St Paul's CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Ministerium Tuum Imple Love | Serve | Do the best that is possible

Year 8

OPTIONS

INFORMATION BOOKLET

2026

The Holistic Curriculum at St. Paul's

The curriculum at St. Paul's is designed to ensure that students can:

- take responsibility for their own learning through thinking hard.
- take responsibility for their own behaviour by making good decisions.

Our Catholic Mission

The cornerstones of Pastoral care at St. Paul's enable:

- Christ to be firmly at the centre of everything we do and say.
- the preservation and promotion of human dignity through living by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the Gifts we Grow.
- people to fully live our mission in their lives beyond St. Paul's, taking their gifts and talents to others.

Academic Excellence

High expectations will be demonstrated through:

- the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum and enrichment experience.
- the commitment to the development of academic learning talents.
- the development of subject scholarship.
- the ability of students to articulate learning.

Love | Serve | Do the best that is possible

Developing Thinking Hard
with the Learning...

T – Thought Processes
Working it out! Applying what you know.

A – Academic Articulation
Communicate like a scholar of...

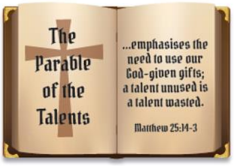
L – Linking Learning
Making and using connections.

E – Evaluation
To what extent...? Would it be better if...?

N – Necessary Knowledge
Being curious to know...

T – Tenacity
Independence in and beyond the classroom.

S – Strategic Approaches
Knowing the best approaches to get the best outcome.



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The 5 Year Curriculum

When pupils join us in year 7, they embark on their journey through our 5 year curriculum. They get the opportunity to study a breadth of subjects during year 7 and 8, including a wide range of Expressive Art subjects, Design and Technology subjects, Computer Science and Humanities, as well as subjects such as RE, Science, Maths, English and Modern Foreign Languages. We believe this breadth allows pupils the opportunity to develop wide knowledge and understanding, and also to develop the Learning Talents and Catholic Social Teaching in many different subject contexts.

For a number of years, we have recognised the importance of the transition from year 8 into year 9 as a waypoint in the 5 year curriculum. It is an opportune time to focus learning in more depth and in specific subjects which pupils have found a particular talent or interest in.

We have found that using this time to specify study in greater depth, whilst maintaining a broad curriculum for all pupils, allows the best opportunity for success in later life.

Parents have the most important role to play in their children's education. Please use this booklet to inform and support the conversations you will be having with your children and their teachers during this important time.

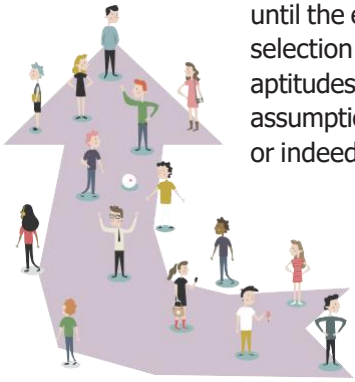
J A Hoare

The Options Process

This stage of the options process is for parents and students to find out information together about the choices that lay ahead. This booklet aims to provide clear guidance to support students in selecting their preferred combination of subjects. Students are also encouraged to have conversations with subject teachers, form tutors, mentors and year leaders to equip themselves with as much information as possible.

The information evening of the 3rd February provides a superb opportunity to do this. To also support your decisions, there is an opportunity to book an appointment with either a member of the Year 8 pastoral team and or a member of our leadership team to talk through your ideas. Details of how to make these appointments can be found at the end of the booklet. You will use the school cloud system and will be able to book an online appointment.

Our options process in Year 8 involves students choosing one GCSE subject they wish to begin in Year 9 with a view to sitting the examination at the end of Year 11. They will also need to choose an Expressive Arts subject they wish to continue with until the end of Year 9. Students are advised to make their selection based upon their interest, career aspirations and aptitudes. Choices should not be guided by biased and inaccurate assumptions about subjects or based on friendship preferences or indeed 'favourite' teachers.



The Options Process

Once students have selected their preferences, we will let you know whether they have been successful in gaining a place on their first choice. Last year we were successful in that 100% of students received their first choice. However, whilst we endeavour to accommodate everyone's first choice, year on year this may not always be possible due to staffing and numbers opting for subjects. Therefore, as part of the process you will have to rank your preferences as we may not always be able to accommodate first choices and occasionally students will be given their second choice.

