

29th April, 2021



Dear Parent/Carer

Options for your son in Year 9

In previous years, in order to help Year 9 students prepare for the end of Key Stage 3 and the start of Key Stage 4, we have offered them a degree of choice about the subjects that they study. For a number of reasons, we are offering less choice this year, but there are still two important areas where a choice needs to be made.

Languages

All students must study a Modern Foreign Language for three hours a week in Year 9. Up till now, students have been allocated roughly equal time to two languages, French and Spanish. **Next year they must choose one language in which to specialise.** Regrettably it is not possible to continue to study both languages.

Computer Science/ICT

Students must also choose whether to study Computer Science or ICT; again, it is not possible to study both.

Computer Science looks at how computers are built and how they are programmed. Students will continue to learn the basics of computer programming as part of this course. This course is an essential requirement for anyone considering taking Computer Science at GCSE or at 'A'-level. (It is worth pointing out that all students must choose one out of Computer Science, French, History, Geography, Separate Sciences and Spanish as one of their GCSE courses, so if your son is unlikely to take one of the latter five on that list, he should consider continuing with Computer Science).

ICT looks at how computers can be used. Students will familiarise themselves with particular programmes and will work with them throughout the course. Subject to numbers, we often run an accredited (non-GCSE) course in ICT in Years 10 and 11, and this course can lead on to a post-16 BTEC Level 3 qualification in ICT too.

An information sheet with more information about all four courses is attached.

I'm writing now to ask you to complete the form overleaf so we can allocate your son to the best courses in next year's timetable. **Please return the form overleaf to school by Tuesday 18th May.** This date is after the Year 8 Parents' Evening, when teachers will be on hand to answer any questions you may have, although you are equally welcome to get in touch beforehand if you so wish! As well as your son's teachers, Miss Monaghan (Head of Languages) and Mr O'Gorman (Head of Computing and ICT) will be able to advise you about the courses on offer.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Brierley', enclosed in a thin black rectangular box.

Stephen Brierley
Principal.



OPTIONS FORM

Please complete each question and return this form to the main school office by **4:30pm** on **Tuesday 18th May**.

1	Pupil's name and form:	
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2	Which language do you wish to study? (Please circle one)	French
		Spanish

3	Which of these two subjects do you wish to study? (Please circle one)	Computer Science
		ICT

4	Signatures:		
		(pupil)	(parent)
	Print name:		
Date:			

Please complete this form and return it to the main school office by Tuesday 18th May.
If convenient, forms may be scanned in and sent by e-mail to admin@stmargaretsacademy.com

Options for Year 9: Subject information

French

In Year 9, we will build on what you have already learned in Years 7 and 8. We will study the future tense in more detail so that you can talk about your future plans. We will also study the perfect tense in the context of holidays so that you can discuss what you have done on holiday in the past. By the end of Year 9, you should be able to converse in French using past, present and future tenses, which will give you a solid foundation should you continue to choose French for GCSE or will simply give you the confidence to hold a simple conversation in French.

French is spoken in a variety of countries (France, Switzerland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada and several African countries including Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia). It is one of the working languages of the European Commission and is in the top 3 languages sought after by UK employers.

The topics we will study are:

- leisure activities;
- food and drink;
- planning a trip to Paris;
- describing a visit to a theme park;
- holidays;
- television programmes;
- digital technology; and
- cinema.

Spanish

In Year 9, we will build on what you have already learned in Years 7 and 8. We will study the future tense in more detail so that you can talk in detail about your future plans. We will also study the preterite tense in the context of holidays so that you can discuss what you have done on holiday in the past. By the end of Year 9, you should be able to converse in Spanish using past, present and future tenses, which will give you a solid foundation should you continue to choose Spanish for GCSE or will simply give you the confidence to hold a simple conversation in Spanish.

Spanish is spoken in a variety of countries (Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, to name but a few) and is in the top 5 languages sought after by UK employers.

The topics we will study are:

- holidays;
- leisure activities;
- daily routine;
- clothing;
- transport;
- digital technology;
- television programmes; and
- cinema.

Computer Science

Advanced programming in Python

You will build on the programming skills taught in Year 8 and work towards GCSE-standard Python work. You will have the opportunity to learn about programming techniques such as loops, lists, procedures and functions. NASA uses Python to program space shuttles and all these skills are also used by programmers in a variety of jobs such as game and app creation.

Discover how computers work

It is easy to take for granted how computers, phones and tablets work. We use them every day and you will learn how they work by learning the following topics:

- elements of a computer system;
- the Central Processing Unit;
- understanding binary;
- binary addition;
- storage devices;
- convergence and new technologies; and
- computer communications and networking.

Build and interrogate your own software system

You will create systems and be able to find useful information from them. Every software system and every computer game you play has been designed and programmed. You will learn skills used in software and games creation.

You will also begin GCSE style work as you progress through the year in preparation for work in year 10. These topics may include Hardware, Software, Operating Systems, Networks, the Internet and fundamentals of Computer Science.

ICT

You will build upon your ICT skills from Year 8 and develop them further. You will use software to create ICT products and also create a video and using sound in Audacity.

You will learn how to plan, script and edit a video for a particular purpose. You will learn how to effectively review your work and make improvements.

A large part of the course will be to undertake ICT projects in which you will:

- plan and implement a large multi-level ICT project by
 - selecting and using relevant video and images and
 - designing and implementing a user interface to make it easy for people to understand and use;
- create and use spreadsheets;
- create websites/apps;
- review and improve work; and
- design touch screen applications.

You will learn some of the fundamentals of ICT: theory topics may include ICT systems, hardware, software, networks and emerging technologies.

This course will prepare you for the BTEC Tech Award in Digital Information Technology (GCSE equivalent). This will be an option for Year 10.