

Year 9 Subject options

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Introduction

The months leading up to moving into Year 10 is an extremely important stage in every child's education, and it is the time to give consideration to the GCSE and vocational subjects that will be studied in Years 10 and 11.

It is vitally important that careful consideration is given to the option choices our students make in readiness for the spring term, with completion of this by the first half of the summer term.

Attendance

Attendance is very important in all years, but especially so in the next two years. Controlled assessment and field tasks take place in many of our subjects, and missing any of these will put students at a disadvantage, with the potential to seriously affect good results.

Holidays

External examinations and coursework occur throughout Years 10 and 11 and the law states that holidays during term time are disallowed.

The curriculum structure and choices

All students study six core subjects at Key Stage 4 level and these are English, Mathematics, Science, Spanish, one Humanities subject and Physical Education.

In Year 10, students will study a mixture of core subjects and their subject options.

Vocational courses

Vocational courses are work-related subject options. They are an important part of the school's curriculum and students are guided towards the most appropriate subject for them.

Offered at Key Stage 4, vocational courses are an accredited alternative to some GCSE courses. They are full, nationally recognised qualifications, and success can lead to further study at Advanced Vocational level post 16 years old. They also relate strongly to the world of work and are a good route into an apprenticeship.

Choosing a subject

Good reasons for choosing a subject option to study

I am choosing my subject options because:

I enjoy the subject.

I am good at the subject.

I am interested in the subject, even though I've not studied it before.

I want to study the subject beyond Key Stage 4.

I want to study the subject to be able to follow my chosen career path.

Studying this subject will make sure I have a balanced range of study areas.

Poor reasons for choosing a subject option to study:

I am choosing this subject option because my friend has and I don't want to be separated.

Remember, people are different and what is right for your friend, may not be right for you. Also, even though you've chosen the same subject, you may still end up in a different group.

I am choosing subjects based on who is the teacher is.

At the point of choosing subject options it is not possible to determine our teaching timetable, so this may not have an effect on your choices.

Final option choices

Students will receive online Subject Options by email following the combined Subject Specific and Options information evening which is scheduled for Thursday 26 March 2026. Every effort will be made to give the students their preferred option choices. However, there are occasions when this is not possible because:

The groups are too large

The groups are too small

Some inappropriate choices have been made

Flexibility is key to ensure all students are placed into subjects that they want to study so please think seriously about your subject option choices. You will be invited to put forward three choices, of which you will study two.

Many students choose Art and Design as a study area because it offers a hands-on, practical approach that fosters creativity and self-expression. In addition to enjoying the creative process, students benefit from developing independent working skills that are valuable for future academic pursuits, and in life after school.

Art allows students to explore a variety of disciplines including 3D design, fine art, textile design, critical and contextual studies and graphic communication. Through these areas they are encouraged to produce unique creative works while gaining a deeper understanding of the artistic world.

The skills and knowledge required to excel in GCSE Art

Students should be enthusiastic and creative, with the ability to work independently both at school and at home. A strong sense of initiative and a passion for art with greatly contribute to success. While a reasonable level of drawing ability is required as a starting point, these skills will be developed and refined throughout the course.

What does a typical lesson in GCSE Art involve?

The course begins with teacher-led instruction, where students learn new skills through project-based activities. As the course progresses, students gradually take on more responsibility for their own learning, with coursework becoming increasingly independent. They have the opportunity to develop and create their own unique pieces of work, closely aligned with the course requirements.

Assessment weighting

Component 1 – a major practical portfolio and outcome worth 60% of the qualification.

Component 2 – preparatory work leading to a sustained practical outcome worth 40%.

GCSE Art prepares students for A-level Art or vocational study. Some of the career opportunities include:

Architecture, Interior design, Video and animation, Advertising and illustration, Fashion and textiles, Computer game or web design, Theatre set design, Film and TV makeup and costume.





Further education and future career opportunities

GCSE Child Development prepares students for apprenticeship entry, or Level 3 vocational or academic studies in areas including Early Years, Health and Social Care or Psychology or an apprenticeship.

Other options include studying Level 3 in Children's Play Learning and Development or AAQ BTEC Early Childhood Development.