The table below outlines the subjects students can choose from for their GCSE choice and the Expressive Arts 1 year course. Students may not choose the same subject twice and should be very mindful that their GCSE option choice should be their most preferred subject as this will continue until year 11 and end in a formal qualification.

GCSE SUBJECT CHOICE (take through to end of Yr 11)	**EXPRESSIVE ARTS OPTION CHOICE (1 Year course)**
Art Drama Music Physical Education Business Studies Computer Science Separate Science Sociology	Art Drama Music Physical Education

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Choosing a Technology Specialism

As part of this process the Design and Technology Faculty will also be operating their own options process too. This will enable students to choose a specialism within the Technology suite. The information about these different Technology specialisms has also been included to ensure parents and students have time to reflect upon this. Again, it is important to get this right as students will continue to follow their preferred specialism all the way through to Year 11 where they will gain a formal GCSE qualification.

The Technology department will work with students in lessons to ensure they all fully understand the different specialisms and will support students in guiding them to make the best choice which reflects their prior learning. They will also be available on the options evening on the 3rd February to answer any questions. The Technology subject choices require students to choose from one of the following strands:

OCR GCSE Design and Technology 

QA Food Preparation and Nutrition 

OCR Cambridge National in Engineering Manufacture 

We very much look forward to welcoming you on the 3rd February and hope the information is helpful in assisting you make the best choices.

Jo-Anne Hoarty
Headteacher

Subjects

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Art

Pupil specification

Pupils studying Art aspire to:

- be willing to explore new ideas and concepts
- be willing to persevere and are able to review and refine their work
- enjoy practising art skills in order to develop their technical ability

Why we love Art

- development of technical skills with a wide range of materials
- boosts hand-eye co-ordination
- encourages problem solving skills,
- develops lateral thinking,
- involves complex analysis and critical thinking skills.
- successful pupils of Art become more focused, able communicators with the ability to look at things in a new and organised manner

Further details:
Information from the exam board can be found at https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/art-and-design.html

"If you love making art, you'll miss it when it's gone. If you choose to study Art, chances are, it will be your favourite class of the day" – **Amiria Gale.**

Further Study and Careers

Study in Year 9 leads onto GCSE Art and subsequently to our popular A-levels in Art and Photography, from which, many students complete Art related degrees.

In addition to conventional careers such as Architecture, Interior Design or Fine Art related occupations, the development of the internet has created an outburst of exciting, creative, professions. Most businesses have an online presence requiring Web Designers, App Designers, Graphic Designers, Illustrators, Animation Artists, Multimedia Artists to name but a few emerging roles. Adults leaving education who are multi-skilled are more useful, well-rounded, hireable and capable of excelling in a much wider range of professions.

Business

Further details:
Information from the exam board can be found at https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/business

"Time flew by in the lesson where we had to come up with our own TV advert. We got so wrapped up in what we were doing".

"Looking around the store I realised that all of the workers were doing exactly what we had learnt about in class."

Pupil specification

An effective learner in Business:

- is keen to develop knowledge
- has the ability to apply their understanding to contexts
- is able to analyse business issues
- can evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to make informed judgements
- is organised, shows resilience and perseverance
- "does the best that is possible".
- makes a sustained contribution to learning, keenly participating in activities and asking thoughtful questions
- displays exceptional care and concern, knowing and understanding that we all learn from each other
- embraces independent learning

Why we love Business

Business is hugely relevant to 'real life' – we are all customers and we will all work in a business organisation during our lifetime. We are passionate about the interdependent nature of business activity, influences on business, finance, marketing and human resources, and how these interdependencies underpin decision making and, ultimately, business success.

Further Study and Careers

After a successful Year 9, pupils will progress to GCSE Business. Post-16 opportunities include AQA A Level Business and/or Economics. Many pupils then continue their studies at university in a range of disciplines such as Economics, Management, Human Resource Management (HRM), Accountancy or Marketing.

The world is full of possibilities for jobs: Retail Management; Sales and Marketing; Business Ownership; Accountancy; Logistics Management; Public Relations; HRM; Banking; Investment and Financial Services.

