ABINGDON

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

September 2022

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Introduction

This booklet provides an introduction to the Middle School curriculum at Abingdon School. It covers the main academic subjects in the third, fourth and fifth years, together with topics such as personal, social and health education, physical education and sport, and career guidance. It does not deal, however, with the ethos of the school, or the pastoral system.

After a brief introduction to the curriculum, the pattern of subjects in the third, fourth and fifth years is outlined in two tables. Finally more detailed information about academic subjects and other topics are given, together with contact details of the relevant Head of Department.

Outline
The Middle School comprises the third year, fourth year and fifth year (National Curriculum Years 9 to 11). The third year is a foundation year, in which we integrate our intake from the Lower School and from preparatory schools, and begin in earnest the majority of GCSE courses. In the fourth and fifth years pupils pursue a more limited range of subjects for GCSE.

Set sizes
Pupils are taught in sets of twenty, on average. In some subjects, such as the top Mathematics sets, and in History and Geography in the options blocks, set sizes may be larger than this. On the other hand, in the lower mathematics sets, the languages, and the practical subjects, such as Art, Music, Design and Technology and Drama, they are smaller.

Assessment and Reporting
Over the course of a year parents/guardians can expect:

- A set of internal examinations in summer in both the third and fourth years, and GCSE mock examinations in the January of the fifth year.
- One settling-in report (subject comments collated to inform tutor and housemaster. Both comments of a few sentences)
- Two attitude to learning (ATL) reports (attitude to learning comments and subject comments of a few sentences, with comments from tutor and housemaster)
- One self reflection report (goals for each academic subject guided by subject teachers, endorsed by tutor discussion)
- One response to goals report (attitude to learning comments and subject comments of a few sentences with comments from tutor and housemaster).

GCSE and IGCSE grading

GCSEs in England are now graded from 9 to 1 instead of A*-G. Many IGCSEs also use the new system. At Abingdon all GCSEs and IGCSEs are graded from 9 to 1.

New grading structure	Previous grading structure
9	A*
8	A
7	
6	B
5	C
4	
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

Distinctive features of the Abingdon curriculum
Several distinctive features of the Abingdon curriculum require some emphasis.

Students may choose whether to study three separate sciences to GCSE or to take “double award science”. This choice is based on a pupil’s interest in science since the double award scientists spend fewer periods per week studying science. This allows double award scientists to timetable an additional optional subject for GCSE. This choice is discussed more fully in the Science section later in this document.

PSHCE lessons and tutor time provide personal and social education. Some pupils will also received additional support from the Learning Support team

At each stage there are optional choices to be made. The relationship between the optional and compulsory subjects is shown for each of the year groups in the tables on subsequent pages.

In the third year, all pupils study Art and Design & Technology. These subjects become optional in the fourth and fifth years.

For further information about the curriculum please contact me.

Mr Oliver Lomax
Curriculum Director
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February 2022

Pattern of subjects

This is the pattern of subjects proposed for the 2021/22 timetable. Lessons are typically 55 minutes in duration.

Third year (National Curriculum year 9)

Students are taught in the same groups for English, History, Geography and Religious Studies. There are also nine groups for Science.

Compulsory subjects	lessons per fortnight
English	5
Mathematics	5
Biology	2
Chemistry	2
Engineering Science (Physics, Electronics and Computing)	3
Continuing modern language (French or German)	4
History	4
Geography	4
Philosophy and Theology	4
Art	2
Design Technology	2
Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education	1
Physical Education	2
Optional subjects: Two to be chosen from:	
Latin (Continuing or Beginner)	4 for each
Greek	
Ancient History	
Additional languages started from scratch: German, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese.	
Drama	
Music	

Fourth and fifth years (National Curriculum years 10 & 11)

Compulsory Subjects:	**Fourth Year** (lessons per fortnight)	**Fifth Year** (lessons per fortnight)
English and English Literature	6	6
Mathematics	5	6
Biology + Chemistry + Physics	15 (or 10 for double award)	15 (or 10 for double award)
Modern Foreign Language (French, German, Spanish or Mandarin)	5	5
Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education	1	Taught during weekly tutor time
Physical Education	1	1

Optional Subjects: Separate scientists choose **three** Double award scientists choose **four**	**Fourth Year** (lessons per fortnight)	**Fifth Year** (lessons per fortnight)
Geography	5 per fortnight	5 per fortnight
History		
Religious Studies		
Latin		
Ancient History		
Additional languages: German, French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese		
Greek		
Electronics		
Computer Science		
Music		
Art		
Design & Technology		
Drama		

Pupils are allocated sets based on ability in Mathematics and Latin. These sets will usually remain unchanged throughout the year.

Pupils doing all three separate sciences to GCSE make **three** subject choices from the option blocks. Those taking double award science are still taught science by three separate, specialist teachers, but have fewer science lessons each week and gain only two science GCSEs. Double award science students make **four** subject choices from the option blocks. Within these four choices they must study at least one of History and Geography (they may study both). GCSE science is more fully discussed in the Science section later in this document. Double award classes have 3 or 4 lessons per fortnight, the fourth rotating between the three sciences throughout the year.

ART

Edexcel GCSE Art & Design (2AD01)

http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/art-and-design-2016.html

Introduction

Art develops intellectual, imaginative, creative and intuitive capabilities. Working in a wide range of materials is encouraged and we therefore teach all the main disciplines: painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture and ceramics. The study of the history of art runs alongside the practical teaching, providing students with an increasing understanding of context and importance of visual literacy.

The department is housed in the new Beech Court complex, with three fine Art studios, a specialist ceramics studio, darkroom and spacious Sixth form studio. The four teaching staff each have their own area of specialism and are supported by a full time technician

The Courses

In the third year, all students have a lesson a week of art. The aim is to give a broad and exciting range of experiences and approaches to the subject, to develop skills and progress understanding. It is often a chance for students to rethink their abilities and discover a fresh an enthusiasm for the subject. The course also provides an insight into the skills required for GCSE.

At GCSE we offer Art and Design: Fine Art. Taught in 5 lessons over the two-week cycle, the course allows students to develop work in a variety of media and informed by the example of other artists and designers. The course allows for increasing specialisation but we believe it is important that a wide range is explored at the start.

The GCSE consists of two units. The first is a portfolio of work developed over the course to be submitted for final assessment early in the Summer term of the fifth year. The second is an externally set unit, the final piece of which, after almost a term of preparatory studies, has to be completed in ten hours, in exam conditions. This exam takes place in the last week of the Lent term. All the work is then marked internally and moderated by an external examiner who views an exhibition of the work in the school.

We run regular trips to galleries and organise workshops with visiting artists and designers.

Students thinking of careers in architecture or other design/creative areas should especially consider opting for art and design at GCSE. Most students are capable of taking the subject through to A level if they wish. In the sixth form, students combine A level art with a wide variety of other subjects and without detriment to their university applications in a wide range of subjects.

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CAREER GUIDANCE

Abingdon School's Career Guidance Programme takes pupils aged 11-18 (Year 7 to Year 13) on a journey of self-discovery, helping them to:

- think in terms of pursuing a personal mission
- grasp what is meant by career
- identify potentially suitable future occupations
- make educational choices informed by career planning
- understand and experience the world of work
- develop key skills needed to gain employment
- prepare to live independently after leaving school

In short, our goal is to help every pupil think carefully about, and take practical steps towards realising, his future career.