Child Development will inspire and equip you with independence and confidence while developing skills that are directly relevant to the childcare sector. Students study health and wellbeing for child development and learn how to create safe environments where children can thrive. The course also covers the nutritional needs of children from birth to five years, investigating and selecting appropriate equipment, and exploring the development of a child from one to five years using observation and research techniques. This hands-on, practical approach provides a strong foundation for understanding children's needs and development.

What skills and knowledge are required to do well in Child Development?

Students should have a keen interest in children and want to know more about how they develop, learn and play. Students will do a variety of activities to help with assignments and exam content. A good grasp of English is required to succeed on this course.

What does a typical lesson in Child Development involve?

Lessons will incorporate a blend of key enquiry and investigational skills, helping students to deepen their understanding for assignments and prepare effectively for the written exam.

Assessment weighting

- Written exam (40%) focused on health and wellbeing for child development.
- Non-Exam Assessment (30%) Create a safe environment and understand the nutritional needs of children from birth to five years
- Non-Exam Assessment (30%) Understand the development of a child from one to five years

This course equips students with the essential skills and knowledge so they can thrive in the digital world, whether they choose to pursue further studies or enter the workforce. It prepares students for success in an increasingly technology-driven world by teaching the theoretical aspects of computer science and the practical application of programming skills.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Computer Science

While there are no specific entry requirements for this course, students should possess strong mathematical and problem-solving skills. Throughout the course, students build their logical thinking and analytical abilities, which are vital for understanding and solving real-world computing problems.

Students gain a deep understanding of how computers work, algorithms and data structures, and how to program effectively through coding and projects.

What does a typical lesson involve?

Computer systems	The structure and function of hardware and software components, including memory, storage, processors, and operating systems.
Algorithms and programming	Creation, use, and analysis of algorithms, and the development of efficient and reliable code using programming languages.
Data representation	Understanding how data is stored and manipulated on a computer, including binary, hexadecimal, and other data formats.
Networks and cybersecurity	The principles of computer networking, internet communication, and the challenges of securing data and systems.
Ethical, legal, and social issues	Exploring the responsibilities of computer professionals, data privacy, and the impact of computing on society.

Students completing the course can continue their studies in computer science, software engineering, data science, AI, or other related fields. They can also enter the workforce with the skills needed for a variety of roles in technology and digital industries including software development, network administration, cybersecurity, and IT support.



Assessment weighting Paper 1

Computer systems and programming (50%)

Paper 2

Computational thinking, algorithms, and data (50%)

Design and Technology

Specification code
AQA 8552



Further education and future career opportunities

The opportunities are wide and varied if you have a strong grade in this subject.

They include:
Studying A Level Product Design in our Sixth Form. Enrolling on to industrial design, mechanical engineering and interior design at college. Possible careers include architect, product designer, industrial engineer, mechanical engineer, interior designer and structural engineer.

GCSE Design and Technology is a creative and practical subject that allows students to design and make products that solve real-world problems. Pupils will develop skills in creativity, problem solving, practical manufacturing, and critical thinking while gaining an understanding of modern design and manufacturing processes.

This course is ideal for students who enjoy being creative, working practically, and exploring how products are developed from idea to final outcome.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Design and Technology

Students who do well in Design and Technology are creative, practical, and enjoy solving problems. They are willing to develop their making skills and work accurately with a range of materials and tools. Strong time management, resilience, and the ability to respond to feedback are important, especially during the coursework project. An interest in how products are designed, manufactured, and improved will also support success in the subject.

What does a typical lesson involve?

A typical Design and Technology lesson involves a mixture of theory and practical work. Students may begin by learning new technical knowledge or analysing existing products, before applying this through designing, modelling, or manufacturing activities. Lessons often include developing ideas through sketching or CAD, working with materials in the workshop, and evaluating progress. Students are encouraged to work independently, solve problems creatively, and refine their work to a high standard.

Assessment weighting

50% of the assessment is based on a portfolio of work leading to a single design and make task. 50% of the assessment is demonstrating technical knowledge in the written exam.

This vocational subject provides students with a wide understanding of the engineering industry, its sectors and how products are made. The course includes learning about engineering sectors, materials, new technologies and manufacturing processes through a range of individual written assignments, practical activities and technical drawings.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Engineering

Students must be keen to develop their skills learned in Years 7, 8 and 9 and use these to increase their independence in selecting and correctly using tools and equipment. There are many written elements of the course where students will be required to analyse, evaluate and apply their engineering knowledge and students require a good level in English language studies.

