness, the language deficit is an important barrier to overcome. Deficient language skills and the presumption that international business partners will speak English costs the UK economy about 3.5 per cent of GDP. The 'Born Global' study, which asked the views of more than 600 employers, found that UK nationals without language skills often lose out because they are limited in their ability to communicate.

You should study a language if you are interested in: working for MI5, MI6, the Foreign Commonwealth Office, United Nations, and UNESCO; Journalism; International Aid and Charities; Gallery and Museum Curating; Digital Marketing; PR; Travel, Tourism and Hospitality; Investment Banking; Law or Teaching. The wide range of transferable skills developed, as well as the topics covered, makes it highly regarded by universities.

To take a language at A Level, a minimum of grade 6 in the language at GCSE is essential.

The Spanish, French & German A Level courses are divided as follows:

Paper 1 - Listening, Reading & Translation into English – 40%

Paper 2 – Written Response to literary/film studies & translation into target language – 30%

Paper 3 – Speaking (discussion on a theme and independent research)– 30%

Those who take a language will be encouraged to take part in the annual study abroad trips. You will also have the opportunity to complete a work experience placement abroad through Halsbury Travel, where you can put your language skills into practice in an authentic working environment.

*“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”
(Ludwig Wittgenstein)*

Media Studies

We would probably all agree that you should never underestimate the power of the media, so to have an insight into how the media represent everything from our news to the contents of our shopping basket, is to have an understanding of the ways communication works throughout our society.

As Director of the Communication and Media Research Institute, University of Westminster, Professor David Gauntlett says, “Popular media can take a leading role in social change ... it can help to chip away at people’s prejudices.” This is core to Media Studies at St Mary’s, where students study the representation of different social groups within the media over time, and whether those representations simply reflect or also shape reality.

With the introduction of a postgraduate course in Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge, the study and understanding of Media is becoming more and more highly valued. According to the Office for National Statistics, graduates of Media and Information studies have the second highest employment rate in the UK (93%). So it is understandable that St Mary’s students are embracing the opportunities that the media offer to them.

The A Level in Media Studies introduces students to the role and impact of the media on society, culture, politics and the economy in both domestic and global spheres. Using cases studies from nine media areas including news, film, music video and advertising, students develop their understanding through a theoretical framework of media language, representation, media industries and audience. There are no GCSE subject requirements for this course. Students must be ICT-literate and have a willingness to work independently and to learn how to use editing software to create their media products. An interest in current affairs, film, television drama and even politics is an advantage. You must be prepared to read newspapers regularly, engage with online news and to become a media producer yourself.

This course is assessed by two two-hour examinations in Year 13, which comprise 70% of the marks, plus a non-examined assessment where students create their own media products, such as a music video alongside a website for the artist. The non-examined assessment is worth 30% of the total marks.

There are plenty of opportunities for Media Studies students to enrich their experience, from annual study days at the British Film Institute, submitting their work to national competitions, filming school events to enjoying work experience opportunities at Pinewood Studios.

“Society can only be understood through a study of the messages and the communication facilities which belong to it”
(Norbert Weiner)



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Mathematics

Mathematicians are the world's problem-solvers and studying for an A Level in Mathematics can set you on the road to becoming one of these problem-solvers. It is recognised by all universities and employers as a most worthwhile qualification.

Studies show that an A Level in Mathematics is responsible for adding around 9% to your salary at the age of 30! It can lead to a huge number of career paths including Investment Banking, Coding, Engineering, Data Analyst and Academic. Mathematics will never be undesirable and your skills will always be in demand.

All students are required to study Pure Mathematics, Statistics and Applied Mathematics. The Pure content includes looking at different uses of algebraic manipulation, calculus and trigonometry. The Statistics content builds on all that has been learnt at GCSE and the Applied content considers the mechanics of motion. This lays all the foundations for the further study and use of Mathematics in the real environment.

The subject is suited to those with a real interest in Mathematics, however, it combines particularly well with Economics, Business, Geography and Science. You must have a minimum of grade 6 at GCSE Mathematics to take it at A Level.

Assessment is based around three two hour exam papers all at the end of the two year course. The first two papers test all the Pure content of the course and Paper 3 tests the Statistics and Applied content of the course.

Outside the classroom students can participate in the Senior Maths Challenge and meet other mathematicians at 'Team Challenge' events.

Further Mathematics

For those who are looking to advance themselves beyond the Mathematics A Level curriculum we also offer Further Mathematics as an additional A Level.

Students who take Further Mathematics find that the additional time spent studying mathematics boosts their marks in single A level Mathematics. It also enables students to distinguish themselves as able mathematicians in their applications for university and future employment.

