

Year 9 Options & Pathways Guidance Booklet 2026/2028

Orange Pathway- Open



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The Options Process: Information for Parents

Dear Parent/Carer,

In September 2026, your son or daughter will be starting Key Stage 4 and will begin a two-year programme of study which will lead to a range of nationally recognised qualifications.

In this booklet you will find useful information to help you support your child making their options choices. This booklet will give you information about the subjects that will make up this two-year programme of study. The separate subject booklet contains information about the different types of qualification which are on offer and core subjects that all students must study.

Our Aim

Our aim is for all students to achieve their personal best and transition successfully from their education at Thornhill Community Academy on to a variety of post 16 opportunities and pathways, which may include apprenticeships or courses at College. The options process will allow your son/daughter to choose from a range of GCSEs and vocational qualifications, which will allow them to study the subjects that are required nationally and choose some which will fulfil their interests and skill set.

Parents, students and Academy staff all play a part in choosing options. We advise parents and carers to take time to sit and discuss the information in this booklet, with your child to make sure that the most appropriate choices are made. Your child does not have to make the option decision on their own; they should use all of the support and guidance available to them. Please encourage them to:

- Think carefully about why they want to choose some subjects in preference to others
- Choose subjects because: they enjoy them; they are good at them; and they would like to study them at A Level and even university
- Not choose the subject because their friend is choosing it or because they like the teacher!
- Research the careers they are interested in and consider which subjects would help them to achieve this goal. There is a 'Careers Directory' and 'Labour Market Information (LMI)' on the Academy website, which may help
- Talk to their subject teachers about the subjects that they are interested in studying, and find out more about the courses that they will be taking

Support

We aim to support our students through this process by working with them in the following ways:

- Assemblies to guide students through the process of option choices
- Taster sessions of subjects both new and existing
- Options evening for students and parents/carers to attend
- Guidance interviews with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure they are making the best choices for them

We offer students in-depth information to prepare them to make the best choices for their KS4 qualifications. All information can be found in the Year 9 Options Teams group, and on the Academy website. The key dates and deadlines for the Option process are as follows:

Monday 19 th January	Options launch assembly
Monday 19 th January- Friday 30 th January	Options Taster Lessons
Thursday 29 th January	Options Information Evening, 4-6pm (parents/carers & students)
Monday 2 nd February	Options advice interviews begin
Thursday 5 th February	Y9 Parent's Evening
Friday 13 th March	Deadline to return Options Form

All students must complete the Option Choice Form (MS Form) emailed to them by **Friday 13th March 2026**

We aim to do our best to ensure that each student is allocated their choice of options but this depends on the numbers opting for each subject and the availability of teaching staff. *Please note, we are unable to run groups that are too large to teach or too small to be viable.* Should any problems arise with the choices made by your son or daughter, we will contact you to discuss this and suggest possible solutions.

If at any time you have questions about Key Stage 4 courses, or the options process, please contact the Academy.

Yours faithfully,



Lucinda Rudd

Assistant Headteacher

The Options Process: Information for Students

Dear student,

Good information is the key to making successful choices. You need to think very carefully about which subjects you enjoy and which ones you are good at. It is important to gather as much information as you can and ask for advice from your parents/carers and teachers.

You need to think about your future career and your longer-term plans. Use the Careers links on the Academy website to help research which subjects are best for your chosen career.

We hope that everyone will be able to take his or her chosen courses though we cannot, of course, guarantee this.

Please choose subjects because:

- You have thought clearly about everything
- You have done your research, especially about new subjects and qualifications
- You know what the subject and assessment process involves
- You are good at the subject; you like it or have a talent for it
- You have considered your best way of working (or learning style). Some students prefer practical work or work-related learning, some prefer end of course exams, and others prefer regular continuous assessments

Please do not choose subjects because:

- You like or dislike a teacher
- Your friends are doing it
- You think that it will be an easy subject

If in doubt, ask for help and support from your subject teachers, SLT Link or Student Manager.