What does a typical lesson in Engineering involve?

Learning is related as closely as possible to the real world of engineering. Projects involve a mixture of skills development, assignments and studying towards a written exam. For practical work, students will work to specific requirements. Assignments are used to assess a student's application of knowledge.

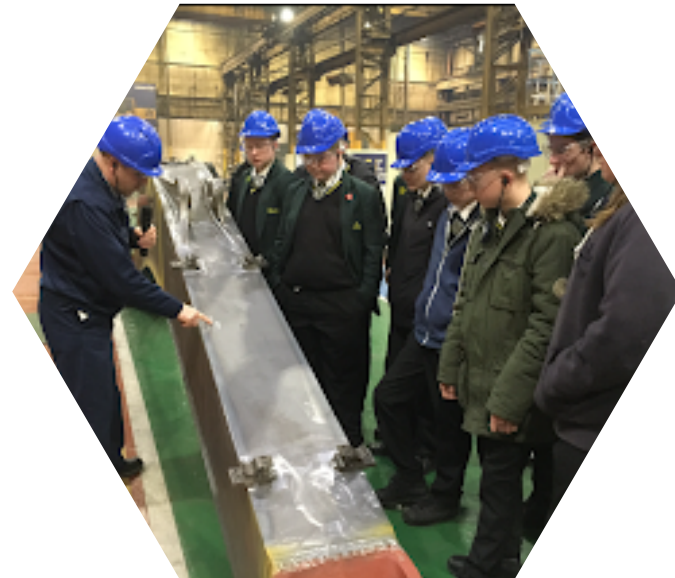
Students have the opportunity to visit an engineering site and work with people in the engineering industry including Nissan, Balfour Beatty, Arup, Northern Architecture and Komatsu. Virtual meetings with engineers in the aerospace and energy industries are also offered as part of the subject's studies.

Assessment weighting

Coursework completed within Year 11 lessons makes up 60% of the overall assessment, with the other 40% being achieved in a final summer examination.

Further education and career opportunities

Level 1 / 2 Engineering opens up opportunities to study: Design Technology A-Level at Kingsmeadow Sixth Form.
Level 3 specialist engineering and design related courses at college.
Courses leading towards a university degree in an engineering discipline. Students with a good grade could apply for an apprenticeship with an engineering employer.



Further education and career opportunities

Students who complete this course can progress to further vocational study (such as Level 3 Cambridge Technicals, BTEC or T Level qualifications), A Levels in subjects such as Business or Economics, apprenticeships, or employment in business related roles.



The OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National in Enterprise and Marketing develops the practical knowledge and skills students need to understand how businesses are created, marketed and made successful.

This qualification is ideal for students who prefer a more vocational and applied approach to learning. It combines coursework with an examined unit, helping students build confidence through real business scenarios and practical enterprise activities.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Business Studies

There are no specific entry requirements; however, students should have secure literacy and numeracy skills. Throughout the course, students will:

- Research real businesses and markets
- Develop and plan their own enterprise ideas
- Create marketing materials such as logos, branding and promotional campaigns
- Analyse financial information such as costs, revenue and break-even
- Present and justify business decisions.

Students will also develop important employability skills including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, planning and independent research. These transferable skills are highly valued by employers and further education providers.

What does a typical lesson involve?

Lessons are practical, engaging and application-focused. Students regularly work on enterprise projects, analyse case studies, carry out market research, develop marketing strategies, create promotional materials and practise exam-style questions for the examined unit.

Assessment weighting

Paper 1: Business Activity, Marketing, and People (50%)

Paper 2: Operations, Finance, and Influences on Business (50%)

Both exams assess students' understanding of key business concepts and their ability to apply these ideas to real-life business scenarios.

With the growing importance of issues such as climate change, migration, environmental degradation, population change and inequalities, geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Studying geography gives students a broad and balanced understanding of the world and the opportunities and challenges we may experience.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Geography

You need to have an interest in the Earth's landscapes, environments, natural phenomena, and human societies. The other skills outlined below will be developed throughout your time studying geography; many of which students will have developed through studying geography from Year 7.

What does a typical lesson in Geography involve?

