

Year 8

Axe Valley Academy
Key Stage 4 Options Booklet

2019-2022



Contents

Welcome to Key Stage 4 Options	Page 2
Useful Contacts	Page 2
The Key Stage 4 Curriculum	Page 3
Qualifications	Page 3
EBacc	Page 3
Frequently asked questions	Page 4
The Options Process	Page 4
GCSE Art & Design	Page 5
GCSE Computer Science	Page 6
Cambridge Nationals in Creative iMedia	Page 7
GCSE Design & Technology	Page 8
GCSE Drama	Page 9
GCSE Food Preparation & Nutrition	Page 10
GCSE French	Page 11
GCSE Geography	Page 12
GCSE German	Page 13
Cambridge Nationals in Health & Social Care	Page 14
GCSE History	Page 15
GCSE Music	Page 16
GCSE Photography	Page 17
GCSE Separate Sciences	Page 18
Cambridge Nationals in Sports Science	Page 19

Welcome to your Key Stage 4 Options

Dear Year 8 student,

This booklet is designed to guide you through one of the most important education choices you have ever had to make.

Choosing your Key Stage 4 programme of study is a really exciting opportunity for you to reflect on what your curriculum strengths and interests are, as well as the career path you might wish to follow later in life. It is a chance to tailor a package of subjects and courses that you will enjoy and experience success in and that will provide you with a strong base from which to launch into the next phase of your education.

However, making your option choices can also be quite a daunting and stressful time. Over the next few weeks you should discuss your ideas with as many people as possible: your teachers, your tutor, your parents/carers and any relatives who have taken GCSEs and other Key Stage 4 courses. Read this booklet very carefully, as it contains vital information about each of the courses. If you are confused about which subjects are compulsory and which are optional, or which combinations of option choices are allowed, do ask a teacher, Mr R Carr or myself for guidance.

I wish you every success with your decision-making.



Kevin Cumming
Assistant Head

Useful Contacts

Assistant Head (Curriculum):
Year Leader:

Mr K Cumming
Mr R Carr

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The Key Stage 4 Curriculum

The timetable runs on a two-week cycle and contains 50 x 1 hour periods and 10 x 25 minute tutor/assembly periods; the time allocated to each subject area is as follows:

Core Subjects		Option Subjects	
English	8 hours	Option Subject 1	5 hours
Maths	8 hours	Option Subject 2	5 hours
Combined Science	8 hours	Option Subject 3	5 hours
Religious Education	2 hours	Option Subject 4	5 hours
Physical Education (Non-Exam)	4 hours		
PSHE (Non-Exam)	Tutor Time		

Core Subjects

The core courses that all students study are:

English Language	(GCSE)	Religious Education	(GCSE)
English Literature	(GCSE)	Physical Education	(Non-Exam)
Mathematics	(GCSE)	PSHE	(Non-Exam)
Combined Science	(GCSE) ¹		

Option Subjects

The option courses that students can choose from are:

Art & Design	(GCSE)	German	(GCSE)
Computer Science	(GCSE)	Health & Social Care	(Cambridge National)
Creative iMedia	(Cambridge National)	History	(GCSE)
Design & Technology	(GCSE)	Music	(GCSE)
Drama	(GCSE)	Photography	(GCSE)
French	(GCSE)	Separate Sciences	(GCSE) ¹
Food Preparation & Nutrition	(GCSE)	Sports Science	(Cambridge National)
Geography	(GCSE)		

¹ All students study at least two GCSEs in Science (combined science) but selecting Separate Sciences as an option means that you will study three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Qualifications

GCSE

Most of the option subjects are GCSEs. The structure of these courses and course content has in many cases changed significantly in recent years. As you may be aware, the GCSE grades have changed from the letter grades (A*-G) to numerical grades (9-1, where 9 is the highest). Subjects follow a three-year linear course leading to final, in some subjects tiered, examinations in summer 2021.