During the Options process you will receive a personal interview with a senior member of staff. Here you will have an opportunity to discuss your future plans and to look at what your current results predict about your future chances in certain subjects. You will be contacted by your SLT link to arrange this.

Good luck with your choices.

Mrs Rudd

Disclaimer: please note that all courses, particularly those included in the GCSE, BTEC and Tech Awards Options sections are subject to changes as a direct result of governmental reforms. In addition, all courses are subject to a minimum number for viability


Qualifications Available

The qualifications offered at Key Stage 4 will give all young people the opportunity to choose a mix of learning which motivates and challenges them, and which gives them the knowledge, skills and experience they need to succeed in education, work, and life. To achieve this, a variety of qualifications are offered which have different demands in terms of how things are learned and how they are assessed. All qualifications fit into a national framework understood by colleges and employers.

What are GCSEs?

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. It is highly valued by schools, colleges and employers, therefore vital for whatever students are planning to do afterwards. The qualification involves studying the theory of a subject, combined with some investigative work. Some subjects also involve practical work. GCSEs are graded at 9-1. Some GCSEs on offer are tiered, meaning that the student can be entered at either a Foundation level (grades 1 – 5) or higher level (grades 4 – 9). These subjects include GCSE French, GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Science.

Comparing the old and new GCSE system:



Grading new GCSEs from 2017

New grading structure	Current grading structure
9	A*
8	A
7	A
6	B
5	B
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
1	G
U	U

GOOD PASS (DfE)
5 and above = top of C and above

AWARDING
4 and above = bottom of C and above

Tech Awards (including BTECs)

Tech Awards have been developed to equip learners with the practical, transferable skills and core knowledge they will need to progress to further general or vocational study, including Level 3 qualifications, employment or apprenticeships.

Level 1 Tech Award qualifications are equivalent to 1 GCSE at grades D-G:

	New GCSE Grade Equivalent	Old GCSE Grade Equivalent
Pass	1	G
Merit	2	F
Distinction	3/4	D/E

Level 2 Tech Award qualifications are equivalent to 1 GCSE at grade A*-C:

	New GCSE Grade Equivalent	Old GCSE Grade Equivalent
Pass	5	C
Merit	6	B
Distinction	7	A
Distinction*	8/9	A*

What is the English Baccalaureate?

English schools are required to deliver an English Baccalaureate (EBacc) curriculum to the vast majority of its students. The government believes that schools should offer students a broad range of academic subjects to the age of 16, and the English Baccalaureate promotes this aspiration.

The EBacc is not a qualification in itself. It will recognise students' achievements across a core of selected academic subjects in getting 'good passes' (standard pass = Grade 4, good pass = Grade 5) in rigorous GCSEs. The English Baccalaureate will cover achievement in English, Mathematics, Sciences, a Language and a Humanities subject. A student who achieves the English Baccalaureate will, therefore, gain GCSEs at grades 5 and above at Thornhill Community Academy in:

- English or English Language and Literature (Double Award)
- Mathematics
- Two Sciences
- A Humanities subject (this must be either History or Geography)
- A Modern Foreign Language (French, Spanish or Urdu)
- In addition, students will also choose two options, meaning they achieve two additional qualifications to suit their interests, skills and enthusiasm

Core Subjects

All students will study the following compulsory core subjects:

English

English, in all schools, is a compulsory subject and this is for a very important reason. The skills learnt in English Language ensure that you can access every other subject, as all curriculum areas have some element of reading and writing. Similarly, after leaving school, these skills will allow you to communicate confidently with employers and colleagues, and write with accuracy in many forms, including application forms, reports, and letters. Furthermore, English also encourages creativity and provides you with an opportunity for self-expression, both desirable skills as you move onto the next stage of your life.

English Literature also benefits your future. The texts covered at Thornhill Community Academy explore time periods and cultures different to our own, encouraging tolerance, understanding and acceptance. The cultural and social context behind why a story, play or poem has been written can be fascinating and illuminating. English is a facilitating subject, allowing you to be ready for the next steps you choose to take.