The Career Guidance Programme combines printed and online career information resources with career thinking/planning lessons; employability skills workshops; financial education seminars; CV, cover letter and interview training; one-to-one guidance meetings, and a wide range of events and activities, including talks by working professionals, an annual careers fair, several career advice evenings, two work experience schemes, and meetings with British Armed Forces careers advisers.

The career guidance section of the pupil intranet (Firefly) is a 'one-stop-shop' of links to recommended websites for researching occupations; learning about different academic, vocational, and work-based educational options (post-16 and post-18) and their relevance to career choices; searching for enrichment opportunities that give insight into career choices, and finding work experience placements, internships, apprenticeships, and school leaver programmes.

Every Year group enjoys a set of bespoke activities designed for its step in this journey, with one Year's activities smoothly transitioning into that of the next Year. This design ensures coherence from Year to Year and puts pupils in the best position possible to make informed educational choices at the end of each key stage in their education: GSCE, A-Level, and all post-18 options, including Higher Education.

3rd Year Programme

Career guidance takes on significance for the first time in 3rd Year, when Year groups reach their full size and cohorts are complete.

In September, the Head of Career Guidance speaks at 3rd Year Assembly to inform all new pupils (and remind all returning pupils) of the career information resources available on the pupil intranet (Firefly).

Starting after October half-term, every 3rd Year pupil attends an 'Exploring Careers' lesson in which they get introduced to a 'Framework for Exploring Careers'. This framework helps pupils to understand what any given occupation offers (and does not offer) from six different dimensions (interests, abilities, motivations, lifestyle, personality, health). They learn how to use this six-point framework to create a 'personal recipe' for what is important to them - what they want from their career - and to then use that 'recipe' to research and assess different occupations for their suitability. A group activity engages pupils in applying the framework to nine different occupations, culminating in a quiz to test their knowledge and analytical skills. Equipped with this method, pupils can continue their own independent career research with a view to making career-informed GCSE subject choices in late February. They can also schedule 1:1 meetings with the Head of Career Guidance.

Starting in late Lent Term, 3rd Year pupils receive training in Team Working skills, which become especially critical during GCSE Years.

4th Year Programme

The focus of career guidance in 4th Year is to help pupils build additional GCSE-critical soft skills, clarify and refine potential career directions (in so far as is natural), and prepare for the following year's work experience programme.

In Michaelmas term, 4th Year pupils receive training in Group Decision Making skills, which are critical during GCSE Years, especially for academic group project work and various 'Other Half' activities and competitions.

Throughout the year, 4th Year pupils continue to have access to the career information resources available on the pupil intranet (Firefly). They can also schedule 1:1 meetings with the Head of Career Guidance.

In Lent Term, every 4th Year pupil attends an 'Applying for Work Experience' lesson in which they learn how to write a CV and Cover Letter. Pupils can get feedback from the Head of Career Guidance on drafts of their CV and Cover Letter, which they will use to secure a work experience placement in 5th Year.

Several times a year, the Career Guidance Programme brings external speakers (often parents and alumni) to Abingdon School to host informal 'Career Insight Talks'. These talks are designed to give 4th year, 5th year and 6th form pupils insights into what different industry sectors are like; highlight key personal qualities needed for success; explain the rewards and sacrifices of the job; describe different specialisms within the industry; and reveal the different educational routes into the industry. These talks are especially useful to pupils unsure of what career they might pursue. In every three-year cycle, nine different industry sectors are covered.

Finally, in June, pupils and parents can attend an evening event called 'The Truths and Myths Behind Often Misunderstood Careers' which helps to affirm truths and debunk myths about a range of popular, if often misunderstood, careers which students may be considering (but potentially should reconsider) before making A-Level subject choices in 5th Year.

5th Year Programme

5th Year pupils have many opportunities to engage in Abingdon's Career Guidance Programme; 5th Year is a very important year in terms of choosing A-Level subjects and preparing for the 6th Form (or another Level 3 qualification), getting first-time experience of the world of work, and deepening an understanding of potential future careers.

Given that tentative A-Level subject choices are made in late November of 5th Year, early in Michaelmas term, pupils complete a 'Career Profiling Programme' administered by an external organisation. Pupils first complete a series of online questionnaires about their interests, skills, lifestyle preferences, motivations, and personality. Based on the answers given, the online system generates a list of potential occupations that would appear to be well matched to the pupil along with key information that explains why. Pupils then have a one-to-one meeting with an independent and experienced career adviser to discuss the matched occupations as well as implications on A-Level subjects that may be required or useful for entering the matched occupations. This service is offered for a fee on an opt-out basis.

5th Year pupils continue to have access to the career information resources available on the pupil intranet (Firefly). For pupils interested in discussing further the findings of their career profiling programme, and implications for A-Level subject choices, the Head of Career Guidance is available for follow-up 1:1 Meetings.

Kicking off at the beginning of the year, and continuing in stages throughout, is a 5th Year Work Experience Scheme, strongly encouraged for all 5th Year pupils. Pupils are charged with finding their own placement and undertaking the placement for one or two weeks immediately after completion of their GCSE exams in Summer Term.

The annual Abingdon Career Convention, jointly run by Abingdon, St Helen's, and Our Lady's, is held on a Thursday or Friday evening in mid-March and features parents and alumni of all three schools, as well as local employers, representing a wide range of careers. Pupils can meet with representatives one to one, participate in small group discussions, and attend panel presentations. The event is compulsory for 5th Year pupils.

Several times a year, the Career Guidance Programme brings external speakers (often parents and alumni) to Abingdon School to host informal 'Career Insight Talks'. These talks are designed to give 4th year, 5th year and 6th form pupils insights into what different industry sectors are like; highlight key personal qualities needed for success; explain the rewards and sacrifices of the job; describe different specialisms within the industry; and reveal the different educational routes into the industry. These talks are especially useful to pupils unsure of what career they might pursue. In every three-year cycle, nine different industry sectors are covered.

Finally, 5th Year pupils continue to receive skills training, this tear during Michaelmas term and covering Project Planning skills, which will be critical during their A-Level years and beyond.

Michael Triff (michael.triff@abingdon.org.uk)

CLASSICS

The classical subjects taught in the Middle School are Latin, Ancient Greek and Ancient History. No classical subject is compulsory, but most pupils study at least one; the range of subjects offered is such that there should be something to interest and fulfil every pupil. Most of those who studied Latin in the Lower School opt to continue in the Middle School.

There are six full-time classics staff, teaching in the departmental suite of rooms located in Greening Court. The department is keen to encourage pupils to see the importance of the study of the past to an understanding of the present, and to this end runs annual Classics trips abroad (recent destinations have included Provence, Tunisia, Italy, Greece, Sicily, Turkey and Crete) as well as trips to the Ashmolean, the British Museum and to Greek drama productions in Oxford and London. Pupils also attend GCSE conferences of relevance to set texts where possible, and speakers are regularly invited to the school to talk on a variety of associated topics.

LATIN

OCR GCSE Latin (J282)

http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-latin-j282-from-2016/

Latin is taught using the new course written by Henry Cullen and John Taylor. This prepares pupils well for the GCSE course, since it concentrates on the relevant language skills, while we introduce pupils to an appreciation of Latin literature through reading a range of poetry and prose texts using our own materials. Before the end of the fourth year every pupil will have been exposed to all the grammar which he will need for GCSE, as well as having read a selection of the greatest Latin authors. The department also supplements the course with its own linguistic material, laying particular emphasis on the understanding of grammar.