Cambridge Nationals

Some students prefer an assessment system with fewer written examinations and a more practical approach; we offer a number of courses which can be completed alongside the GCSE subjects offered. These qualifications are awarded grades such as Distinction, Merit and Pass which schools, colleges and employers recognise as being equivalent to GCSE grades.

EBacc

The EBacc is achieved if a student gains a minimum of GCSE grade 5 in English, Maths, at least two Sciences, a Modern Foreign Language and a Humanities subject (Geography or History). In order for students to have the opportunity to meet this standard, you should choose at least one from French or German and at least one from Geography or History when completing your option form.

Frequently Asked Questions

How many options do I study at Key Stage 4?

You will study four option subjects at Key Stage 4, each one for five hours per fortnight.

Can the school guarantee that I will be given my first choice of subjects?

Every attempt will be made to give you your first choice subjects but we ask you to select a range of subjects in order of preference so we can best meet the needs of every student.

What sort of future planning should I be doing?

Where possible, if students have a goal to aim for, this can help focus their choice of courses. Having said that, we fully understand that many students will either not have a career path planned out or may change their plans. Our curriculum has the flexibility to accommodate this and we would also encourage students to choose a broad range of courses over Key Stage 4 to keep their future options open.

What support is there to decide which options to take?

Subject staff are available at the Options Evening to discuss option courses, please make an appointment through the parents evening booking system. Students are encouraged to continue to discuss option choices in relation to their future career plans and current level of performance with subject teachers and tutors over the coming weeks.

Can I change my mind?

As soon as the options deadline has passed, work begins on timetabling. Alterations to choices may not be possible from this point onwards. Once a decision has been made and a course has begun, it is extremely difficult to make any changes. It is therefore essential that time and thought be given to the combination of courses to be taken.

What if I cannot do my chosen course?

We hope that the courses offered will be available to all the students who want them. However, despite every effort to give all students their preferred choice, this may not always be possible. Alternatives may have to be considered if:

- Too many students opt for a particular course
- Too few students select a particular course
- We wish to advise a better range of courses to meet a student's needs
- Combinations of courses are chosen which are impossible to timetable.

The Options Process

5th March	Parents and Options Evening	An opportunity to make appointments with subject taken to obtain further information and to ask questions.
19th March	Options Form deadline	Please return completed forms to your Tutor or the Exams office. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Once all option forms are submitted, these choices are entered into an options programme with details of their ranking 1st choice, 2nd choice etc.2. The option blocks are then generated to maximise the number of students getting their preferred option choices.3. Students are then allocated to courses starting with their 1st choice and so on.4. Where we cannot allocate a subject choice due to it clashing with an earlier choice in the same option block it will then try to fit your 5th or 6th choice subject.
24th May	Letters confirming options issued.	

GCSE Art & Design

Key facts:

GCSE Art and Design is a broad course exploring practical and contextual work through a range of 2D and/or 3D processes, mixed media and photography. Students will produce practical and contextual work associated with the exploration of fine art, graphic design, three-dimensional design, photography and print. Art is a fascinating and rewarding subject that encourages the use of your imagination and creativity, whilst acquiring a range of skills and abilities.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will work on projects exploring and developing skills and technical ability in a range of techniques and processes.
- You will learn to develop artwork with confidence in any given material or medium.
- You will learn to understand a wide variety of artists' work and use it in the development of your own methods, styles and ideas.

What skills will I develop?

- You will develop solid observational drawing skills.
- How to develop ideas through experimenting with media.
- The ability to work confidently, making and following independent decisions.
- How to critically analyse artists and their work.
- The ability to manage your time through effective problem solving.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Art Teacher or Mr S Petty, spetty@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Computer Science

Key facts:

Computer technology continues to advance rapidly and the way that technology is consumed has also been changing at a fast pace over recent years. The growth in the use of mobile devices and web-related technologies has exploded – as a result, businesses require an ever-increasing number of technologically-aware individuals. This is even more so in the gaming, mobile and web-related industries.

Possible career paths: business analyst, database administrator, games developer, information systems manager, IT consultant, multimedia programmer, search engine optimisation specialist, systems analyst, systems developer, user experience analyst, web designer, web developer, university, apprenticeships and much more.

