



Year 8 Options

Guide for Parents and Carers

All together: Always learning Understanding each other
Achieving excellence Enjoying creativity Committing fully

Guidance for Options

The option choices 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:

1. Form tutor
2. Parents or Carers
3. Subject teachers
4. Teachers from subjects that they have not studied, but are interested in.

To try and help your child make maximum progress and be successful in years 9, 10 and 11 the school provides a wide range of study options, some of which will provide more support for learning than others. It is important that your child chooses courses that will allow them to make the best progress, achieve the best exam results and enjoy the learning opportunities that will help them to be successful.

Your child's exam results at the end of year 11 will be critical in determining what kind of study course they progress onto in the sixth form at Stoke Newington School.

The new GCSE courses have a different grading system of 1 to 9 with a grade 9 being an A**. We expect nearly all our students to gain a minimum of five 9-5 grades (old grades A*-C) by the end of year 11 with the majority of students achieving many more than this. We expect more than 35% of students to achieve at least three 7, 8 or 9 grades and approximately 15% of students to achieve grades 7 to 9 for all their subjects.

To further help your child make the best choice of subjects and help them progress into an appropriate course post-16 and onto university, we will be using a guidance process that considers academic progress since joining Stoke Newington School. The starting point will be student scaled scores from primary school and we consider progress throughout years 7 and 8. The aim of this process is to provide all students with a curriculum offer that has the appropriate level of support and challenge and that allows every individual to successfully manage their learning in years 9, 10 and 11.

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. For these students we provide a supported learning pathway with structured support and appropriate courses to access KS4 programmes of study.

We will not allow students make choices that are inappropriate or unrealistic.

New GCSEs - what's different?

All GCSE courses are being reformed over a three year period. GCSE courses in maths and English language and English literature began in September 2015. Most other GCSEs such as history, geography, modern foreign languages, sciences, and the arts began being taught from 2016 with media studies and all of the technology subjects starting in September 2017. When your child begins year 9, all of their GCSEs will be the new, reformed GCSEs.

- The new GCSE courses have a different grading system. Instead of A* to U it has been changed to Grades 9 (A**), 8 (A*), 7 (A), 6/5(B), 5/4 (B/C) down to 0 being U or fail.
- The new benchmark pass grade will be grade 5 - a 'strong pass' and a grade 4 will be a 'standard pass'.
- GCSEs will not have coursework except for these subjects: art, photography, music, media, PE, resistant materials, graphics, textiles and food and nutrition. Drama will retain a performance practical exam.
- Only maths will have tiered exams with a foundation and a higher paper. All other subjects will have a unified paper with access to the full grade set of 1 to 9.
- GCSE courses will have more demanding content.
- All exams have to be taken at the end of the course; there are no modular examinations.

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 grades 9 to 5 grades including maths and English by the end of year 11.

The changes to the GCSE exams means that students will have to work consistently across year 9, 10 and 11 to be properly prepared for their final exams at the end of year 11.

There will be increased pressure on sixth form places in London and Hackney because of raising the participation age. The sixth form at Stoke Newington School has grown in numbers and is becoming increasingly successful. It is ranked in the top 10% of sixth forms in England with some subjects ranked in the top 2%. This

success has led to increasing pressure for places; in September 2017 we recruited over 200 students into year 12. 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. Last year we were in a position of having to turn students away because we were full on the basis of first applications.

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. This is currently five 9 to 5 grades, including maths and English and as a general guide, a minimum of a grade 6 in many subjects that they may choose to study.

The standard progression pathway from 16 into university is to complete a course of three GCE A levels over years 12 and 13 and the EPQ (Extended project qualification) in year 12.

Many A level and BTECs depend upon you having studied particular subjects at GCSE. As a general rule, if you want to study a subject at A level, it is advisable to choose it at GCSE if it is available. You should be aiming to pass it with a minimum of a grade 6. For more detailed information please look at our current *Stoke Newington School Sixth Form Course Directory* which is available on the sixth form page of our website.

To progress to a top university such as University College London, London School of Economics, Oxford or Cambridge, A level exams will all need to be passed at A or A*. Most universities currently require minimum of B grades at A Level.

For progression into higher education, if you are aiming to go to a good university you should aim to study two facilitating subjects at A level, these are:

- Maths and Further Maths
- English Literature
- Physics
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Geography
- History
- Languages (Classical and Modern)

It is very important to understand that not taking at least two of these subjects at A level will significantly reduce your chances of securing a place at a top university. For more detailed information please look at the Russell Group's '*Informed Choices*' document which is available online at:

<http://russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/publications/informed-choices/>

Careers in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects such as medicine, pharmacy, engineering or a science specific degree, will be better supported by following a triple science course at GCSE. Science A levels can be studied with combined science GCSEs as long as grades 6 to 9 are attained.

To find out more about university you can use these guides:

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide>

<http://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 GCE | 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 |

The options process

We offer a wide range of subjects at GCSE and students are asked to select four options. The subjects are arranged in blocks and students must select one from each block. They are also asked provide three back-up choices, in rank order of preference.

It is compulsory that one of the option choices must be taken form the following list of subjects:

- Triple sciences
- Computer science
- History
- Geography
- French
- Spanish
- Turkish
- Latin

The blocks have been carefully constructed to give students as many subject and combination choices as our resources and staffing will allow. We are unable to move subjects into different blocks to accommodate a student's preferred subject combination.

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. 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 return of options 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

Once the GCSE programme of study has begun at the beginning of year 9, there is a short window of time where changes may be requested. The deadline for this will be given to students at the beginning of the academic year. 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.