Over the two years of study students will learn about the challenge of natural hazards, ecosystems and physical geography including coasts and rivers. They will also learn about challenges in the human environment and urban issues such as population changes in different parts of the world and the associated impacts.

Other learning includes understanding economic development and change, the challenges around managing food and water, and how the demand for resources is changing.

There are also two fieldwork enquiries; one a physical enquiry and the other a human enquiry.

Assessment weighting

Assessment is based on three written examinations.

Paper 1 - Living with the physical environment (35%)

Paper 2 - Challenges of the human environment (35%)

Paper 3 - Geographical skills and applications (30%)



Further education and future career opportunities

A Level Geography in the Sixth Form

Students with a good grade could apply for an apprenticeship. A university degree in Geography. With a degree you could work in a variety of different fields, from digital technologies, mapping and statistics, through to ecology, sustainability, and tourism. You'll also have transferable skills that could see you work in teaching, finance, or planning. Geography has one of the highest employability rates of all undergraduate degrees.

Further education and career opportunities

A Level History in the Sixth Form.

Students with a good grade could apply for an apprenticeship.

A university degree in History. With a degree you could work in a variety of different fields, from careers in law, politics and business through to creative media, journalism, broadcasting and tourism management

In their study of History at GCSE level, students are taught to extend their knowledge and understanding of key events, periods, and societies in local, British, and wider world history, and of the wide diversity of human experience. They have the opportunity to engage in historical enquiry and develop skills as independent learners, and critical and reflective thinkers.

Students develop the ability to ask relevant questions about the past, critically investigate issues, make valid historical claims and gain the awareness of why people and events have historical significance, and how and why they have different interpretations.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in History

To do well in this subject, students need to develop critical thinking skills, gain knowledge of historical events, and be able to structure answers. They also need to be able to analyse sources, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions.

What does a typical lesson in History involve?

In Year 10 students learn about medicine in Britain through time, c.1250 to the present including the British sector on the western front, 1914-18: injuries, treatments and the trenches. Studies also include learning about early Elizabethan England.

In Year 11 History students take one of the following modern depth studies: Superpower Relations and the Cold War, 1941-1991; Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917-41; Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918-39; Mao's China, 1945-76; The USA, 1954-75, conflict at home and abroad.

Assessment weighting

Assessment is based on three written examinations.

Paper 1 – Thematic study and historic environment 30%

Paper 2 – Period study and British depth study 40%

Paper 3 – Modern depth study 30%



The ability to plan, prepare and present food is an essential skill within the hospitality and catering industry and the Eduqas Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering equips students with theoretical knowledge about the industry and enables them to develop practical skills in planning, preparing and cooking a variety of dishes.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in this subject

- Independent learning
- Ability to work alongside others
- Good organisational and management skills
- The ability to solve problems and build resilience

What does a typical lesson in Hospitality and Catering involve?

The real world of hospitality and catering is applied to subject teaching, and students engage with professionals and take part in site visits where possible. Lessons focus on skill development, food styling, planning menus, the practicing of non-examined assessments and studying towards the Unit 1 written exam.

Please note: this course does not follow the demonstration and practical format of Key Stage 3. The focus of the Level 1 / 2 Hospitality and Catering qualification is the day to day operations of hospitality and catering establishments.

Assessment weighting

60% of the assessment is based on the non-examined assessment (12 hours) and 40% technical knowledge for the written exam.



Further education and future career opportunities

Level 2 / 3 Diplomas in Hospitality and Catering, Professional Cooking or Hotel Management.

Level 3 Advanced Diploma in Food Preparation (Professional Cookery).
City & Guilds in Hospitality and Catering.

An apprenticeship in a related career.

Qualifications to move onto a university degree or towards a career in catering, hospitality or the food industry.

Further education and career opportunities

This subject prepares students for A-level or vocational study. Some of the opportunities include:
Level 3 in IT / Media courses in our Sixth Form.

An IT or digitally related apprenticeship with local employers, including Accenture, one of the largest apprenticeship providers in the North East.

This course provides students with the essential skills, knowledge, and understanding of digital media, content creation, and the use of multimedia tools. Whether students continue their education with vocational qualifications, A-Level courses, or enter the creative industries directly, this course prepares them for a variety of career paths within the rapidly growing media and technology sectors.