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Computer Science

Further details:
Information from the exam board can be found at https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/computer-science-j277-from-2020/

"Programming is a highly creative process. We were given the same problem but every single person in the class came up with unique solutions"

Pupil specification

An effective learner in Computer Science:

- is keen to develop knowledge
- has the ability to apply their understanding to contexts
- is able to develop and use computational thinking to solve problems
- can evaluate different approaches to solving problems
- is organised, shows resilience and perseverance, especially when programming
- displays exceptional care and concern, knowing and understanding that we all learn from each other
- embraces independent learning
- is not afraid of basic mathematics

Why we love Computer Science

It is an exciting time to be a Computer Scientist! We are living in the middle of a revolution powered by computers. Almost all aspects of life have been effected by developments in Computer Science. It is very difficult to imagine a world without:

- social networking
- transportation systems
- medical systems
- commerce/business
- entertainment
- scientific research

Further Study and Careers

After a successful Year 9, pupils progress to GCSE Computer Science. Post-16 opportunities include Computer Science at A Level. Many pupils then continue their studies at university in Computer Science or a similar programme such as IT, Web Design, Games Programming, Cyber-Security or Software Engineering.
Many students go on to become Computer Scientists, Software Engineers, Programmers, Games Developers, Project Managers, Web Developers, Cyber-Security Analysts etc.

Drama

Further details:
Information from the exam board can be found at https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/subjects/drama-theatre-and-performing-arts.html

Pupil specification

- ability to collaborate with a range of people
- communication and presentation skills
- evaluation and analysis skills
- building confidence and social skills
- ability to use of a range of stimuli – poetry, music, images, objects and texts
- developing empathy and ability to understand emotional issues
- consideration of different audiences and impact of certain elements being keen to experience live theatre

Why we love Drama

- it's practical, hands on learning
- there are new productions and styles of theatre to explore all the time – these inspire us and our students
- we often use examples of professional theatre companies and practitioners
- seeing students shine in school productions
- the focus on practical exploration of Drama skills
- making explicit links with other subject areas, particularly English
- the technical elements of theatre e.g. lighting, costume, sound

Further Study and Careers

Study in Year 9 leads onto GCSE Drama and subsequently to our popular A-level in Drama and Theatre. Study in Drama is beneficial for anyone wanting to build on presentation and confidence in the working world and links very well with other creative and analytical subjects.

Study in Drama will contribute to careers involving public speaking, media and performing arts e.g. Actor, Lawyer, Drama Therapist, Marketing Director, Sales, Advertising, Theatre Designer, Stage Management.

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Music

Further details:
Information from the GCSE exam board can be found at GCSE Music | Eduqas

In the words of Albert Einstein:
"The greatest scientists are artists as well".

"When you're a musician and you're playing an instrument, you have to be using more of your brain," **says Dr. Eric Rasmussen.**

Pupil specification

Skills you will need to be a successful performer and musician:

- ability to play a musical instrument or sing
- commitment and creativity
- reading music from staff notation, tab or following chords
- be an independent learner

The skills you will gain and improve whilst studying music are:

- team-work
- organisation
- problem solving and critical thinking
- confidence
- performing and presenting skills

Why we love Music

- Music has been scientifically proven to be good mental exercise for the brain and in some cases, reduces effects of debilitating brain diseases in later life! See here!
- music can draw millions of people from different parts of the world and uplift them emotionally
- music can help you express your feelings in a different way to using words
- music grades count towards A Levels and UCAS points if you get to the higher grades of 6, 7 & 8!

Further Study and Careers

Study in Year 9 leads onto GCSE Music. Students will study a range of music including classical, pop, rock, musicals and will learn how to compose as well as further their performing skills.

Choosing Music as an A Level subject is also particularly impressive to top universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and Russell Group Universities as they value the skills and work ethic that comes from learning an instrument to a high standard and having good self discipline.

Those graduating from universities with Music degrees have a wide range of career options available to them both inside and outside the industry, including Performer, Teacher, Songwriter, Conductor, Composer, Recording Engineer, Arts/Music Promoter or Music Therapist, not to mention lots of applications in Arts as well as Media and Publishing.

