

Mercia School

GCSE Selection Process - FAQs



1. Which subjects should pupils choose?

The subjects that are best for pupils will depend on who they are and where they want to go. We have encouraged much thought about the future ahead and we have advised the consideration of careers and high ambition. Support this! Choosing French, history or geography, and two other subjects gives all pupils a range of academic GCSE subjects and keeps options open for A Level and/or further study. Pupils will not be limited by their selections.

2. What will a pupil timetable look like?

Pupils will follow a timetable of 29 lessons a week, including one PE lesson and one enrichment. The final session of the day will be referred to as Period 6. This allows us to dedicate more time effectively, and also helps pupils transition towards more independent study and pursuit of their own selection choices. Core subjects of mathematics and English will continue to have five lessons per week. Options subjects will have 2/3 hours of allocated time. Pupils will still have Mastery Time as normal and any Accelerated Learning will take place during this time.

3. What will happen if selected subjects cannot be timetabled?

We will try and build the timetable, around pupils' selections. Where it is not possible to allocate a pupil to all of their preferred choices, we will make use of their reserve choices. Where this is not possible, we will discuss this in the scheduled one-to-one meetings. We will endeavour to meet pupil selections and discussions will allow us to navigate any issues together.

4. Do pupils have to study both a Modern Foreign Language and Geography or History?

It is compulsory for pupils to study both French and geography or history. This allows them to meet the criteria for the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc). The government announced its intention that all pupils who start school in/after September 2015 should aim to meet the criteria for the Ebacc when they reach their GCSEs in 2020 and beyond. We are committed to this traditional, rigorous curriculum.

The Ebacc provides a strong foundation for university applications, where it is viewed as the preferred entry route. The Ebacc is made up of the subjects which are considered essential to many degrees and open up lots of doors. Research shows that a pupil's socio-economic background impacts the subjects they choose at GCSE, and that this determines their opportunities beyond school. Research by University College London's Institute of Education shows that studying subjects included in the Ebacc provides pupils with greater opportunities in further education and increases the likelihood that a pupil will stay on in full-time education. Sutton Trust studies have revealed that studying the Ebacc can help improve a young person's performance in English and mathematics.

5. What is the difference between a BTEC/Cambridge National and a GCSE?

With a GCSE, pupils obtain a grade from 9 - 1 (with 9 being the highest grade). GCSE courses consist of mostly examinations, but there is some non-examined assessment in subjects like art, music and drama. Mercia School offers BTEC Sport and Cambridge National Creative iMedia. Pupils learn about the subject in a more practical, work related manner. This course is for those who prefer to have the chance to be assessed through coursework, and who enjoy independent learning and practical activity. There will also be an examination that pupils must pass in order to complete the course. You can achieve Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*. This course is the equivalent to one GCSE.

6. Do pupils have to use one of their selection choices to study Separate Sciences if they want to be able to study Science A Levels in the Sixth Form?

No, but it is encouraged. It is not a requirement at Mercia to study GCSE Separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) to study those subjects at A Level, but Separate Sciences provides a deeper foundation for A Level study, so is recommended.

7. Will pupils at Mercia School now complete homework?

Pupils at Mercia School will be allocated lesson preparation work, revision and some homework when they begin their GCSEs. This is an essential step towards pupils fulfilling their potential. Put simply, to achieve well at GCSE and prepare for the significant challenges of A Level, pupils will need to work at home at times. As you would expect, given the longer school day at Mercia, this will be managed carefully.

8. When will pupils find out what subjects they have been allocated?

When we have completed one-to-one meetings and collated the GCSE selections, we will design the timetable and write to you with an outline of your choices. We will likely write to you in early June.

9. Can pupils change their selections when courses start?

Pupils must be aware that it is difficult and often impossible to change selections once the courses have started in September. If a particular course is full and a pupil requests moving onto it, this will not be possible. We would not be supportive of changes, hence why this process must be taken seriously by both pupils and their parents/carers.

10. Will all GCSE courses run?

It is our intention to run all courses, even if numbers for subjects are relatively small. Equally, due to staffing limitations in some subjects, numbers of pupils who can study a particular subject may be limited. Please be reassured, our preliminary selections suggest this is unlikely to be an issue.

11. How will pupil progress be monitored at GCSE?

Pupils will receive a report as normal and this will track their attainment. Pupils will also have subject Parents' Evenings and subject teachers will maintain contact if any concerns arise. Internal examinations will take place at the end of Year 10. These grades will be released in a results assembly and sent home.

12. How will Mercia School prepare pupils for A Level?

Mercia pupils will all be encouraged and supported to pursue their studies to A Level. We will have a thorough process of selection and information sharing as pupils undertake their GCSEs. A Level subjects have entry requirements, so we will share these and ensure pupils are on track for what they want to pursue. Additionally, our ongoing curriculum, with its rigour and ambition is adequate preparation for A Level. In due course, we will share our A Level Prospectus, pathways information and how we intend to support the transition to A Level.

If you have a question that is not covered in the above responses, please contact the school through enquiries@merciaschool.com