



Stoke Newington School
& Sixth Form

Year 8 options

Guidance for parents,
carers and students

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.

GCSE courses have a grading system of 1 to 9 with a grade 9 being equivalent to an old 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 support your child to 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. GCSE targets may be reviewed by heads of subject following progress checks.

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 Key Stage 4 programmes of study.

GCSEs – 9-1 grading

All GCSE courses have been reformed over the last few years. 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, which means:

- 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 hospitality and catering. Drama will retain a performance practical exam.
- All subjects will have a unified paper accessing the full grade set of 1 to 9, with the exception of maths, combined science, triple science and modern foreign languages which have tiered papers.
- All exams will 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 years 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 20% of sixth forms in England, with some subjects ranked in the top 2%. This success has led to increasing pressure for places; in September 2019 we recruited just 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.

Thinking about A levels

Many A level and BTECs depend upon you having studied particular subjects at GCSE. In the table below we have set out the 2019/20 entry requirements for our sixth form:

Subject	Entry requirements
Art	4 in art and 4.5 English
Biology	6 in biology and at least a 5 in one of the other 2 sciences (or at least a 6-5 in combined sciences) 5 in maths and 5 English
Chemistry	6 in chemistry and at least a 5 in one of the other 2 sciences (or at least a 6-5 in Combined Sciences) 6 in maths and 4.5 English
Classical civilisation	4.5 in English and 5 in a humanities subject.
Computer science	5 in maths - 4 in computer science if studied at GCSE
Drama & theatre studies	5 in drama
Economics	5 in maths and 4.5 in English
English literature	5.5 in English literature and 5.5 in English language
Film studies	5 in English literature or 5 in media if studied at GCSE
French	5 (preferably a 6) in French
Geography	5 grade in geography and 4.5 in English
Graphics - product design	5 in art, photography, graphics, resistant materials or textiles
History	6 in history - if history has not been studied, at least a 5 in English
Maths	High 6 (UMS must be in top 50%) in maths
Further maths	7 in maths
Music	5 in music and a highly competent performer on an instrument or singing
PE	Two 5 grades in sciences or 5.5 in combined science – 5 in maths and 4.5 in English. 5 in PE (if studied at GCSE) or distinction in BTEC level 2 (if studied)
Photography	4 in art, photography, graphics or textiles – 4.5 in English
Physics	6 in physics and at least a 5 in one of the other two or 6.5 in combined sciences, 6 in maths and 4.5 average in English
Politics	Preferred 4.5 in English
Psychology	4 in maths, science and 4.5 in English language
Sociology	4.5 in English language and preferably a 5 in a humanities subject
Spanish	5 (preferably a 6) in Spanish
Textiles	5 in graphics, resistant materials or textiles – 4.5 in English
BTEC - digital games production	4 or above in maths. 4 in media studies if studied.
BTEC - business	4 in maths and 4 average in English is required.
BTEC - sport	You must have studied PE or BTEC level 2 – preferably 4s in science and 4.5 in English
Core maths	5 in maths

Progression to university

If you are aiming to attend a good university, you should consider studying two of the following 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 may 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: www.russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/publications/informedchoices

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:

- www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
- www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide
- 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 GCSE	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 be taken from the following list of subjects:

- 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.

Due to the nature of the courses being similar students may not choose these pairing of subjects:

- Design and technology: graphics and design and technology: resistant materials
- Art and textiles: art and design

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, parents and carers at the beginning of the academic year 2020-21. 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.

Important dates for the options process

- Week beginning Monday 3 February - Heads of subject to present at Year 8 assemblies
- Week beginning Monday 24 February - 1:1 guidance meeting for all students
- Friday 28 February - Creative day 2 - careers carousel
- Wednesday 4 March - Year 8 options evening
- Wednesday 4 March onwards - Drop-in sessions for parents and carers requiring support
- Wednesday 25 March - Year 8 parents' evening
- Friday 3 April - Deadline for all completed and return of option forms
- June - Letters sent home with confirmed options