You must have a minimum of grade 8 or 9 at Mathematics GCSE to take Further Mathematics at A Level. Assessment is based around four one and a half hour exam papers all at the end of the two year course. The first two papers test all the Pure content of the course and the following two papers test the Statistics and Applied content of the course.

**“Mathematics is the most beautiful and most powerful creation
of the human spirit”
(Stefan Branch)**

Music

Do you love playing an instrument and performing? Enjoy exploring and creating new music? Take delight in listening to music from a range of styles? Then A Level Music could be for you!

Music combines analytical, academic and practical skills that require determination, single-mindedness and self-motivation, as well as a creative flair. These are all character traits that impress future employers. Music A Level is a well-respected qualification which all universities accept. By choosing an Expressive Arts subject, you are showing that you are a well-rounded student who has shown determination to get to a high level with an instrument or voice and you have the confidence to perform in front of audiences of hundreds.

The aim of the course as a whole is to produce accomplished musicians who can use transferable skills between different elements. The study of Music at this level is immensely practical and creative.

You should choose to study Music if you enjoy playing, composing and listening to music. It is possible to study Music at A Level without having taken GCSE Music if you have a suitably advanced performance and theoretical background. Grade 5 theory and a practical standard equivalent (to a minimum of grade 6) would be expected by the start of Year 12. Girls taking Music will normally be confident performers, having music lessons on their instrument or voice, and being involved in musical activities in school.

The course is assessed in the three main areas: Performance (35%), Composition (25%), Historical/Set works (40%). However, if you choose to major in composition, the weighting changes to 25% performance and 35% composition.

The performing element includes a recital of ten minutes if this is your major, or six minutes if not. You may also perform on a second instrument or choose to be part of an ensemble. For Composing, you will be required to create two compositions of approximately two to three minutes each in length. Finally, there is a Historical paper which covers the set works. The focus is on listening to music and understanding how it works. The set works includes a very wide range of pieces from Handel, Mozart, Beethoven to music from the 'present day'.

It is expected that an A Level Music student would be heavily involved in the co-curricular programme of musical activities in the department, with its opportunities for leadership, outreach work, competitions, school concerts, the House Music Festival and the Expressive Arts bi-annual trip abroad. In addition, there are opportunities to attend concerts and experience not only the music included in the set works, but music by other composers and in other musical genres.

“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.” (Albert Einstein)

Physical Education

PE is extremely diverse: it allows you to explore and enhance your own sporting ability, and also bridges the academic divide between the arts and the sciences

The sports industry is one of the fastest growing sectors of modern society. You only have to look at the rise of performance analysis in Premier League Football or the growth of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to see that, with the right qualifications and passion for sport, there are a huge number of exciting opportunities .

This course focuses on relating theory to sport and its impact on the performer. Using theoretical content, students will improve their knowledge, application and analysis skills to understand what it takes to become an elite performer working within the sporting industry.

As the sports industry is continually growing and developing, there are endless career opportunities which can arise from studying this course. These could include: Nutritionist, Journalist, Sports Development Officer, Physiotherapist, Sports Technology designer and many more.

There are seven sections within this diverse course that are complimented by other subjects, particularly, Biology, History and Psychology. This course looks at applied physiology, skill acquisition, the role of sport in society, exercise physiology, biomechanical movement, sport psychology and the role of technology in sport.

Physical Education suits students who have a passion for sport; students will enjoy a fast paced and diverse course that covers many subject areas, yet this is underpinned by the student's application to sport. GCSE PE and A Level Biology may help, but are not a requirement. Competing at a high level in at least one sport will be very advantageous

There is a non-examined assessment as well as exams at the end of the course. The non-examined assessment is a combination of course work based on analysis and evaluation of a performer (15%), and a practical performance in one sport (15%).

The final 70% of the course is based around two examinations, each of two hours. Each paper is broken down into three sections. Within each section there is a combination of multiple choice, short answers and extended writing. There are both 8 and 15 mark questions within each section.

There is an annual trip run by the Girls' Schools Association called 'Girls Go Gold'. This conference includes a number of professional athletes who run practical workshops and keynote speeches to support the A Level course. You will be encouraged to play as much sport as possible both inside and outside of school.

“To be the best, you have to constantly be challenging yourself, raising the bar, pushing the limits of what you can do. Don't stand still, leap forward.”

(Ronda Rousey)

Physics

Physics is understanding how things work and turning new ideas into reality.