Physical Education

Further details:

Pupils express a preference for a 'Physical Education' course. They will be assigned to the most appropriate course by the Department Information from the exam board about GCSE PE can be found here: https://www.ocr.org.uk/subjects/pe-sport-leisure/

Pupil specification

Pupils who find success whilst studying PE:

- play at least one sport outside of school or for the school team
- have an interest in training, diet and preparation for sport
- are intrigued about how the body works within a sporting context
- are able to sustain a good level of physical fitness
- is reflective and can identify strengths and areas to improve in their own and others performances
- can apply knowledge to a wide variety of sporting examples

Why we love PE

- understanding how our bodies work during exercise and how to progress towards a goal
- learning a range of practical skills and tactics which can be transferred within a number of sports
- the opportunity to perform competitively against others
- enjoy working within a team to achieve an outcome
- links with many other subjects (biology, technology, psychology, sociology)
- provides opportunities to analyse own performance and plan ways to make improvements

Further Study and Careers

During your course in Year 9 it will be decided whether you will be entered for the Tech Award in Sport or the OCR GCSE P.E. Study in year 9 can lead onto a range of courses: GCSE PE in years 10 and 11, A-level PE and/or BTEC Sport and Exercise post-16. Study in Physical Education leads to a wide range of careers: PE Teacher, Personal Trainer, Sports and Exercise Coach, Physiotherapist, Nutritionist, Sports Journalist, Dietitian, Sports Psychologist and Sports Analysist, to name a few.

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Separate Science

Further details:
Please follow these links to read further information from the exam board: https://www.ocr.org.uk/subjects/science/

Pupil specification

- show confident application of Maths skills when solving unfamiliar problems
- use imagination to visualise
- write concisely to explain
- relish being independent when learning
- really enjoy the chance to work collaboratively
- actively contribute to classroom discussions
- consistently use and understand complex subject vocabulary
- follow instructions (very important in practical work!)
- able to analyse data to conclude and evaluate practical work

Why we love Separate Science

explains the why and the how of the world around us
Science allows us to think logically about how the world works and how people function it allows us to make more informed decisions about our lifestyle in order to make more informed choices gives us skills that can be applied across the curriculum to many other subjects highly collaborative opens the doors to endless possibilities.

Further Study and Careers

Successful study during year 9 leads on to separate science GCSEs (three Science GCSEs). Post-16 pupils can continue studying all three Sciences at A-level and also on vocational Science courses. Study in Science can lead to careers in: Microbiology - Geology - Engineering - Physiotherapy - Marine Biology - Architecture - Research Science - Pharmacology - ICT based careers - Radiography - Investment and banking - Occupational Therapy - Paramedic - Pharmacy – Botanist - Astronomer - Agriculture - Veterinary Science - Astrobiologist – Geneticist - Nanotechnologist - Pathologist - Sports Science - Scientific Journalist - Nature Reserve Ranger (to name a few!).

Sociology

Further details:
Information from the exam board can be found at https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/sociology

Pupil specification

Sociologists must have an open mind and enjoy the challenge of learning about new ideas which are present within existing literature and personal experiences. Sociologists are pushed to collaborate with their peers so that they can question the world around them and develop their own understanding of the complexities of society.

The most effective Sociologists don't stand still but keep up to date with current social issues and societal changes. This may range from a political change, to a rise in crime or even the increased educational underachievement of a particular social group.

Why we love Sociology

Sociology provides you with an opportunity to seek answers to questions about social systems and processes. We love analysing society so that we can provide answers to these questions and make sense of the world in which we live.

Why do men appear to commit more crime compared to women?

Has childhood improved over the past 50 years?

Is society a fair system in which everybody receives a fair chance?

We structure our lessons around you and we love to hear about your own experiences.

Further Study and Careers

After progressing through Year 9, pupils study GCSE Sociology. We provide the opportunity to continue studying A-Level Sociology at sixth form, allowing students to explore topics in greater detail and conduct their own research into areas of interest. Alongside Sociology, there is the opportunity to study Psychology and BTEC Health and Social Care which both compliment and support Sociology.
A range of Universities offer a host of Sociology courses which provide some exciting career options, including: Social Work, Human Resources, Advertising, Policing, Marketing, Journalism, Law and Teaching.