Those pupils with more experience of Latin or exceptional ability are set together, with the intention that they will be able to pursue a broader course of reading in the fourth year.

Beginner Latin in the 3rd year is also offered, with the aim of catching up with the other Latinists by the start of the 4th year.

The aim is to have completed the language element of the GCSE syllabus by the end of the fourth year. In this year, each set also begins to read real Latin literature, in preparation for the literary part of the GCSE. This is also an opportunity to study broader aspects of the Roman world, such as life in the city of Rome or the development of the Roman political system from republic to empire. The top sets are able to pursue this reading in more depth, but by the end of the year all the students are ready for the final year's work, irrespective of their previous experience.

The GCSE itself consists of three examined papers (there is no coursework element). The language paper (worth 50%) tests the candidate's linguistic competence with unseen translation, comprehension and grammatical questions. For this paper there is a set vocabulary list, which we work towards learning gradually over the course. The other two papers are on set texts, one verse (25%) and one prose (25%). Pupils are expected to translate and comment upon their set authors. We expect almost all pupils who take the GCSE to achieve a very high grade on the new numerical GCSE grading system. In 2019 (pre-CAGs/TAGs), 55% of candidates achieved 9s and 82% 9 or 8.

ANCIENT GREEK

OCR GCSE Classical Greek (J292)

http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-classical-greek-j292-from-2016/

Ancient Greek offers a demanding and very highly respected GCSE. The influence of the Greeks on our modern world is almost limitless: science, drama, philosophy, history, democracy, architecture and art are but a few of the areas which the ancient Greeks either invented or developed hugely. The GCSE course offers a window onto these ideas through the study of their language and some of their literature, a literature of almost unparalleled impact. Most pupils come to Greek, having previously started Latin, but this is not essential: it has been studied very successfully by non-Latinists.

Pupils may start Greek in the Third Year, the GCSE being taken in the Fifth Year. A handful of students - those who have read Greek to scholarship standard or higher common entrance level already at preparatory school - choose to take "Express" Greek outside the timetable, sitting the GCSE at the end of the Fourth Year.

Pupils are taught using the Taylor course, which gives them a thorough grounding in grammar, and this is supplemented with the department's own material. As the course is shorter than Latin, with only three years to GCSE, it is not usually possible to read a selection of Greek authors before embarking on set texts, though the new course contains many passages from classical authors adapted to an appropriate level of difficulty.

The exam itself follows the same pattern as the Latin GCSE, with half the marks for language and half for literature. As in Latin, there is a set vocabulary for the language paper, and no coursework. The literature papers provide the opportunity to study some of ancient Greece's great literature, such as Homer, in the original. In 2019 (pre-CAGs/TAGs), every candidate, bar one, achieved a 9.

ANCIENT HISTORY

OCR GCSE Ancient History (J151)

http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse-ancient-history-j198-from-2017/

Those who wish to study the ancient world without the further linguistic study required by Latin or Greek, may pursue a course in Ancient History, which offers a challenging and exciting programme of study of the military, political and social history of the Greek and Roman worlds.

There are usually about fifty pupils a year who pursue such a course in the Third Year, and they will study foundation topics devised by the department. After a general introduction to the ancient world, they will study ancient entertainment (looking at the Greek Olympics and in Rome chariot-racing and gladiatorial shows), and then Greek and Roman warfare (focusing on Sparta and the army in Roman Britain respectively). The last of these topics is studied in the form of an extended essay, which is supported by a trip to relevant ancient sites (such as Caerleon or, further afield, Hadrian's Wall). In the summer the final module of this course comprises the study of Athenian democracy.

The GCSE course proper starts in the Fourth Year, and thus it is possible for pupils to opt for Ancient History at this point if they wish. Pupils have to study four topics, and there is no longer any coursework module. For the four papers, we study: the Persian Empire and their wars of attempted conquest against the Greeks; the development of democracy in Athens from the tyrannies which preceded it; the foundation of Rome from the mythical period of Romulus through to the origins of the republican political system; and finally the wars between Carthage and Rome, focusing on Hannibal, the charismatic Carthaginian leader who so nearly brought Rome to her knees.

All ancient authors are read in translation, and so no knowledge of Latin or Greek is needed or assumed. In 2019 (pre-CAGs/TAGs) almost half the candidates achieved a 9.

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DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

AQA GCSE Design & Technology (8552)

http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/design-and-technology/gcse/design-and-technology-8552

The department has 3 well-equipped workshops, a design classroom and two dedicated ICT suites located within the design and technology centre. Pupils are encouraged to work with a diverse range of materials and the department has a wide range of computer-controlled machines, allowing an industrial approach to design and manufacture.

The department is open most afternoons for students to pursue their own interests or to enable them to continue with their coursework projects.

Third Year
Approximately half of the third year pupils are new to the school and may have very different design and technology experiences. All of the projects that they cover are designed to follow an iterative design process, starting with the design brief, research and idea generation, through to the modelling, making, testing and evaluation. The main emphasis in the third year is on developing confidence in the workshop and gaining an understanding of materials and manufacture. The projects taught develop in difficulty and demand as the year progresses and include an introduction to the laser cutter and 3d printing facilities. The aim is to ensure that when the pupils finish the third year they are able to make informed decisions about their GCSE options.

Fourth and Fifth Year GCSE Options

During the fourth year the students will complete a selection of mini projects designed to give them experiences in a wide range of material areas, while developing their graphical communication and computer aided design skills. These provide them with the bulk of the knowledge for the written examination (50%) and also help them decide what materials they may wish to incorporate into their coursework. Projects will combine traditional practical skills with more innovative processes such as 3d printing and computer controlled manufacture. The emphasis is on developing their theory knowledge through practical skills but also covers the major design movements of the 20th century and the study of several influential designers.

The coursework project is an important element of the GCSE and it contributes 50% of the GCSE mark. The project will be chosen by the student from some exam board contexts that are released on the 1st of June and will include, identifying a need and researching the problem through to generating initial ideas and developing a chosen solution, planning for construction and finally product manufacture. The design folio will involve a large amount of ICT and CAD work.

The course aims to encourage students to develop and sustain their own innovation, creativity and design and technology capability. The GCSE course will suit those who are problem solvers, enjoy challenges and those who have the motivation to work consistently throughout the design and manufacture of their coursework piece. Students will need excellent time management skills to excel in the coursework and there is also a maths content that is assessed in the written paper.

Design and technology aims to provide students with the skills needed to solve practical problems that reflect D&T in the wider world where materials are combined together in the manufacture of innovative products, as well as foster awareness amongst students of the need to consider sustainability and the environmental impact of their designing.

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COMPUTER SCIENCE

AQA GCSE Computer Science (8525)

https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/computer-science-and-it/gcse/computer-science-8525

Computers and computerised devices are everywhere today. An understanding of how computers work, and how to solve problems using them, transforms you from being simply a consumer of modern technology to having the potential to shape our modern world. A computer scientist undertakes a creative role which connects the very fast but very rigid calculating power of a machine with a myriad of interesting human problems, from science and engineering to art.

At this level Computer Science helps to develop an interest in computing and to gain confidence in computational thinking and programming. Topics such as computational thinking, code tracing, problem-solving and programming concepts (algorithms and the designing, writing, testing and refining of code) are tested in a 2 hour written paper. Computer Science theory including data representations, computer systems and networks, cybersecurity, relational databases (including SQL) and ethical, legal and environmental impacts of digital technology on wider society are examined in a 1 hour 45min paper. .