What will I do in lessons?

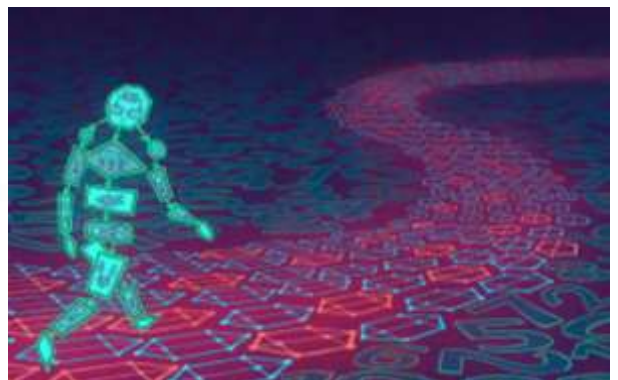
- You will develop your Computer Science knowledge effectively through the skills of listening, reading, researching and writing.
- You will cover the following three unit areas: computer systems, computational thinking and algorithms and programming.
- You will look at different programming techniques and analyse the requirements of a programme and then design, develop and test and evaluate your solution.

What skills will I develop?

- Computational thinking: breaking down a complex problem or system into smaller, more manageable parts, looking for similarities among and within problems, ignoring irrelevant detail and developing a step-by-step solution to the problem, or the rules to follow to solve the problem.
- Independent thinking.
- Resilience.
- Team work.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Computing Teacher or Mr M Brookman, mbrookman@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



Cambridge Nationals in Creative iMedia

Key facts:

In today's world every job has some element of computer use and on this course you will develop a wide range of skills and knowledge that will aid you in your future career - including creating presentations and formal documents, learning about communication methods via computers, building a website and creating a video trailer.

Possible career paths: software engineer, IT consultant, graphic designer, website developer, social media specialist, content or web developer, university, apprenticeships and much more.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will learn about how to plan pre-production effectively including understanding of client requirements and reviewing pre-production briefs. This unit also provides excellent transferable skills such as project planning which will be useful in a wide variety of contexts.
- Design, create, test and evaluate digital graphics.
- Design, create, test and evaluate an animation or multimedia product.
- Design, create, test and evaluate a website.

What skills will I develop?

- You will be able to identify key requirements from business scenarios, and incorporate them into your work.
- You will be able to create content to meet specified purposes.
- You will evaluate websites and TV adverts in preparation for when you create your own.
- You will source multimedia components (images etc.), taking account of relevant rules and laws.
- You will test your products, both whilst you are making them and once they have been completed.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Computing Teacher or Mr M Brookman, mbrookman@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Design & Technology

Key facts:

The new GCSE specification in design and technology enables students to understand and apply design processes through which they explore, create and evaluate a range of outcomes. Students are encouraged to use creativity and imagination to design and make prototypes that solve real and relevant problems, considering their own and others' needs, wants and values.

This course has a written exam and a non-exam assessment (NEA).

What will I do in lessons?

- Theory and science about materials and manufacturing
- Design activities
- Making activities
- Maths skills linked to design work
- Learn about the history of design

What skills will I develop?

Design and Technology requires students to develop skills and understanding in both designing and making.

When designing, you will need to understand what the client requires and then provide them with a functional prototype which can be tested, so that you and your client can judge how successful it is.

Making involves working with a variety of materials, some of which may be new to you, but others you will have already used before starting this course. Only by gaining experience working with materials first-hand can you start to understand their properties, and the ways in which those materials can be used for a variety of purposes.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Product Design Teacher or Mr J Froud, jfroud@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Drama

Key facts:

You will study, create and perform plays. The course is a practical GCSE in three units that will help you to develop a good understanding of how theatre works.

1. **Devising drama** - Create and perform a drama. You will produce a written log in three sections to show your thinking behind and development of the work as well as your evaluation of the end product.
2. **Texts in practice** – Two performances from a published play. There is no written assessment.
3. **Understanding drama** – An exam based on a play you have studied practically and a play you have seen in the theatre.