Skills and knowledge required to do well in iMedia

While there are no specific entry requirements for this course, students should have a basic understanding of using computers and digital media tools. Throughout the course, students develop technical skills in graphic design, video production, website design, and other multimedia platforms. They learn how to apply media concepts and principles through practical assignments that focus on the creation of media products for real-world scenarios. In addition, students improve their soft skills such as creativity, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

What does a typical lesson in iMedia involve?

Lessons are centred on hands-on learning, where students engage in the creation of multimedia products such as websites, video projects, and digital publications. Students also analyse case studies of existing media products to understand the production process and techniques used in the industry. The key topics include pre-production processes, production processes, post-production, legal and ethical issues in media production, and the creative media industry.

Assessment weighting

60% of the assessment is based on practical work (Character and comic creation (35%), Visual identity and graphic creation (25%)) and 40% technical knowledge for the written exam.



The BTEC Technical Award in Music Practice inspires learners to consider a career in the music industry, and not just to participate in music recreationally. It gives learners the opportunity to gain a broad knowledge and understanding of the music industry such as solo or group performances, music promotion and publishing, and the live music industry.

Students choosing this subject should already be having instrumental or vocal lessons, either privately or within school. If students choosing Music Practice do not currently have instrumental or vocal lessons privately or within school they should be able to demonstrate a good performance ability in Year 9 and be very committed to having lessons within school from Year 10 onwards.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Music Practice

Students need to be confident instrumental or vocal performers with the ability to perform as a soloist, and as part of a group. They need to have excellent teamwork skills and be able to work independently. Instrumental or vocal lessons form part of the teaching, but it is vital that students also dedicate time outside of lessons for rehearsal and personal practice.

What does a typical lesson in Music Practice involve?

Component 1 Exploring music products and styles - the techniques used in the creation of different musical products and investigating key features of different musical styles and genres.

Component 2 Music skill development – developing two musical disciplines through engagement in practical tasks, while documenting progress and planning for further improvement.

Component 3 Responding to a commercial music brief - developing and presenting music in response to a given commercial music brief.

Assessment weighting

50% of the assessment is based on practical work and 50% technical knowledge in the written exam.



Further education and future career opportunities

This subject prepares students for A-level or vocational study including:

Level 3 BTEC or A-Level Music in our Sixth Form.

Students could apply for an apprenticeship within the music industry or gain work / further experience within the music industry sector as a sound engineer, performer, or as a technician.

Further education and career opportunities

This subject prepares students for A-level or vocational study and the world of work

A-Level Photography in our Sixth Form.

Studying Photography at college.

Applying for a photography related apprenticeship or for a job in a photography related sector such as journalism, film and television, video, animation, marketing, advertising, or fashion and textiles.



GCSE Photography is an exciting, creative course that allows students to explore both traditional and digital photography. Pupils develop the skills to capture, manipulate, and present compelling images.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Photography

Students who are enthusiastic, creative and able to work independently both at school and at home are successful in this course. While there are no entry requirements for this course, students should have strong literacy skills as the course involves detailed analysis and evaluation of their own and others' work. Critical writing, including reports for the final exam, is also a key component.

Throughout the course, students develop practical, presentation and digital communication skills. To succeed, students must be prepared to dedicate time outside of lessons for research and preparation. This is essential for completing their portfolio for Component 1, as well as the externally set assignment in Component 2.

What does a typical lesson in Photography involve?

The course encourages experimentation with composition, lighting, editing, and photographic techniques, helping students develop a personal style and creative voice. These skills are highly transferable and provide a foundation for careers in photography, film, graphic design, media, advertising, and other creative industries. Students also gain a strong understanding of the artistic, technical, and contextual aspects of photography, combining practical work with research, analysis, and critical evaluation of professional photographers and visual media.

Assessment weighting

Component 1 – a major practical portfolio and outcome worth 60% of the qualification. Component 2 – preparatory work leading to a sustained practical outcome worth 40%.

Important note: due to exam board restrictions, students are not permitted to study both Art and Design and Photography simultaneously.

GCSE Psychology helps you understand why people think, feel and behave the way they do. You will explore fascinating topics such as memory, sleep and dreaming, social influence and criminal behaviour. The course develops valuable skills including critical thinking, analysing evidence and evaluating different explanations.