If you have an interest in logic puzzles, and also have a persistent approach to problem-solving, you should take to programming. The programming itself will be in Python, a high-level language which has many applications beyond the classroom. You will need access to your own computer to undertake programming tasks.

There is no coursework component to this course and both sections are examined via external exam.

NB: In order to ensure a breadth of subject types at GCSE we only allow students to take one of Computer Science and Electronics at GCSE level.

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DRAMA

Edexcel GCSE Drama (DR0)

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/drama-2016.html

Drama is a popular option for many students with an interest in the arts. It is taught by members of the drama department. Pupils studying drama see a number of plays and take part in productions as part of the assessment. They are also encouraged to participate in extra-curricular productions (many involving girls from St Helen's). The subject often attracts those with an interest in film, such as members of the Abingdon Film Unit. At GCSE level, drama involves some rehearsals in out-of-school time, so a firm commitment is essential. Above all, drama has a three-dimensional character so that in addition to the key academic skills of reading and interpreting, writing, analysing and evaluating, you also need to be able to bring ideas to life as a performer. You need a good imagination. Perhaps most importantly, you need to be able to work well with others.

In the third year, students choosing to study drama are taught in three or more sets for four periods per fortnight. The course shadows many aspects of Edexcel's GCSE course, and our aim is to introduce all the key components of that course: acting skills (movement and voice); the study of a play text from the point of view of an actor, designer and director; evaluation of live theatre; devising and performing an original piece of theatre alongside presenting extracts from scripted plays. At all stages, students learn to evaluate their own and others' work, and to assess their skill levels more objectively. The third year course also involves visits to live theatre productions, usually during the evening.

The Edexcel GCSE Drama course (DR0) occupies fourth and fifth years. At this level, there are usually two sets in each year, both taught for five periods per fortnight. The GCSE course is assessed in three main components. Component 1 involves devising and performing an original piece of theatre, followed by a 1,500-2,000-word portfolio analysing and reflecting on the devising process. This component accounts for 40% of the total marks and is internally marked and externally moderated. Component 2 requires students to prepare and perform two key extracts from a published play text in front of a visiting examiner. Extracts can be any combination of 2-3 minute monologues, 3-5 minute duologues or group pieces involving 3-6 performers and lasting 10-15 minutes. Component 2 accounts for 20% of the marks. Component 3 is a 90-minute written paper set at the end of the course. It requires students to answer questions on the staging of a set play from the perspectives of an actor, director and designer, and answer a question involving the evaluation of a live theatre performance. It constitutes the remaining 40% of the marks and is externally marked.

The first term of the fourth year course involves induction activities and skills development sessions, alongside a trial devising and portfolio unit as an introduction to the demands of Component 1. In the second term, students study a set play and perform two key extracts from it as a way of preparing for the demands of Components 2 and 3. Across terms 1 and 2, they also attend live theatre productions and develop the skills to write with insight about what they have seen. In the third term, students sit a trial written exam before embarking on the process of devising their final Component 1 pieces. Starting the process at the end of 4th year allows research and development activities to continue over the summer holidays, so that the finished pieces can be performed and assessed around October in the fifth year. Drafting and finalising the portfolio occupies the remainder of the Michaelmas term of fifth year alongside preparation for the Component 2 acting exam pieces. These are assessed by a visiting examiner some time in January-March. At the start of January, students sit a mock written paper. After the Component 2 exam, the final weeks of the course involve practice and revision for the Component 3 written paper in June.

The GCSE course leads on to GCE A Level Drama and Theatre (Edexcel 9DR0) in the sixth form, where it is taught jointly with St Helen's, offering pupils a taste of co-education. It combines well with almost any other A Level subject, especially other Arts subjects such as English, Art, Music, History or Languages.

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ELECTRONICS

Eduqas GCSE Electronics

https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/electronics/gcse/

Electronics is part of everyday life. It has applications in computers, telecommunications, radio and television, industrial process control etc. Research and development in the electronics industry plays a key role in the country's economic success. Electronics GCSE level reflects up-to-date practice into electronics, and highlights real world applications.

Pupils will be given a broad understanding of the fundamental aspects of electronics. In the fourth year they are taught basic electricity, timing circuits, digital logic, and use of semiconductors. The fifth year syllabus covers sequential logic, microprocessors, amplification systems, and communication systems.

Electronics is a practical subject and practical work is given a strong emphasis throughout the course.

There is a practical project that is worth 20% of the overall GCSE grade. In this project, the pupil should identify a specific, applied electronic problem to be solved. He should consider alternative solutions and give reasons for selecting the chosen solution, conduct background research, devise appropriate circuit diagrams, construct and test the system, suggest suitable modifications, and produce a report which details all stages of the development.

Although the basic electricity taught in Physics underpins Electronics, most of the subject content in Electronics is unique and not part of the Physics syllabus. Electronics is, in essence, an engineering subject and not a science. Its emphasis is, therefore, much more on practical application.

Electronics is suitable for candidates from a wide ability range: for some, the summit of achievement may be to construct and describe simple circuits, while others may gain sufficient depth of understanding to design systems to solve original problems.

Electronics combines a high level of academic rigour with a high level of invention and design. It gives pupils the vital knowledge and expertise to enable them to contribute in an increasingly technological society. The intention is to allow ‘hands-on’ experience in order to promote a deeper understanding, as well as a broader appreciation of potential applications. Electronics compliments and enriches a broad curriculum. It provides a contrast to arts and humanities subjects. It offers skills such as problem solving, analytical thinking, communication of complex ideas, acquisition of knowledge, numeracy, and fine manual dexterity. Electronics extends and encourages a pupil’s interest in science and technology.

NB: In order to ensure a breadth of subject types at GCSE we only allow students to take one of Computer Science and Electronics at GCSE level. The school does not offer Electronics at AS or A-level however the skills learned at GCSE are good preparation for Physics, Computer Science or indeed any science A-level.

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ENGLISH

AQA English Language (8700)

http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-language-8700

AQA English Literature (8702)

http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702

The vision of Abingdon School's English Department is to foster students' love of reading and writing through creativity and pursuing new ideas. We pride ourselves in the personalised nature of our teaching, focusing on innovative lessons and active learning, with a particular emphasis on precision and personal response.

At Abingdon, we believe that success at the higher levels is underpinned by a breadth and depth of knowledge through study in the Lower and Middle Schools. In the Middle School, pupils study a wide range of texts: in the 3rd Year pupils study a Shakespeare play in our innovative 'Shakespeare and Identity' unit, and a classic novel, such as *Oliver Twist* or *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, while also exploring writing composition, learning how to vary language and construct persuasive arguments. Students also learn about reading and writing poetry, before finishing the year with an introduction to their GCSE Literature modern drama text, *An Inspector Calls*. As well as being essential for success in English, the skills that students learn in English are invaluable across the school curriculum and in the world of work.

Pupils in all year groups are encouraged to read widely outside the classroom and we work closely with the Library to provide reading lists and help students choose books appropriate to their reading level. In the 3rd Year students are expected to carry personal reading books, which they can read around school and during reading time in English lessons. There is also a programme of Library lessons for 3rd Year students. We maintain a strong focus on technical accuracy in writing, and students receive a copy of the 'Blue Book', a guide to spelling, punctuation and grammar that is referred to in lessons.

