



KS4 Options

**Guidance for parents,
carers and students**

Guidance



In September 2026, your child will start their new GCSE courses which they will see through until their public exams at the end of Year 11. We offer a wide range of courses, both academic and vocational, ensuring that students can build on the breadth of our curriculum offer at Key Stage 3. This is an exciting and very important stage in school life, and we will provide advice and guidance throughout the process to make sure that students choose subjects which enable them to progress to Sixth Form and beyond.

The recent findings of the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review outline a vision for a revitalised arts curriculum giving equal status to creative subjects. The changes are very much welcomed by our school, where we have always valued the arts as equal and our commitment to offer a range of qualifications which inspire students and speak to their strengths. We should rightly be proud that our offer reflects the planned changes as part of the government's bid to have a "World Leading Curriculum".

The option subject choices that your child makes will be important for their future. To help them make the right choices they will need to find out about the subjects they are interested in. They will need to get information from the following people:

- Form tutor
- Parents or carers
- Subject teachers
- Teachers from subjects that they have not studied, but are interested in.

Your child's exam results at the end of Year 11 will be critical in determining what kind of course they progress to in the sixth form at Stoke Newington School. GCSE courses have a grading system of 9 to 1 with a grade 9 being the highest. We expect nearly all of our students to gain a minimum of five 9-5 grades by the end of Year 11, with most students achieving many more than this.

We recognise that every young person is different and that we have a small number of students who will need additional support to reach their target grades and goals. For these students we provide a supported learning pathway and an additional mixed pathway, with structured support and appropriate courses to access Key Stage 4 programmes of study, ensuring opportunities to transition to the next stage of learning.



Raising participation age and sixth form study

Students are expected to remain in full time education, training or an approved programme of work and training, such as an apprenticeship, until they are at least 18 years old. It is important to think about progression into the sixth form, and indeed into higher education. It becomes even more important that students make the best choice of subjects for them in KS4 and that they are successful in achieving the minimum five 9 to 5 grades including maths and English by the end of Year 11. Students will have to work consistently across years 9, 10 and 11 to be properly prepared for their final exams at the end of Year 11.

The sixth form at Stoke Newington School has grown in numbers and students make excellent progress whilst studying here. The sixth form building provides excellent study and communal areas that make it an even more attractive place to study. As a successful sixth form we are increasingly popular with our own students but also with the external recruitment of students who studied GCSEs at other schools. We want to make sure that our own students have first choice to stay in our school's sixth form, but this does mean that they will need to meet the admissions criteria.

At Stoke Newington Sixth Form we aim to ensure that every student leaves us with the skills and motivation required to be successful in whatever they choose to do. Although we pride ourselves on our excellent outcomes, our unwavering support for every individual to progress and meet their full potential is at the core of everything we do. We aim to do this by empowering and enabling every individual to continue on to the best that higher education, training, or the world of work has to offer. This is achieved through:

- Excellent teaching and learning.
- A comprehensive pastoral support network.
- Outstanding progress made by all students who attend.
- Personalised support and guidance for the duration of their journey with us at Stoke Newington Sixth Form.



Thinking about A levels and BTECs

Many A level and BTECs depend upon you having studied particular subjects at GCSE. In the table below we have set out the 2025/26 entry requirements for our sixth form:

Subject	Minimum entry requirements
Art	4 in Art and 4 English
Biology	6 in Biology and a 6 in one of the other two Sciences (or at least a 6-6 in Combined Sciences), 5 in Maths and 5 English
BTEC Diploma in Business	4 in Maths and 4 average in English is required.
Chemistry	6 in Chemistry and a 6 in one of the other two Sciences (or at least a 6-6 in Combined Sciences), 6 in Maths and 4.5 English
Computer Science	6 in Computer Science and 5 in Maths
Drama & Theatre Studies	5 in Drama and 5 in English
Economics	6 in Maths and 5 in English Literature and English Language
English Literature	A minimum of 5-6 in English Literature and English Language
Film Studies	5 in English Literature
French	5 (preferably 6) in French
Geography	6 in Geography and 4.5 in English
Graphic Communication	5 in Art, Photography, Graphics, Resistant Materials or Textiles
History	6 in History
Mathematics	7 in Maths or 6 with additional support.
Further Maths	7 in Maths (must be studied with A level Maths)
Core Maths	5 in Maths
Music	6 in Music and a highly competent performer on an instrument or singing
Photography	4 in Art, Photography, Graphics or Textiles – 4 in English
Physics	6 in Physics and at least a 6 in one of the other two or 6-6 in Combined Sciences, 6 in Maths and 4.5 average in English
Politics	5 in English Language and a 5 in History, Geography or another humanities subject.
Psychology	5 in Maths, 5-5 in Combined Science and 5 in English Language
Sociology	5 in English Language and preferably a 5 in a humanities subject
Spanish	5 in Spanish
BTEC Extended Certificate in Sport	4 in PE or L2 Merit in Sport, and 4 in English
BTEC Extended Diploma in Sport	4 in PE or BTEC Sport level 2 pass, and 4 in English
Textiles	5 in Art, Graphics, Resistant Materials or Textiles, and 4.5 in English.
Three-dimensional design	5 in Design and Technology or an Art subject.
EPQ	5 GCSEs 9-4

Progression to university

Our sixth form students go on to study at a wide array of universities, including University of Oxford and University of Cambridge, as well as art schools like UAL, and other prestigious London universities like LSE. We have also had students go on to study abroad at institutions such as Harvard.