Drama is recognised by employers as a subject that develops essential skills for work.

What will I do in lessons?

- Explore ideas for making drama including different styles and techniques based on a variety of starting points.
- Practically explore scenes and ideas in plays and think about how directors, designers and actors turn them into performances.
- Learn about and use some technical aspects of theatre.
- Rehearse and perform drama to an audience (some technical/design options are available).
- Develop your ability to record your own ideas and write about drama including reviewing productions you have been to see.

What skills will I develop?

- **Drama specific skills** – including interpretation, devising, performing, characterisation, technical, design, reviewing and evaluating.
- **Transferrable skills** – including interpersonal/collaborative group work skills, communication skills and enhanced confidence to present in front of other people, independence and self-motivation, research and problem-solving.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact Mr R Selby, rselby@axevalley.devon.sch.uk.



GCSE Food Preparation & Nutrition

Key facts:

The main topics you will study are: nutrition, food science, healthy eating, diet through life, where food comes from and food preparation skills. To do well you need to be interested in food, and food science, enjoy cooking and be organised to bring your ingredients for practical lessons.

The course is made up of 50% Non-Examined Assessment (Food investigation and preparing a three course meal).

The remaining 50% is a written exam at the end of Year 11.

What will I do in lessons?

- Study the nutrition and science of food
- Practical food investigations to support the study of the food science and nutrition. This helps you to understand and to practice for your first Non-Examined Assessment.
- Practical cookery: Sometimes you will be given a recipe so that you learn a specific skill, other times you will be able to choose your own recipe.
- Theory work – researching, exam practice and learning key facts.
- Individual and group work.

What skills will I develop?

- Understanding the science of food
- Medium and high level practical cookery skills.
- Problem solving.
- Organisation and multi-tasking.
- An understanding of how ingredients work in recipes.
- An understanding of how food affects health.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Food Technology Teacher or Mr J Froud, jfroud@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE French

Key facts:

You will engage in different activities to enable you to develop your ability to communicate effectively in French and to develop an awareness and understanding of France and its language. Foreign languages are increasingly essential for a wide variety of careers and they are also important for personal and social development and enjoyment. 93% of the world's population does not speak English as their native language; come and join us on this exciting journey of discovery.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will learn to communicate effectively through the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing.
- You will cover the following five topic areas: home and local area, health and sport, leisure and entertainment, travel and the wider world, and education and work.
- You will do some translations both from French to English and English to French.
- You will also look at literary texts to further develop your reading skills.

What skills will I develop?

- You will practise the language by speaking and writing.
- You will be exposed to the language for listening and reading comprehension.
- You will develop dictionary skills and use ICT creatively to support the development of your language skills.
- You will complete project work including songs and research into foreign countries.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Language Teacher or Mrs N Flynn, nflynn@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Geography

Key facts:

Geography helps you to make sense of the world around you. It is hands-on, it is relevant and it is fun. The course is a good mix of topics such as urban issues, world development, extreme environments, rivers and hazards. The course will give you the chance to get to grips with some of the big questions which affect our world and understand the social, economic and physical forces and processes which shape and change our planet.

What will I do in lessons?

- There are so many ways of learning in geography.
- We use maps, photographs, videos and a range of graphs to find out about places.
- We use evidence to examine the issues places have and make decisions about the future of places.
- It can be practical with opportunities to learn new skills such as modern computer based mapping (called GIS)
- Fieldwork is an important element, you will get the chance to carry out 2 days of fieldwork and spend time in lessons preparing for this fieldwork and afterwards examining the results we collect and drawing conclusions based on them.

What skills will I develop?

