

Year 9 Options - FAQs

- **What are GCSE options?**
GCSE options are the subjects you choose in Year 9 to study in Years 10 and 11, alongside your core subjects.
- **Why do we choose options in Year 9?**
Because Year 9 is the transition point where we start planning your GCSE programme and preparing you for success in.
- **Which subjects are compulsory?**
The core subjects at St Marks includes **English, Maths, Science and RE**. Your options are the additional subjects you choose.
- **How many option subjects do I need to choose?**
Students will be allocated 3 choices from the 5 preferences that they pick (this includes their EBACC language and humanity choice).
- **How do I choose the right subjects?**
Choose subjects that you:
 - enjoy and are interested in
 - are good at (or improving in)
 - are willing to work hard in
 - understand the assessment for (exam/coursework/practical)
- **Should I choose a subject because my friends are choosing it?**
No. Choose what is right for you. Classes are based on timetabling and demand, so you may not be placed with friends anyway.
- **What is the key difference between GCSE Combined and Triple science?**
In GCSE Triple Science 3 separate grades are awarded for each (Biology, Chemistry and Physics). Triple Science involves studying biology, chemistry, and physics separately, leading to three distinct GCSEs.

But, for GCSE Combined Science only 2 grades are given. Yet, Combined Science students are still required to study all three science subjects. Hence Combined Science is viewed as 2 GCSEs, whereas GCSE Triple Science counts as 3 separate GCSE subjects. Combined Science provides a general understanding of the subjects without going into as much depth as the Triple Science qualification.

- **What is the key difference between IT and Computer Science (CS)?**
Computer Science and ICT are two different subjects but at the same time have many similarities. Computer Science is more about how computers work, and about programming.

IT is more about people in business, and tailoring commercially-available applications to their needs, whereas CS is more about the hardware and creating the software.

A useful analogy is learning to drive a car. IT in this analogy would mean learning to drive the car. CS would be more about understanding the mechanical structure of the car and how the car works, can be adapted or improved.

- **What if I'm not sure what I want to do in the future?**
That's normal. Choose a balanced set of subjects that keeps your options open and plays to your strengths.
- **Will I definitely get my first choices?**
We aim to give students their preferences, but it depends on staffing, class sizes, timetabling and how many students choose each subject.
- **What happens if a subject is oversubscribed?**
If too many students choose a subject, not everyone may get a place. Students may be offered their 2nd or 3rd choice and we will guide them through the process.
- **What happens if too few students choose a subject?**
If a subject has very low demand, it may not run. Students will then be supported to choose an alternative.
- **Can I change my options after I submit them?**
There is usually a short window for changes, but once timetabling begins, changes may be limited. Please refer to the timeline.
- **How can parents/carers support with options?**
By attending Parents' Evening/Options Launch, talking through strengths and interests, asking teachers questions, and helping students meet deadlines.
- **What should I ask teachers at Parents' Evening?**
Ask about:
 - current progress and next steps
 - whether the subject suits you and why
 - how the course is assessed
- **How are options decisions made if a student needs extra support (SEND/EAL)?**
We will work with students and families to choose subjects that are appropriate and ensure the right support is in place.
- **Are GCSEs all exams?**
Most subjects are mainly exam-based, but some include practical or coursework elements. Your Options booklet will explain this for each subject.
- **What if I choose the "wrong" subjects?**
That's why we provide guidance. Use the Options booklet, speak to teachers, and attend the Options Launch. The goal is to make an informed choice based on strengths, interests, and future pathways.