Timeline

| Date | Aspect |
|---------------|---|
| January 22-29 | Heads of Subject visit year 8 assemblies and present their subject offer at KS4. |
| February | Options work in tutorial time. Meetings with parents of students identified for the supported learning pathway. Triple sciences students identified from exam outcomes and letters sent home. |
| 5 March | Year 8 Options Evening |
| 19 March | Year 8 Parents' Evening |
| 28 March | <i>Deadline for all completed option forms.</i> |
| Mid-June | Letters sent home with confirmed options. |

Case Studies - examples of student choices and progression

Ahmed

Ahmed is clear that he wants to go university to study medicine. He knows that to get into a top university he needs to have a balance of subjects but understands that if he must study facilitating subjects at A level, two of them being science or maths where one must be chemistry. He has been offered triple science and he will need to choose one other academic subject. Ahmed wants to continue Spanish and history and knows that including a language at GCSE leaves all options open because some Russell Group universities require a language at GCSE. He knows that this will leave him with only one other option choice.

He started in year 7 with overall KS2 results of 117 in English and 115 in maths and is secure/advanced in progress in all of his subjects. Ahmed has the odd day off because he has quite severe asthma but in general his punctuality and attendance are excellent. Ahmed is also a very talented musician and has instrumental lessons in school.

He chooses triple science, Spanish, history and music. Ahmed will be studying nine GCSE courses and non-GCSE courses will be PE and PPP. Compulsory subjects are shaded in the table below (any two sciences are compulsory).

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------|
| English Language | English Literature | Maths |
| Biology | Chemistry | Physics |
| History | Spanish | Music |

Ahmed knows that it is important to have good or outstanding progress and he must get grades 7 and 8, 9 in all his subjects. This is even more important because he wants to go Oxford, Cambridge or a Russell Group university to study medicine.

Amy

Amy is clear that she wants to go university but because she has strengths and weaknesses in different subjects she knows that she has to build on her strengths.

She enjoys languages so she wants to continue with French. Her strongest subjects in school are PE and technology and she particularly likes graphics. She has talked to her PE teachers and likes the sound of the GCSE PE. She thinks that graphics will be good but she knows that she needs to study another academic subject and likes the idea of computer science which she thinks will work well with graphics.

Amy started school with overall KS2 results of 100 in English and 103 in maths. She has made expected progress and is secure in maths and English. Amy has excellent attendance and punctuality.

Amy has decided that she will choose French, computer science, GCSE PE and graphics. She has looked at some careers websites and sees that with these choices she could study towards a career in games design or, if she gets a grade 7 or above in maths, she could consider studying architecture at university.

Amy will be studying nine GCSE courses and non-GCSE subjects in PE and PPP.

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|----------|
| English Language | English Literature | Maths |
| Combined Science | Combined Science | GCSE PE |
| French | Computer Studies | Graphics |

Amy will need to achieve grades 6 to 9 in all of her subjects if she is to get into a good university. Her results in maths and English are particularly important for her progression into Post-16 and then on to university.

Adam

Adam has moved school because he got into trouble in year 7 and came to Stoke Newington for a fresh start. Adam had an overall KS2 score of 90 in English and 98 in maths but with missing some school and moving he has not made the progress that would have been expected of him.

Adam likes practical learning and he enjoys art, drama, PE and technology. He quite likes languages but is worried that because he missed so much school he will struggle if he chooses Spanish in year 9. Adam gets on well with his teachers but still has too much time off school. His current progress check shows he is only judged beginning in both English and maths. Adam has had variable progress checks and his effort grades tend to be only 2 and 3.

After discussions with his tutor and Head of Year, Adam chooses to do subjects that will allow him to do a lot of practical coursework. Adam chooses to do drama, graphics, art and Spanish; this means that Adam will be studying nine GCSE courses and non-GCSE subjects in PE and PPP.

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------|
| English Language | English Literature | Maths |
| Combined science | Combined science | PE GCSE |
| Graphics | Art | Spanish |

This means that Adam will be able to have a range of subject choices in the sixth form if he gets the appropriate GCSE grades of at least 4 to 9 in the majority of his subjects and at least a grade 4 or 5 in maths and English.

Anna - Supported Learning Pathway

Anna has had support in her lessons since she started school. She needs support when reading any long pieces of text and with calculations in maths. She can add simple sums but has difficulty calculating numbers above 20. Anna has low KS2 scores of 80 in English and a nominal score of 70 for maths.

Anna loves school and has a really good group of very supportive friends but sometimes struggles in lessons because she finds the work very challenging, despite support from her teachers.

Anna has very good progress check reports. Her behaviour, effort and homework are always 4 but her subject progress is judged beginning.

Anna has been selected by the school to study the supported learning pathway selection of subjects. This is a mixture of GCSEs and level 1/2 courses, together with additional support for English and maths. The level 1/2 science and technology courses also provide the possibility of GCSE entry if Anna's progress shows she would be successful. The supported learning pathway will allow Anna to better access the curriculum and provide her with useful skills and progression routes to post-16 study.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| English supported study GCSE | English Literature GCSE (if appropriate) | Maths supported study GCSE |
| Level 1/2 science course | Level 1/2 science course | ICT level 1 course |
| Additional support - English | Additional support - maths | Design level 1/2 course |

Non-GCSE subjects in PE and PPP will be studied as well.

Students selected for the supported learning pathway do not go through the normal options process because the school has decided upon the most appropriate curriculum for them to be successful and to enjoy learning at KS4.

If your child is selected for the supported learning pathway then the school would have contacted you and invited you into school to meet with the Head of Year, Head of Inclusion and the Deputy Head with responsibility for the options process.