English is compulsory up to the end of the 5th Year, with all pupils studying towards two GCSEs. We believe the AQA GCSE offers pupils the strongest and most rounded experience of English in Middle School years. The qualification is widely respected for its rigour and quality, and is 100% exam-assessed. As examinations approach, staff offer regular drop-in clinics and an English skills course - English Plus - for all pupils.

The study of English at Abingdon provides the gateway to future success; it is a subject which fosters creativity and naturally leads to discussion and debate. As a result, the English Department places a special emphasis on co-curricular classes and activities. The Literary Society and Creative Writing Group *Scribble* encourage students to extend their reading and writing beyond the curriculum. Pupils produce their own creative writing magazine, *Words and That*, and can contribute to the school newspaper, *The Martlet*. We arrange regular theatre trips and lectures, plus we work closely with theatre companies who perform productions of set texts.

Matthew Coolin (matthew.coolin@abingdon.org.uk)

GEOGRAPHY

Edexcel IGCSE Geography

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-geography-2017.html

Geography is a dynamic subject that is constantly evolving with academic research and global change. The Geography Department works hard to stay abreast of contemporary geographical debates, delivering lessons that are up-to-date and underpinned with high expectations.

The department has three central objectives;

1. to cultivate students interest in the wider world and encourage them to think like a global citizen;
2. to help students draw links between and evaluate the significance of different topics and concepts,
3. to develop a broad range of geographical skills, one of which is GIS.

GIS (Geographic Information Systems) has become a key focus at university level for the subject. Over the past few years the Department has integrated GIS into the curriculum, meaning we are one of the leading geography departments in the country with our own GIS suite and a dedicated GIS technician.

In the third year students explore 'The Anthropocene'. The idea that we are now entering an epoch defined by humans is contentious, and the evidence varied. The aim is to look at the human and physical evidence behind the Anthropocene including; climate change, population growth and resource conflict, the changing nature of the world's ecosystems as well as explore potential solutions. During this year students will develop their analytical skills in preparation for GCSE.

The iGCSE includes contemporary topics and geography is uniquely placed to give pupils an insight into the issues that will affect them in the future. There are two exam papers, both will include fieldwork questions:

- Paper One: Physical Geography (River Environments, Hazardous Environments)
- Paper Two: Human Geography (Urban Environments, Economic Activity & Energy, Human Development and Welfare)

Fieldwork is an integral part of the iGCSE and time is dedicated to learning essential fieldwork skills. Students are required to complete two pieces of fieldwork during the course: one physical geography and one human geography which are examined in their respective examination papers. Fieldwork is undertaken in Abingdon and Oxford but there is no need to complete any formal project for submission and assessment.

Exploring the world, making synoptic links between seemingly disparate subjects and engaging with real world problems are at the core of middle school Geography. Being prepared to challenge assumptions and critically analyse information are skills that will develop and support other GCSE subjects, as well as being critical to nurture for Sixth form study.

Amy Donnelly (amy.donnelly@abingdon.org.uk)

HISTORY

Edexcel IGCSE History (4HI1)

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-history-2017.html

History is a highly respected, academically rigorous and hugely enjoyable subject. We offer dynamic, fun lessons as well as extremely strong IGCSE results.

In the third year, we offer a curriculum that is diverse, balanced and coherent that helps prepare students for life and, ultimately, the world around them. As in the first two years, we follow a theme. How did the West try to reshape the world from c.1789-c.1945? The enquiries we study are: What was revolutionary about the Age of Revolution? Why did Europeans become empire builders and with what consequences? What were the causes of the First World War? Why did the First World War become a stalemate? Lions led by donkeys – to what extent is this an accurate interpretation of Allied leadership in the First World War? What were the most significant changes brought about by the First World War? Why was the Twentieth Century so destructive (WMD, genocides)?

All third year pupils are offered the opportunity to visit the First World War battlefields of the Ypres Salient and the Somme, in Belgium and France, at the start of the Easter holiday. Fourth year pupils are taken to Berlin for the Cold War and German history trip, whilst there is also a fourth year trip to the Imperial War Museum London to visit the Holocaust exhibition.

IGCSE history, an optional subject at Abingdon, is a two-year course in the fourth and fifth years. The syllabus (Edexcel IGCSE) is examined in two one and a half hour papers:

Paper 1:
- Themes section-Germany 1918-1945
- Superpower relations 1943-72

Paper 2:
- A depth study on Russia in Revolution, 1905-24
- A study in change section, Conflict, crisis and change: The Middle East 1917-2012

The students subscribe to *Hindsight* magazine throughout the two years, which is also a helpful resource.

IGCSE results are excellent. In 2019, the last year before COVID affected grades, 85% pupils achieved a grade 9 or 8 and 96% achieved a 9-7. It is our intention that the range of history topics offered in the Middle School at Abingdon should provide many insights into the essential underpinnings of the world in which we all live. Furthermore, the skills of argument and critical evaluation developed during these key years contribute significantly to individual academic development, irrespective of the path a pupil chooses to take in the sixth form.

Nick Knowland (nick.knowland@abingdon.org.uk)

LEARNING SUPPORT

The specialist teachers in the Learning Support department see a considerable number of students during their time in the Middle School; this is regardless of whether the student has a formally identified SEND. Lessons, either 1:1 or small groups, are provided on a rotational basis to reduce impact on academic lessons. In the sessions, we target areas specifically related to a student's SEND, such as literacy for dyslexic pupils and organisational skills for those with ADHD. With students without an identified difference, we look at techniques that can be applied across curriculum subjects such as workload management and revision and study skills. Learning support teachers can also assist with subject-specific skills and lessons can provide an opportunity to recap and reinforce particular topics or concepts.

Requests for learning support can come from the student themselves, their tutor/ housemaster or their teachers. The department also carries out preliminary screening for specific learning differences and is part of the implementation of exam arrangements, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of such arrangements.

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MATHEMATICS

Edexcel IGCSE Mathematics A

http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/International%20GCSE/Mathematics%20A/2016/Specification%20and%20sample%20assessments/International-GCSE-in-Mathematics-Spec-A.pdf

OCR Additional Mathematics (6993)

http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/457916-specification-from-2018-.pdf

Mathematics is compulsory for all students in the Middle School, and all will have taken at least the equivalent of GCSE in the subject by the end of the fifth year. As well as enabling each student to achieve their potential in examinations, the course is designed to give everyone the opportunity to develop their ability to think through problems, and develop the mathematical skills and understanding which will support work in other scientific subjects, in the social sciences, and for later employment and adult life. The department aims that students should become aware that mathematics is an interesting and enjoyable field in its own right, and also that it continues to be central to many diverse and important branches of endeavour in the modern world. The mathematics course for the Middle School covers the requirements of the National Curriculum, adapted as necessary to the requirements of Abingdon.

An important part of the focus at Abingdon is that Mathematics can be the basis of rigorous and creative thinking skills. The third year programme of study concentrates on ensuring that all students reach at least a common minimum standard of proficiency, (regardless of their previous mathematical experience), but has also been designed to give students the opportunity to engage with more open-ended tasks which require thought and tenacity. The 4th and 5th years are spent focussing on the requirements of the syllabus for IGCSE and/or Additional Maths.