- Literacy skills through report writing and written work.
- Numeracy skills by interpreting data and constructing graphs.
- Computing skills through the use of Geographic Information Systems.
- Decision-making skills by examining issues and viewpoints and recommending actions.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Geography Teacher or Mr D Perks, dperks@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE German

Key facts:

You will engage in different activities to enable you to develop your ability to communicate effectively in German and to develop an awareness and understanding of German and its language. Foreign languages are increasingly essential for a wide variety of careers and they are also important for personal and social development and enjoyment. 93% of the world population does not speak English as their native language; come and join us on this exciting journey of discovery.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will learn to communicate effectively through the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing.
- You will cover the following five topic areas: home and local area, health and sport, leisure and entertainment, travel and the wider world, and education and work.
- You will do some translations both from German to English and English to German.
- You will also look at literary texts to further develop your reading skills.

What skills will I develop?

- You will practise the language by speaking and writing.
- You will be exposed to the language for listening and reading comprehension.
- You will develop dictionary skills and use ICT creatively to support the development of your language skills.
- You will complete project work including songs and research into foreign countries.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Language Teacher or Mrs N Flynn, nflynn@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



Cambridge Nationals in Health & Social Care

Key facts:

Careers within the health and social care sector are wide-reaching and there are many job opportunities available to those who enjoy working with people and who have a caring nature. You will identify the essential skills and qualities required to be an excellent health and social care worker and will engage in different activities that will develop your own health and social care skills. This subject will help to develop your writing and communication skills which are essential skills needed for future employment within the health and social care sector or in general when working with people.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will develop your communication skills and learn how to communicate effectively with people of all ages through reading and discussing case studies and news articles. You will engage in a variety of tasks that will include independent, paired and group research, presentations, essay writing and other practical activities.
- You will cover the following four topic areas: health and social care values; human lifespan development; health and wellbeing; and equality and diversity in health.

What skills will I develop?

- You will develop knowledge and understanding of fairness and the importance of treating people with respect and care.
- You will develop your communication skills and consider the importance of verbal and non-verbal body language.
- You will develop valuable team-working skills by taking part in whole class and small group discussions and presentations.
- You will develop research skills to enable you to think more critically about health and social care related issues.
- You will develop knowledge of human growth and development through the life stages.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact Mr M Brookman, mbrookman@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE History

Key facts:

GCSE History has become more varied with students being required to study a range of periods both modern and ancient. This is a brand new course with our exam board Edexcel. We offer a wide range of lessons to interest and challenge you. There is no coursework, and with exams where knowledge, and writing longer answers is especially important you will have an advantage if you are already placed in the higher sets for English. As well as our classroom studies we will look to offer enrichment opportunities such as a Battlefield Trip to allow students to explore history beyond the confines of the GCSE.

What will I do in lessons?

You will study a mix of modern and early History. When you start in year 9 we will first study Medicine, Then the American West. In Year 10 we will revisit Medicine and investigate the Historic Environment of the Western Front and medicine during WW1, followed Nazi Germany for study. In year 11 we will study the Norman Conquest until Christmas, and then revise for the 3 exams.

What skills will I develop?

- **Initiative.** - At times you will be asked to take responsibility for giving presentations, acting in dramas, or recreating a famous historical poster as a snapshot with classmates.
- **Problem-solving ability** - Every time you are asked for your opinion – and you will be asked frequently – you will need to use your problem-solving skills. You will need to make sense of the evidence and reach conclusions based on it.
- **Teamwork** - You will get plenty of opportunities to work as part of a team in History so you will be able to develop skills in this area too. You will need to listen to your peers, contribute to group tasks, participate in presentations and evaluate your own work.
- **Communication (oral & written) & persuasive powers** - We do a lot of work on how to make your point, and defend it against alternative points of view.
- **Leadership** - You will learn to evaluate leadership skills (or lack of them) in a variety of key historical figures. You will then get an opportunity to develop some of these skills for yourself through group-work tasks and through taking responsibility for your own work.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your History Teacher or Mr R Knott, rknott@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Music

Key facts:

GCSE Music is about making and listening to music. Students will be introduced to a wide variety of musical styles, from popular music to jazz, and world music to Western classical music. They will also be given opportunities to use music technology such as sequencing, mixing and recording. If you enjoy performing and being creative GCSE Music offers lots of opportunities to explore and develop these skills.

What will I do in lessons?