In the past century Physicists have been able to develop a deep understanding of how the universe operates and have used this knowledge to design and engineer most of the objects we use today. Physics makes it possible to safely design buildings and bridges; to build better and more efficient transport; to deliver electricity to our homes as well as make it possible to make such modern devices as televisions, computers, smartphones and the internet possible. Physics studies the very small and the very large and uses this knowledge to build stronger, faster, cheaper and more efficient devices. In the last 10 years, Physics has become even more interesting as new knowledge and theories develop.

Students completing this course will have the knowledge and application skills to do well in Physics or Engineering courses at university. Physics and especially Engineering skills are in high demand in the workplace as there are more jobs available than people with the requisite skills.

As a Physicist or Engineer, you could follow several different paths. You could become a pure scientist and discover more of the secrets of the universe or you could apply your skills working in companies that are turning new ideas into products or finding better ways to improve the quality of the world we live in, for example building new energy systems; making more efficient electric cars; speeding up the internet or building faster computers.

A Level Physics covers the complete range of concepts starting with Classical Physics ideas such as Forces, Mechanics and Electricity and continues on to Quantum Physics and Relativity which cover the newest ideas in Physics. You will cover everything from sub-atomic particles to how the universe was formed. To do A Level Physics you must achieve a grade 6 or above in either Combined or Separate Science.

Assessment is based around three exam papers at the end of the two year course. The papers contain multiple choice and short answer questions, with a small number of six mark questions that require longer answers. There is no assessed practical unit. Instead there are 12 required practicals that will be overseen by the teacher throughout the two years of study. These skills will then be examined with questions on practical skills and data analysis in the third examination paper.

“Look up at the stars and not at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about makes the universe exist.

Be curious.”

(Stephen Hawking)

Politics

No matter what choices you make or subjects you take, all our lives are impacted by Politics.

Politics is the study of how our country is run. We will learn about the Prime Ministers, the Parliaments and the Elections that have shaped all of our lives. You will discover the strengths and weaknesses of our system and build up strong opinions as to whether reforming our constitution is necessary or undesirable.

An understanding of Politics will benefit you throughout your life. It is important to know how decisions are made which will impact you and your families. By taking this course you will develop an interest and understanding of current affairs which will stay with you in the long term. It particularly suits anyone considering going into the Civil Service, the Legal Profession, Journalism, Charity Work or Diplomacy.

Politics links together brilliantly with anyone wishing to study History or Economics at A Level and would give future International Relations, PPE and Law students a real advantage at university.

The course studies the powers of our Prime Minister, Parliament and Judiciary. You will discover how democratic and representative our system really is. There is a study of voting behaviours, electoral systems and a look at influence of the media. At the end of year one, there is a chance to study some of the ideologies that have helped to shape the last 300 years of civilization – Liberalism, Socialism, Anarchism and Conservatism. In the second year of the A Level, you will study US Politics and discover whether their focus on personal liberty and rights have built a system which is superior or inferior to our own.

You are not required to have studied a GCSE in Politics to do this course and there are no specific requirements on your GCSE results. However, a 6 or above in English would be desirable as reading and essay writing are a large component of the course.

Assessment involves three examination papers at the end of the two year course. The papers are mostly essay based, with some source questions and a couple of short comparative questions.

One of the wonderful features of studying Politics is that the subject is up to date and constantly evolving in response to events. To make sure we successfully embed ourselves in this political world, each year we intend to visit the Houses of Parliament and attend a specialist A Level conference where we can hear from current and past politicians and question their views.

*“In our age there is no such thing as keeping out of politics”
(George Orwell)*

Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of the brain and behaviour; by studying Psychology you will not only understand yourself better, but be able to explain other people's beliefs and actions in many areas of life.

Psychology is a fascinating A Level which is popular with students, employers and universities. It is a varied and diverse discipline that covers many types of behaviour. Studying Psychology develops critical thinking skills as students evaluate psychological and biological explanations for behaviour, and consider implications of research findings for the wider world. It develops scientific research skills and an understanding of statistical analysis of data.

Psychology compliments many other A Levels including Biology, PE, Economics and Mathematics. As such it prepares students for a wide range of university degrees and careers. Psychology A Level can be the first step to becoming a Chartered Psychologist (e.g. educational, sports or forensic), a Neuroscientist, Advertising Executive or a Behavioural Economist – or anything that involves working with people – which is pretty much everything.

The course is a broad introduction to many sections within Psychology: for example, social influence (why people conform or obey – or don't); the concept of memory; factors affecting eye witness testimony, and explanations and treatments for a number of mental disorders (e.g. phobias, schizophrenia and depression). Biological and psychological theories are considered through each topic, and debates such as whether we are predetermined or have free will, and how nature interacts with nurture, are explored. Underpinning all of this is a knowledge of psychological research methods, data analysis, and the chance to conduct a practical study.