We pride ourselves on ensuring we offer a broad and balanced programme that enables students to make informed decisions on next steps, which has resulted in students not only progressing to university but also onto apprenticeships, and Art Foundation courses. The key is to keep your options open by getting the best GCSE grades possible. Then, at sixth form, choose A levels or BTECs that are applicable to anything you want to do in future and seek to enjoy your learning.

It is very important that you check that the A level choices you make facilitate you being able to do any degree you might want to do. For example, if you want to do medicine you need to study Chemistry. For more detailed information please look at the Russell Group's Informed Choices website: www.informedchoices.ac.uk

Science A levels can be studied with combined science GCSEs as long as at least 6-5 is attained. To find out more about university you can use these guides:

- www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
- www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide
- www.independent.co.uk/student/into-university/az-uni-colleges

Qualifications ladder

Levels	Academic general qualifications	Vocational qualifications - work ready qualifications	Work based/skills qualifications
5	Honours degree		
4	Degree	Higher National Diploma Higher National Certificate Higher Level Apprenticeship	Foundation degree NVQ 4
3	A level GCSE	BTEC nationals Award, cert & diplomas Short courses	NVQ 3
		Advanced apprenticeship	
2	GCSE 9-4	BTEC firsts Diplomas & certificates Short courses	NVQ 2 Work skills
		Apprenticeship	
1	GCSE 3-1	BTEC introductory Diplomas & certificates Short courses	NVQ 1 ESOL Work skills

Key Stage 4 curriculum and the options process

All students will study the Core Curriculum throughout Key Stage 4. The Core Curriculum consists of:

- English Language GCSE
- English Literature GCSE
- Mathematics GCSE
- Combined Science (two GCSE qualifications)
- Personal Development
- Physical Education
- Religious Studies

Alongside the Core Curriculum, students will choose an additional four subjects, two of which must come from categories A, B and C below:

- Category A - Humanities: Geography, History and Religious Studies
- Category B - Creative: Art, Music, Drama, Design and Technology: Graphics, Design and Technology: Product Design, Photography and Textiles
- Category C - Languages: French and Spanish

It is compulsory for students to choose a subject from two different categories, e.g. A & B, A & C or B & C. For example, Geography (A) and Textiles (B), Music (B) and French (C) or Drama (B) and Spanish (C). Students will then have a free choice of any two further subjects from a list of twenty, including all of the Category A, B and C subjects above.

Examples - nine qualifications in total

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6 Category A	Subject 7 Category B	Subject 8 Free choice	Subject 9 Free choice
English Language	English Literature	Maths	Combined Science	Combined Science	History	Art	Spanish	Drama

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6 Category A	Subject 7 Category C	Subject 8 Free choice	Subject 9 Free choice
English Language	English Literature	Maths	Triple Science - Biology	Triple Science - Chemistry	Geography	Spanish	Music	Triple Science - Physics

Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6 Category B	Subject 7 Category C	Subject 8 Free choice	Subject 9 Free choice
English Language	English Literature	Maths	Combined Science	Combined Science	Music	French	Computer Science	Citizenship

Information for all subjects offered can be found by clicking [here](#).

Students may not choose these pairings of subjects:

- Design and Technology: Graphics and Design and Technology: Product Design
- Art and Design: Textiles and Art

We will do our utmost to fit all students into their preferred choices, but this cannot be guaranteed. That is why it is important that students provide three back-up choices, in rank order. This will be clear on the online options form. Where we have been unable to allocate a first choice, we will work down the rank order list and allocate to the first available subject. The reasons a student may not get their first choice include:

- Insufficient numbers for the class to run – too few students have opted for the subject. If the subject is being run in another block we will look to move block choices to accommodate. If it is not then we will use the back-up choices.
- Oversubscription – too many students have opted for the subject. The number of spaces in each subject is decided using the maximum class sizes set by the headteacher and governors. Practical and computing subjects will have smaller class sizes than other subjects. When there are too many students opting for the number of spaces available, students with an EHCP are allocated first and then remaining students are randomly selected from all those who requested the subject. Where students are not selected, we will use their back-up choices. All students have an equal right to be selected and we do not use attainment or behaviour to decide. The random selection process is overseen by two senior members of staff to ensure fairness.
- Unforeseen staffing changes - rarely, a staffing change may mean that a subject has to be withdrawn from the option blocks. If this happens we will use back-up choices.
- Late submission of the online options selection form - if we do not receive an options form by the deadline published, a first choice cannot be considered if it is for an oversubscribed subject. Back-up choices will be used.

Changes to option choices

Please be aware that it is highly unlikely that your choice of subjects will be changed after the process has been completed. It is essential that you check your online choices form before submitting. You cannot submit the form more than once. Once the GCSE programme of study has begun at the beginning of Year 9, there is a short window of four weeks where changes might be made, providing there is an exceptional reason, beyond having made the wrong choice, and providing that there is space in the preferred subject. We will do our best to accommodate requests but cannot guarantee that a change will be made because most subjects will be full. We do not go over the maximum class sizes set by the headteacher and governors under any circumstances.

Key dates

- **9th February and 23rd February** - Heads of Subject to present at Year 8 assemblies
- **Week beginning 2nd February** - 1:1 options and post-16 guidance meeting for all students
- **Week beginning 23rd February** - Subject information and guidance published on SNS website
- **Wednesday 25th February** - Year 8 Options Evening
- **Wednesday 4th March** - Year 8 Parents/Carers' evening
- **Thursday 5th March** - Link to online options form sent to parents and carers
- **Friday 20th March** - Deadline for completion and submission of online options form

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