There are usually nine sets for Maths in the Middle years. Students are assigned to sets based on their previous attainment, but also to where they will flourish and be happy. Movement between sets is possible when necessary, usually taking place at the end of a year. The majority of our students achieve very high grades, no matter which set they are in. The top sets complete the material for IGCSE at a fast pace. They will have completed most of the syllabus for IGCSE by the end of their 4th Year and will then begin on the material for Additional Maths, in the 5th Year.

All sets take IGCSE at the end of the 5th Year. Students are entered for the International GCSE examination provided by Edexcel (4MA1). Assessment consists of two written papers, of two hours each, which are taken at the end of the course. The requirements for this examination are comparable to GCSEs offered by other boards. All students will be entered for the Higher Level of this examination, which means that the highest grades are accessible, in principle, to all. Top sets will also be entered for Additional Maths provided by OCR (6993). This consists of a single 2 hour paper.

All good mathematicians enjoy solving problems and puzzles, and a regular diet of these is provided to students to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Some students are entered each year for the UK Intermediate Mathematics Challenge contest, with a number regularly being invited to take part in the second round of this competition. There are weekly maths clubs, one which meets throughout the first term to look at the National Cipher Challenge and another which meets to solve a variety of problems/puzzles.

Samantha Coull (samantha.coull@abingdon.org.uk)

MODERN LANGUAGES

French, German, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese are all offered to pupils entering the third year. We aim to foster a love for the countries in which these languages are spoken and to generate an enthusiasm for learning languages. We provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate the culture of the countries of their target languages, running exchanges in France, Germany and Spain, and a China study visit and organising many other trips. The study of modern languages at Abingdon gives them enjoyment and satisfaction, as well as intellectual stimulation.

All pupils in the third year must study French or German and may study any one or two of the starter languages on offer alongside. In the fourth year, all students must choose at least one MFL subject from French, German, Spanish and Mandarin. All pupils then study French, German or Spanish up to IGCSE and Mandarin up to GCSE, and many continue with two languages and in some cases even three. Many pupils combine a modern foreign language with other A-level subjects in the sixth form.

We create a secure, supportive and respectful learning environment within the classroom so that each student feels confident in his own ability to communicate effectively. We endeavour to enable all students to achieve their potential, thus embracing not only the idea of communicative competence, but also that of academic excellence. Clinics and extension activities are provided to those pupils who would benefit, and we tailor what we offer to ensure every pupil's individual needs are met.

We are committed to the predominant use of the target language in all classes, whilst acknowledging that the use of the English can sometimes be more appropriate, particularly for the delivery of grammar, in order to ensure full comprehension. We deliver lessons using a variety of techniques and a broad range of resources. Regular opportunities for success in learning provide students with a positive attitude towards their own language acquisition. This is reinforced by regular contact with our foreign language assistants, particularly for pupils in the fifth year who benefit from an additional weekly oral lesson.

Our modern languages classrooms are all equipped with state of the art equipment. We make the best use of vocabulary learning apps and authentic video resources on websites we subscribe to. A range of enriching co-curricular opportunities are on offer.

In French and Chinese, pupils are ready to begin the IGCSE or GCSE course by the start of the fourth year. In German and Spanish, pupils will already have started the IGCSE course in the third year. For IGCSE the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing are developed and assessed with equal importance. The topic areas include media, school, future careers, health and fitness, home life, sport, entertainment, local area and the environment, travel and the wider world. For all European languages, we are following the CIE IGCSE syllabus 9-1. For details of GCSE Chinese, please see the Mandarin entry which follows.

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GERMAN

Cambridge IGCSE German (7159)

http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-igcse-german-9-1-7159/

In the third year, we are currently following the *Foundation Stimmt GCSE course* in conjunction with our own materials developed in-house in preparation for the IGCSE. From 4th year onwards, we follow the *Stimmt Higher GCSE course.* In the fourth year the majority of Germanists participate in our longstanding exchange with the *Ratsgymnasium* in Bielefeld, which has been running successfully for over fifty years, jointly with St. Helen's.

Sarah-Jane Poole (sarahjane.poole@abingdon.org.uk)

FRENCH

Cambridge IGCSE French (7156)

https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-igcse-french-9-1-7156/

Our third year course is based on the brand new Dynamo course and pupils are taught in sets for the whole year. In fourth and fifth year, we follow the Studio course in preparation for the CIE IGCSE syllabus. There are sets based on pupils' third year results and their linguistic potential. Pupils in the fourth year are invited to participate in our exchange with *Lycée la Nativité* in Aix-en-Provence, which has been running successfully for fifteen years.

Nathan Brittain (nathan.brittain@abingdon.org.uk)

SPANISH

Cambridge IGCSE Spanish (0530)

http://www.cie.org.uk/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-igcse-spanish-foreign-language-0530/

Our third, fourth and fifth year courses are based on our own resources that we have developed over the last few years in-house. Pupils in third year have the opportunity to go on a trip to Seville and in the fifth year to take part in a study trip to Málaga run jointly with St. Helen's.

Sophie Payne (sophie.payne@abingdon.org.uk)

MANDARIN CHINESE

AQA GCSE Chinese (Spoken Mandarin) (8673)

http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/languages/gcse/chinese-spoken-mandarin-8673

The Mandarin Chinese Department follows the AQA GCSE course and uses various teaching resources. Students are taught in mixed sets over three years. The AQA GCSE (8673) in Spoken Mandarin consists of four externally examined papers based on the following skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are organised into three themes, each broken down into topics and sub-topics. The three themes are: 1. Identity and culture 2. Local, national, international and global areas of interest 3. Current and future study and employment

There is a GCSE vocabulary list for the course. Pupils are expected to learn around 10 words each week in the third year and 15-20 words in the fourth and fifth years.

All Abingdon students always take the Higher Tier paper in the four skills. Pupils studying Chinese are invited to various culture events and may have the opportunity to take part in a trip to China as part of the course.

Gao Zhang (gao.zhang@abingdon.org.uk)

MUSIC

Examination Board – Edexcel GCSE Music 1MU0

http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/Music/2016/specification/Specification_GCSE_L1-L2_in_Music.pdf

The aims of the music department in the Middle School fall broadly into line with those published in the Edexcel specification for music which is adopted in the fourth and fifth years: We aim to inspire the pupils through a broad course of music study; to develop broader life skills, such as aesthetic understanding, emotional awareness, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-motivation. We want the pupils to engage actively in the study of music, and appreciate a range of different kinds of music. These aims are developed through a range of engagement with music as performers, composers and listeners.

In the **Third Year Music Option** (four periods per fortnight) pupils are given a grounding in the three areas of experience required at GCSE (performing, composing and listening and analysis). **Performing** is delivered through instrumental lessons and ensembles. The **Introduction to Composition** course includes basic melody writing, species counterpoint, simple harmonisation, bass line construction, word setting, Minimalism. Knowledge of these techniques is applied through the writing of an 8-bar melody, completing some counterpoint exercises, writing a piece in Rondo Form, setting a short poem to music, and writing a short piece of Minimalist music. These short compositional studies link to the work they do in the Listening and Analysis side of the course. The students are also introduced to the use of music technology (Sibelius software) in the department's technology room. Work in L**istening and Analysis** is delivered through the study of selected works under the following six headings: Form and Structure, Harmony and Tonality, Texture, Melody, Rhythm and Metre, Sonority, Dynamics and Articulation, Word Setting. After a short music theory crash course the students study four set works: Mozart - Theme and Variations; Schubert - Erlkonig; John Adams - Short Ride in a Fast Machine; Tim Minchin – Songs from Matilda. The students produce an essay on each set work in which they are assessed on the application of technical terms, identifying musical features and incorporating these into a critical evaluation of the piece in question. The students are examined at the end of the course on their set works and the music theory concepts we have covered in the composition course. This exam is modelled on the new GCSE specification (2016-) and will include: some short answer questions on the set works; an analysis of an unseen piece; and some music theory questions based on the compositional studies covered over the year.