Psychology will suit students who are curious about the social world, but are also comfortable with biological concepts. There is no requirement to have studied Psychology at GCSE, but a strong foundation in Biology, Mathematics and English is desirable, in order to bring the appropriate skills to the course.

Psychology is assessed in three two hour examinations at the end of the course. Papers include a mix of short-answer and essay questions, and are equally divided between the three assessment objectives: knowledge, application and evaluation.

In previous years, Psychology students have visited London Zoo to take part in a Phobias workshop, and collect observational data on animal behaviour. They have also attended a 'Brain Day' run by a neuroscientist, which included a dissection of a sheep's brain. Students are encouraged to read related fiction and non-fiction books and to explore topics through some of the many blockbuster films that relate to the syllabus.

“Don't become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin.”

(Ivan Pavlov)

Religion, Philosophy & Ethics

This is a fascinating and enlightening subject which investigates the human situation and the most fundamental questions there are.

Religion, Philosophy and Ethics combines Philosophy (thinking about ideas and concepts), Ethics (applying those concepts to real dilemmas in today's world) and the study of how Christianity has adjusted and reacted to the challenges of the 21st century. Students who wish to study Religion, Philosophy and Ethics will discover it to be compatible with a wide range of other subjects, especially English and Psychology.

We welcome future Lawyers, Doctors, Criminologists, Journalists, Psychologists and everything in between. Religion, Philosophy and Ethics will broaden your global perspective and improve your quality of argument and written communication, so it would be an excellent asset to any future career path.

Students who have studied English and History will be suited to the essay based assessment skills. Students who achieve less than a 6 at GCSE in essay based subjects should be aware that this is an essay based course. Though it is helpful to have done RS GCSE, this is not a pre-requisite.

Additionally, RPE lessons in Year 10 and 11 have been designed to practise the other core skills for A Level: abstract thinking and debating. Students who enjoy that type of discussion will find this course intellectually stimulating.

Assessment is through one examination paper per unit, each two hours long. There is a choice of three essay questions out of four, and each question will examine your ability to include knowledge and understanding of the subjects covered and your ability to put forward, sustain and conclude an argument, whilst engaging with the ideas of key scholars.

There are opportunities for subject enrichment at A Level. Previous enrichment has included attending lecture days and revision courses in London by leading modern philosophers and thinkers. Previous students have also taken part in Year 12 essay competitions run by prestigious universities, earning prizes and recognition for subjects such as 'Is a rabbit a person?'

**“The unexamined life is not worth living”
(Socrates)**

Sociology

Sociology is a subject that seeks to tackle and provide explanations for why people do what they do, and how we can see discernible patterns and trends in human behaviour. It is the study of society, and the tensions between the social forces and influences individuals are subjected to, and the agency (ability to make decisions and choices) of those individuals. American Sociologist C. Wright-Mills described Sociology as a tool that allows us to see that our private troubles, most often, have a wider cause and consequence.

A Level Sociology examines social behaviour from a variety of perspectives: how it originates and then develops, and the ways people are organised into groups according to distinctions such as class, gender and race. Sociology also looks at the institutions and forces which shape and are shaped by groups within a society, such as the media, religion and education.

It focuses on contemporary society, providing an awareness of the importance of social structure and actions in explaining social forces and issues. Some questions A Level Sociology covers include:

- Why do boys underachieve in the education system?
- Why are black people five times more likely to be stopped and searched?
- Why are women more religious when religion oppresses them?
- What is the role of the family in society and how are families changing?

A Level Sociology will help students to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the essential sociological theories and methods (such as Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism) with which sociologists make sense of the diversity of societies, and of the forces which have and will continue to shape social change;
- Think about society in a new and critical light, questioning the status quo and developing a sophisticated understanding of the real issues that affect the society we live in;
- Think about how society works and the range of conditions that individuals within society experience. Students often comment that they didn't realise how varied the human experience can be and how powerfully group identity shapes a person's future.
- Understand and analyse the way in which sociologists conduct research into societal issues and the validity and reliability of research methods and findings.

Sociology A Level is assessed in three 2 hour examinations at the end of the course. Questions are worth 10, 20 and 30 marks and so students will learn to develop extended and critical arguments in their written work. Each paper is equally divided between the three assessment objectives: knowledge, application and evaluation.

As a social science, Sociology fits well into any portfolio of A Level subjects. It develops skills of extended essay writing and critical analysis as well as the understanding and application of research methods in social sciences.

“The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden.”
Pierre Bourdieu



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