- Lots of rehearsing on instruments or singing to develop performing skills, create and play music with others, for example in a rock group, jazz band, orchestra, steel band or vocal group.
- Lots of creative composing in a variety of different styles and genres.
- Have the opportunity to use music technology.
- Study the history and development of music from the 1700s to the present day.
- Learn to read music and identify musical concepts and features when listening to all kinds of music.

What skills will I develop?

- Ability to perform on an instrument or voice as a soloist.
- Ability to perform in a group.
- Ability to compose music in variety of styles and genres.
- An understanding of music theory.
- Ability to analyse music through listening skills.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact Mr J Jevons, jjevons@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Photography

Key facts:

GCSE Photography is an Arts course that will enable you to create photographic images in digital and non-traditional media. Starting points will be investigated and developed and work will be refined until a meaningful visual response can be made. Students will produce practical and contextual work in response to contextual sources and the world around them. In an increasingly visual world, the photograph is everywhere. This course will allow you to present your view of the world around you and the necessary rigour to achieve creative independence.

What will I do in lessons?

- You will work on projects exploring and developing skills and technical ability in a range of techniques and processes.
- You will learn to respond creatively using a variety of media and techniques.
- You will learn to understand a wide variety of artists' work and use it in the development of your own methods, styles and ideas.

What skills will I develop?

- You will learn how to use a camera.
- How to develop ideas through experimenting with media.
- The ability to work confidently, making and following independent decisions.
- How to critically analyse Photographers and their work.
- The ability to manage your time through effective problem solving.
- To clearly present a visual journey.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Art Teacher or Mr S Petty, spetty@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



GCSE Separate Sciences

Key facts:

All students study at least two GCSEs in science (combined science) but taking separate sciences as an option means that you will gain three different GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

What will I do in lessons?

- Biology: Cells and control, Genetics, Evolution, Health and Disease, Plants, Animal coordination, Breathing and Circulation, and Ecosystems.
- Chemistry: Periodic table, Atomic structure, Chemical Bonding, States of Matter, Types of substance, Acids, Extracting metals, Rates of reaction, Energy changes and Earth Chemistry.
- Physics: Motion and Forces, Conservation of Energy, Waves, Light and Radiation, Radioactivity, Electricity and Circuits, Static Electricity, Magnetism, Forces and Matter.
- Practical work is very important, not only to help learning, but also to develop skills in planning, analysing and evaluating. These practical skills will be assessed as part of the written examinations at the end of the course.

What skills will I develop?

- You will develop your knowledge and understanding of Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
- You will improve your mathematical skills needed to evaluate information, in practical situations.
- You will develop an awareness of the science related to everyday situations.
- You will be able to communicate, to apply, to investigate and to use scientific and technological knowledge and ideas to make informed judgements.
- You will develop the skills of researching, reporting, recording and observation.

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your Science Teacher or Mrs E Bishop, ebishop@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



Cambridge Nationals in Sports Science

Key facts:

This is a vocational qualification that is engaging, practical and inspiring. This course provides students a broad knowledge and understanding of different aspects of sports science including sports injuries, applying principles of training, sports and nutrition and how technology is used in sport. The course uses a mixture of practical and theoretical aspects to deliver the course content.

What will I do in lessons?

- Learn how to prepare participants to take part in physical activity which reduces the risk of injuries, how to react to common injuries.
- Learn how to recognise the symptoms of some common medical conditions, providing a good foundation to undertake formal first aid training and qualifications.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the principles and methods of training and the application of these in the design of training programmes.
- Learn about key aspects of the structure and function of the musculoskeletal and cardio-respiratory systems.
- Learn a variety of ways in which technology is being used to enhance both performance and the experience of sport for performers and for spectators.

Students will study 4 units:

1. Reducing the risks of sports injuries
2. Applying principles of training
3. The body's response to physical activity
4. Technology in sport

What skills will I develop?

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Report Writing
- Training safely and effectively

How can I find out more?

For more information contact your PE Teacher or Mr J Scott, jscott@axevalley.devon.sch.uk