In the **Fourth Year** the two music option sets start the Edexcel Music GCSE course and take the examination after two years. The **Appraising** work (three periods) involves the analysis and discussion of a wide variety of music through four areas of study and eight set works of different style and origin. **Performance** continues to be coordinated through instrumental lessons and students are allocated various chamber groups during the course of the year as well as in school orchestras, bands and choirs. The students are expected to sing at least once a week, during the Michaelmas Term, and are encouraged to perform regularly at informal concerts. During **Composing** (two periods) the students undertake a number of compositional exercises, primarily on Sibelius. Students start work on their two pieces of composition coursework in the Summer term and carry on with this through to the deadline at the end of the Lent term of their fifth year.

In the **Fifth Year** the students complete the four areas of study and have a mock examination paper set at the start of the fifth term of the GCSE course. By the end of the Lent Term they expect to have recorded and assessed the prepared **performances** (solo and ensemble) and to have submitted the two **compositions** required.

The music department provides regular opportunities for the students to attend trips to concerts and operas, both in Oxford and further afield in Birmingham and London. As singing and confident pitching is regarded as an essential element of musicianship, the students are required to take part in the Choral Society (Michaelmas Term). They are also encouraged to take part in the wide range of weekly meeting choirs and ensembles. This results in a busy and rich programme of concert giving throughout the year, which is enjoyed by pupils and parents alike.

Michael Stinton (michael.stinton@abingdon.org.uk)

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH and CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (including Relationships and Sex Education - RSE)

PSHCE is an integral part of life at Abingdon, afterall wellbeing is the canvas upon which we learn. Students are encouraged to think deeply and discuss issues to do with their ongoing physical, emotional and mental development. We work with students in small groups of approximately 12 so that there is plenty of opportunity for all to take part and engage with the important subject matter.

The importance of PSHCE and RSE at Abingdon is such that in third and fourth year, it is taught by specialist teachers in fortnightly 55 minute lessons, covering the following topics:

3rd Year

- Wellbeing, values and decision making, making positive friendships, the teenage brain, the importance of kindness
- Healthy lifestyles
- Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics
- Challenging discrimination, including ageism, racism mental health and disability discrimination
- Anti-bullying, including homophobia and transphobia. Case study of Gareth Thomas coming out.
- First Aid training either in CCF or as part of the Service and Citizenship Programme
- Alcohol and drugs, as well as the dangers of prescription drugs and addiction. The UK law surrounding drugs and substances
- Healthy and unhealthy eating
- Love and commitment
- Smoking and lung cancer
- Marriage and relationships including civil partnerships
- Parenting and Trust
- Menstrual wellbeing, the menopause and feminism
- Pregnancy, choices, miscarriage and the law, reasons why people might delay sex
- Annual lectures on pornography and alcohol and drugs.

3rd year Health Centre nurses' talk on personal hygiene, infection, dental care and oral hygiene. Michaelmas term

3rd year RSE Morning event. Summer term
Loudmouth Theatre company production covering Child Drug Exploitation, sexual harassment and County Lines with an effective Q/A follow up.
The school doctor runs sessions on men's health issues in general as well as sexual health
External registered nurses lead sessions on STIs, practical application of condoms and sexual consent.

4th Year

- Emotional wellbeing and resilience
- Managing stress and the mental health continuum
- Depression and Anxiety and how to help others
- Examining modern masculinity today through the lens of Grayson Perry's work
- Prevent and radicalization including incels
- Navigating the online world: digital footprints, online risks, gaming, security online and fraud, online streaming, vlogging and mental health
- Sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, rape, forced marriage, honour based violence, FGM, domestic abuse
- Sexual harassment
- Consent
- Pornography, sexting and the law
- Body image
- Gambling addiction
- The science related to blood, organ and stem cell donations

In addition to these lessons, all pupils are under the guidance of a form tutor. In tutor time they will cover various topics centred around national focus weeks such as anti-bullying, mental health awareness, e-safety, homophobia awareness, international men and womens' week, and RSE. Tutors work on a number of life skills topics with their tutees, including study skills.

5th Year

In fifth year, PSHCE is delivered in weekly tutor time by tutors, focussing on the following topics that are explored via a number of learning methods, such as discussions and practical activities:

- Ways to wellbeing, healthy habits
- British Values
- The UK Government
- Body image

On occasion homework will be set in PSHCE to consolidate a lesson or to complete, for example, an end of unit assessment.

The Librarian works with the third year on information skills and the fourth year on resourcing information.

Finally, a number of aspects of PSHCE are also taught cross-curricularly throughout the school via weekly chapel services, Biology lessons and Philosophy and Theology lessons. This is also underpinned in the School's philosophy of the Other Half. Further information can be found on the Relationships and Sex Education Policy on the school website.

Paul Gooding (paul.gooding@abingdon.org.uk)

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies B (2016)

http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/religious-studies-b-2016.html

Philosophy and Theology are challenging academic subjects that require pupils to learn and understand intriguing and interesting material and to argue their viewpoint clearly. It is valuable in developing skills in writing and thinking and expressing an idea clearly and persuasively. It helps pupils to interpret information and to assess its importance.

Pupils need to be ready to consider new ideas and to argue a case. They do not need to have any particular religious conviction or any religious conviction at all. Philosophy and Theology includes the study of fundamental questions about humanity and allows students to make informed personal responses to difficult contemporary issues ranging from euthanasia to the beginning of the universe

The Third Year includes a study of religion and science, crime and punishment, medical ethics and Philosophy of Religion.

In examining religion and science we look at fundamental issues of difference and compatibility, focussing in particular on issues relating to creation and evolution.

Students will tackle ethical difficulties relating to human conflict that contribute greatly to human suffering. Examples of which are; conflict in war, terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism as well as conflict in society: questions of justice and punishment, crime and execution.

Medical Ethics will examine areas ranging from Euthanasia to animal testing, issues that arise around the world from day to day.

Finally, we look at Philosophy of Religion which deals with the fundamental questions of existence. We study questions of evil and suffering and the extent to which humanity is to blame. Or can we blame God? We also consider arguments for and against the existence of God in order to give ourselves material to consider these questions carefully.

At GCSE we offer the Edexcel B Religious Studies course which examines: ‘religion and ethics’ and ‘religion, peace and conflict’. These topics are studied through the lens of Abrahamic religions.

Thomas Eames-Jones (thomas.eames-jones@abingdon.org.uk)

SCIENCE

An overview of Science in the Middle School

At the start of the Middle School in the third year, all students study Biology, Chemistry and Engineering, each taught by a subject specialist. Engineering comprises aspects of Physics, Computer Science and Electronics. We offer two routes through fourth and fifth year science; students study either all three separate sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) or Double Award Science. Those who take Double Award Science have fewer periods of science than those taking separate sciences but study four optional subjects to GCSE rather than three. This course is suitable for students who wish to take an extra optional subject. Even if the student ultimately intends to take up one or more sciences for A level, they might consider that the breadth of education provided by four arts subjects up to the age of sixteen is more important than a wholehearted immersion in science at this stage. Each case must be considered on its merits. If a student intends to do more than one A Level science then they would usually study separate sciences for GCSE but students can successfully take up A Level science after Double Award provided their grades are very good.