Psychology is an interesting and challenging subject that combines elements of science and discussion. It is a great choice for students who are curious about people and want to understand how the mind works.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Psychology

You do not need to have studied psychology before, but an interest in people and behaviour is important. Students who do well in psychology are usually curious about how the mind works and enjoy discussing and analysing ideas. Psychology combines elements of both science and humanities, so it suits students who enjoy subjects such as science, biology, sociology or English.

What does a typical lesson involve?

Psychology lessons involve a range of activities designed to help you understand how psychologists study behaviour. You may learn about famous psychological studies and experiments, take part in class investigations or demonstrations, analyse real research and case studies, work in groups to discuss and debate psychological ideas. develop skills in evaluating evidence and forming arguments, and practise answering GCSE-style exam questions.

Lessons encourage students to think critically about why people behave the way they do and how psychologists study this scientifically

Assessment weighting

GCSE Psychology is assessed through two written examinations at the end of Year 11. Paper 1: Studies and Applications in Psychology – 50%
Paper 2: Studies and Applications in Psychology – 50%. There is no coursework in this course.



Further education and future career opportunities

GCSE Psychology provides a strong foundation for further education and careers requiring an understanding of human behavior, such as in mental health, education, HR, or policing. It serves as a stepping stone for A-Level and University studies leading to roles like Clinical Psychologist, Counsellor, or Forensic Psychologist



Further education and future career opportunities

Sociology is a good foundation subject. It can lead to employment in research, counselling, journalism, teaching, social work, law, therapy, healthcare, and the police force to name a few. It is a highly valued subject due to the skills it develops and is very good preparation for university where strong writing skills are important.

GCSE Sociology is designed to foster an understanding and critical awareness of the social world. The specification focuses on the importance of social structure in explaining social issues.

Sociology is an exciting and stimulating subject option which develops a students' interest in what happens in society and helps them to understand world events. It is the study of people and their behaviour and focuses on what society is, how we establish it and how it shapes us.

Sociology encourages students to question everything, and to be tolerant and sensitive towards the needs of others.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Sociology

Students need to have strong literacy and communication skills to meet the demands of essay writing. Students learn and apply a range of specialist vocabulary, concepts and theories to different areas of society.

What does a typical Sociology lesson involve?

A typical Sociology lesson involves exploring how society shapes behaviour through discussions, case studies, and group activities. Students analyse real-life examples, debate key issues such as inequality, and practice exam-style questions, all while developing a deeper understanding of the world and questioning how it works.

Assessment weighting

Component 1 - Understanding Social Processes written examination:
1 hour 45 minutes (50% of qualification).

Component 2 - Understanding Social Structures written examination:
1 hour 45 minutes (50% of qualification).

Encouraging independent study, this subject focuses on real life practical sport, leadership and evaluation. Students learn contemporary issues that affect sport and have the opportunity to explore the world of outdoor sport or the media.

They also develop an understanding of the barriers to participation and learn about emerging sports in the UK. They learn the values promoted through sport, the intricacies of hosting a major sporting event and the role of sporting governing bodies.

The skills and knowledge required to do well in Sport Studies

Students need strong literacy skills and a positive work ethic. They should be prepared to produce coursework of a high standard for submission for external assessment.

Students have an opportunity to develop their skills both as a performer and as a leader. They will work independently and as part of a team.

What does a typical Sport Studies lesson involve?

Lessons inspire and motivate students. With support from their teacher, students are expected to meet deadlines and aspire to achieve the best grade possible. On a practical level of delivering a sporting activity, students learn how to organise and plan a session and review their performance.

Assessment weighting

Written exam – Contemporary issues in sport (70 marks)

Assignment – Performance and leadership in sports activities (80 marks)

Plus one optional unit Sport and the media (40 marks), or Increasing awareness of outdoor and adventurous activities (40 marks)

Further education and career opportunities

Success in this subject provides a stepping stone to Level 3 Sport in our Sixth Form. Many employers and careers highly value a qualification in sport as it is the skills and the experiences gained from this qualification that makes a candidate a desired applicant for most jobs. Career pathways include sports management, joining the police force or armed forces, or a role in nursing, physiotherapy, personal training and sports development.





Kingsmeadow Community School
Market Lane, Gateshead, NE11 9NX
enquiries@kingsmeadow.org.uk 0191 460 6004