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Design and Technology

Further details:

Please take some time to watch this video which will help explain even further what D&T as a subject discipline is all a out. Information from the exam board can be found here: https://www.ocr.org.uk/subjects/design-and-technology/

Pupil specification

Pupils studying D&T aspire to be:

- able to project manage
- independent
- problem solvers
- researchers
- collaborators
- creative
- able to persevere
- analytical and evaluative
- able to concentrate for sustained periods
- able to respond to feedback
- risk takers

Study in D&T revolves around the principles of designing, exploring, creating and evaluating. Within D&T pupils can specify further to learn in the context of specific materials and media. These specialist areas are CAD/CAM with Electronics, Graphics, Fashion and Textiles and Woods, Metals & Plastics. Pupils can only opt for D&T subjects which they have studied during year 7 and year 8.

Why we love Design and Technology

- everything has been designed by someone
- the links to and practical application of knowledge from across the curriculum
- designing and making is fun!
- the iterative design process is challenging and fulfilling
- finding and solving problems helps to improve peoples' lives
- We never stop asking ourselves "why not?

Further Study and Careers

Study in Year 9 leads onto GCSE Design & Technology, A level Product Design, A level Design Engineering and degrees in Design and Engineering disciplines. This can then lead to well respected and paid careers in Design, Engineering & Manufacturing.

Food Preparation and Nutrition

Further details:
Pupils can only opt for D&T subjects which they have studied during year 7 and year 8. Information from the exam board can be found here: https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/food-preparation-and-nutrition

Pupil specification

Pupils studying FP&N aspire to be:

- strategic, organised and able to plan
- interested in healthy eating and nutrition
- able to collaborate and work with independence
- able to research and evaluate
- committed, motivated and prepared to bring in ingredients to cook with most weeks

Why we love FP & N

- choosing and preparing healthy food improves quality of life
- practical experience of food preparation
- theoretical rigour when studying nutrition and food science
- food science experiments to find out for ourselves about food and nutrition
- the links to and practical application of knowledge from across the curriculum

Further Study and Careers

Study in Year 9 leads onto GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition, further education in the sciences or vocational catering courses, apprenticeships and careers in both the catering and food science industries.

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Cambridge National in Engineering Manufacture

Further details:

Pupils can only opt for D&T subjects which they have studied during year 7 and year 8. This course complements Engineering Manufacture very well. Information from the exam board can be found here: https://www.ocr.org.uk/subjects/engineering/

Pupil specification

Pupils studying Engineering Manufacture aspire to be:

- practical minded
- methodical
- patient
- hard working
- eager to learn
- team players
- organised to meet deadlines
- effective at planning manufacture
- expert users of CAD and CAM
- ability to manufacture with precision
- adept users of ICT
- able to apply mathematical and scientific principles

Why we love Engineering Manufacture

- If you have a practical mind set, and prefer working with your hands, this is the course for you.
- You will learn how to work with CAD CAM machinery widely used in industry today.
- Engineering Manufacture is a discipline of engineering dealing with different manufacturing practices and processes using machines, tools and equipment that turn raw materials into products.
- A practical approach to teaching and learning will provide learners with knowledge of engineering technologies and develop critical thinking, creativity and dextrous skills through engaging practical experiences.

Further Study and Careers

Post-16 at St Paul's, pupils can choose to continue their studies in Design Engineering, Fashion and Textiles or Product Design. These courses are historically very popular and successful.

Study in Engineering Manufacture can lead to careers in the creative sector of the economy which was reported, in 2025, to account for approximately 26% of all UK jobs, employing over 8.1 million people.

Study in Engineering Manufacture can also lead to careers in the technical or engineering sector of the economy which was reported to account for 32% of UK employment in 2025 and contributed £645 billion to the UK economy in 2025.

What next for students?

Now that you've read the options booklet and hopefully attended the information evening, it is time to start doing some research, talking to teachers, parents, form tutors, mentors and year leaders. This will all help inform your decision making.

Please do not make any decisions based on assumptions, rumours or hearsay. Please do ask your teachers questions so you can find out the facts.

What next for parents?

The best way to support your child through this important decision-making process is by carrying out further reading and research with them. Please try to avoid passing on any biases and avoid making stereotypical assumptions about subjects based on your own experiences at school.

Please log onto the school's booking system:
https://stpaulscatholicschool.schoolcloud.co.uk/

Here you will be given the opportunity to make an appointment in the usual way.

Jo-Anne Hoarty
Headteacher