A student should consult their science teachers or the Curriculum Director for advice on the suitability of Double Award Science or separate sciences for them.

SCIENCE (DOUBLE AWARD)

Edexcel International GCSE Science (Double Award) specification (4SD0)

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-science-double-award-2017.html

Double Award Science is taught in ten periods a fortnight in the fourth year and fifth year and leads to two GCSEs. The Biology, Chemistry and Physics components are taught by subject specialists. There is no coursework but practical ability is examined by written questions on the design of experiments and the handling of data. The material is assessed by three 2 hour examinations (one for each subject). A double numerical grade is awarded.

Double Award Science is the same level of difficulty as separate sciences, but less material is covered. The same list of topics for separate sciences are studied (see sections below) but with less breadth. The course contains a broad range of scientific topics that are designed to engage and stimulate students' interest in science whilst providing the knowledge and understanding required for progression to A Levels (see advice above).

Richard Fisher (richard.fisher@abingdon.org.uk)

BIOLOGY

Edexcel International GCSE (9-1) in Biology (4BI1).

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-biology-2017.html

The course covers five key themes:

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

The material is assessed terminally by two written examination papers. The papers are un-tiered so a full range of grades are available. Students will do a large number of practical activities during the course in order to develop their practical and investigative skills. There are also some practicals in the specification content. Knowledge of these practicals, and the ability to interpret the resulting data, is required for the examinations.

Students will be issued with a text book that is specific to the course.

The Biology department has created its own course in the Third Year in which we develop some of the important underlying skills and introduce key concepts necessary to do well at GCSE. We use a lot of experiments and other exercises to enable students to learn to apply their facts to various problems, and to be able to evaluate data from a range of sources. There is some factual content linked to the experiments and this is appropriate to both Biology and Double Award pupils.

Ben Whitworth (ben.whitworth@abingdon.org.uk)

CHEMISTRY

Edexcel IGCSE Chemistry (4CH1)

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-chemistry-2017.html

Chemistry – as the fundamental basis behind most scientific and technological progress – has shaped the course of the last hundred years to a vast extent. This would never have been possible unless chemists had been interested in two major areas: practical problems and problem solving. Ability in these areas can only come about through a thorough knowledge of the underlying principles behind the chemical reactions being manipulated. In the Chemistry Department, we aim to provide a significant degree of factual knowledge, allow pupils to develop greater practical skills and above all to foster the spirit of scientific enquiry. These skills will be invaluable for any further study of science at A Level or beyond, although the primary aim is to ensure that students perform to the highest possible level of which they are capable.

Students who opt to study Chemistry as a separate subject at GCSE will be taking the Edexcel IGCSE qualification. The course covers the following areas:

1) Principles of Chemistry
2) Inorganic Chemistry
3) Physical Chemistry
4) Organic Chemistry

The course content provides an essential grounding in the subject and is an excellent platform from which to approach the A level course. Typically around 40% of the students opt to continue their study of Chemistry into the Sixth Form.

The final examination will consist of two papers. Paper 1 (worth 61%) lasts for two hours and covers the core elements of the course. Paper 2 (worth 39%) lasts for 75 minutes and covers all the syllabus content. Grades will be awarded on the 9-1 scale. Practical work is a key component of the chemistry teaching and both papers have questions that focus on examining the skills the students have acquired as a result of the experiments they have completed as part of the course. As a consequence there is no coursework element to the examination.

Students who study Chemistry as a separate subject at GCSE are in a stronger position from which to approach the A level course. However, students are certainly capable of handling the transition from Double Award to Sixth Form studies by undertaking some extra work.

Michael Frampton (michael.frampton@abingdon.org.uk)

PHYSICS

Edexcel IGCSE Physics 4PHO

https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-international-gcses/international-gcse-physics-2017.html

The aim of the middle school physics course is to provide a sound understanding of natural phenomena suitable for the pupil, irrespective of whether they aim for a science-based career or not. Physics is the fundamental science and underlies chemistry and biology.

All students take physics in the middle school either as a separate science or as an element in 'double award' science. It is more important to get a high grade if a student wishes to continue to A level, than to worry about which course is followed, however weaker students will find the A level course easier if they do the separate physics course. In the third year, we aim to look at all the major areas of physics to build the foundation for the fourth and fifth years. We are very well equipped for practical work including data-logging equipment

The course content is organised into five themes, each of which is returned to over the course allowing pupils to revise and consolidate on previous work.

- Forces & effects
- Waves
- Heating Processes & Kinetic Theory
- Electricity & Electromagnetism
- Nuclear Physics

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SPORT and PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education

There are seven full-time physical education specialists in the Department. Compulsory PE lessons are integrated within the academic timetable in the middle school, giving individual pupils, access to specialist teaching. The emphasis is on challenging each individual to be the best that they can be, without comparing themselves to others. Within PE lessons a wide and balanced range of activities is offered, including, amongst others, net/wall sports, gymnastic and athletic activities, swimming, health related fitness, and strength & conditioning.

The aims are five-fold:

Fitness: To instil the importance of a healthy body and mind, by promoting physical activity as a means to a healthy lifestyle.

Social and Moral: Through small-sided games and group activities, we encourage students to mix and co-operate. Through competition, we aim to instil the correct attitudes towards winning and losing and develop the pupils' self-discipline and positive sporting behaviour. Students should develop a sense of purpose, confidence, politeness, perseverance, initiative and independence.

Cognitive: To instil knowledge and understanding of the rules, skills, tactics and aims of the various activities, and encouraging pupils to apply these concepts appropriately in the different activities and critically evaluate their performance.

Leisure: By providing a wide variety of sports, we hope to encourage pupils to continue their participation in physical activity way beyond their school years.

Aesthetic: To encourage pupils to appreciate and evaluate form and movement as well as giving them the opportunity to express their creative ability.

Core Sport

The emphasis is on providing 'more opportunity for more pupils' by taking part in two sessions of changed activity per week, throughout the year. It also gives students the opportunity to represent the school in competitions with other schools and to progress to represent higher teams at county, divisional and national level.. The Sports programme is run within the curriculum, and at the end of the school day, there is further opportunity to engage in other sporting activities. The pupils have the opportunity to choose which sporting activity they would like to do each term.

Core Sports Activities provided within the curriculum (chosen on an option basis)

Michaelmas Term	**Lent Term**	**Summer Term**
Badminton	Badminton (5th Yr)	Athletics
Cross Country	Cross Country	Cricket
Rugby	Football	Tennis
Squash	Hockey	Rowing
Swimming	Squash (5th Yr)	Waterpolo
Health Related Exercise	Swimming	
	Rowing	

PE specialists and other members of staff, who have an interest, and often expertise, in particular sports, staff the Sports programme. The use of non-specialist teaching staff for sport gives both teachers and pupils the opportunity to communicate and develop a relationship outside the classroom. Pupils are streamed into teams depending on their ability and we fulfil fixtures against other schools regularly. Where we are short of expertise in a particular discipline, we employ the services of external professionals to ensure a high standard of provision.

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