Mathematics

Mathematics is a fundamental part of the school curriculum and an integral part of a broad and balanced education. It has very strong links to biology, chemistry, physics, geography, business studies, design technology, physical education and sociology to name just a few. A good understanding of maths enables student to access their other subjects with confidence and succeed at the best level. After leaving school it is imperative that students are equipped with a good level of numeracy to be able to function effectively in the world. Jobs in the 21st century require us to be able to work with numbers confidently, be able to process and assimilate information quickly and think and work in a logical step by step manner. If nothing else, a good head with money is important to be able to budget effectively and find the best deals on loans, mortgages, shopping, etc.

Science

Science is a fundamental part of the core curriculum and provides students with an opportunity to learn about the theories and concepts that explain the workings of our natural world and the universe itself. Science lessons teach students how to solve problems and how to put theory into practise. A good set of GCSEs in science will allow students to move into careers in medicine, engineering, architecture, academia and the sciences themselves.

Core PE

At Key Stage 4 all students will continue with Physical Education, as it remains a compulsory subject. There is an emphasis on the physical and mental benefits of regular physical activity. This allows students to be involved in the education of the whole person and also provides periods in the week where students can improve their fitness and aid mental stimulation therefore increasing their capacity for higher levels of study.

This is a non-examined course. If students wish to study Sport in more depth and gain a qualification, they should select it as an Option subject.

Religious Education & Personal Development

At Key Stage 4 all students will continue with Religious Education, as it remains a compulsory subject. Students in Y10 have a fortnightly discreet RE lesson. Over the course of the year, students study three units of work, through which they are challenged with questions about belief, value, meaning, purpose, and truth, enabling them to develop their own attitudes towards religious and moral issues.

Through RE lessons, students will also gain an appreciation of how religion, philosophy and ethics form the basis of our culture. They will develop analytical and critical thinking skills and the ability to work with abstract ideas. Students will consider different beliefs and attitudes to religious and non-religious issues in contemporary British society.

Y10 students study a comprehensive Personal Development curriculum through weekly Learning for Life lessons, delivered by forms tutors. In addition, students benefit from Enrichment days each year. These days are made up of both guest speakers and specialist staff led sessions. As an Academy, we strive to welcome as many outside agencies as possible to give our students a broad and balanced offering. We are proud to welcome in high-profile companies and charities, all delivering sessions which engage and educate our students on topical issues. All Enrichment days have focuses linking to the DfE Statutory RSE Guidance, Gatsby Benchmarks and areas of identified student need (Kirklees Student Survey, Student Voice & Community areas of concern).

This is a non-examined course. If students wish to study Religious Education in more depth and gain a qualification, they should select it as an Option subject.

Option Subjects

Thornhill Community Academy prides itself in providing a full range of option choices available for students in addition to the compulsory core subjects. These include:

- ❖ Art, Craft & Design (GCSE)
- ❖ Ceramics (GCSE)
- ❖ Fashion & Textile Design (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Design Technology (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Business and Enterprise (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Computer Science (GCSE)
- ❖ Construction & The Built Environment (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Hospitality and Catering (Vocational Award)
- ❖ French (GCSE)
- ❖ Geography (GCSE)
- ❖ Health & Social Care (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ History (GCSE)
- ❖ Digital Information Technology (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Music (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Performing Arts (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Religious Studies (GCSE)
- ❖ Spanish (GCSE)
- ❖ Sport (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Travel & Tourism (BTEC Tech Award)
- ❖ Triple Science (GCSE Biology, Chemistry & Physics)
- ❖ Urdu (GCSE)

Personalised Pathway Explained- Orange Pathway

You have been allocated to the Orange Pathway- Open

Congratulations on being allocated to the Orange pathway! This pathway gives you the opportunity to study both traditional GCSEs and vocational subjects. This is a great opportunity for you to choose a broad range of subjects so that you keep doors open for future study Post 16.

You should carefully consider the subjects which you enjoy and think you will do well in, so that you leave school with the qualifications that you will need later on. This is an exciting time for you.

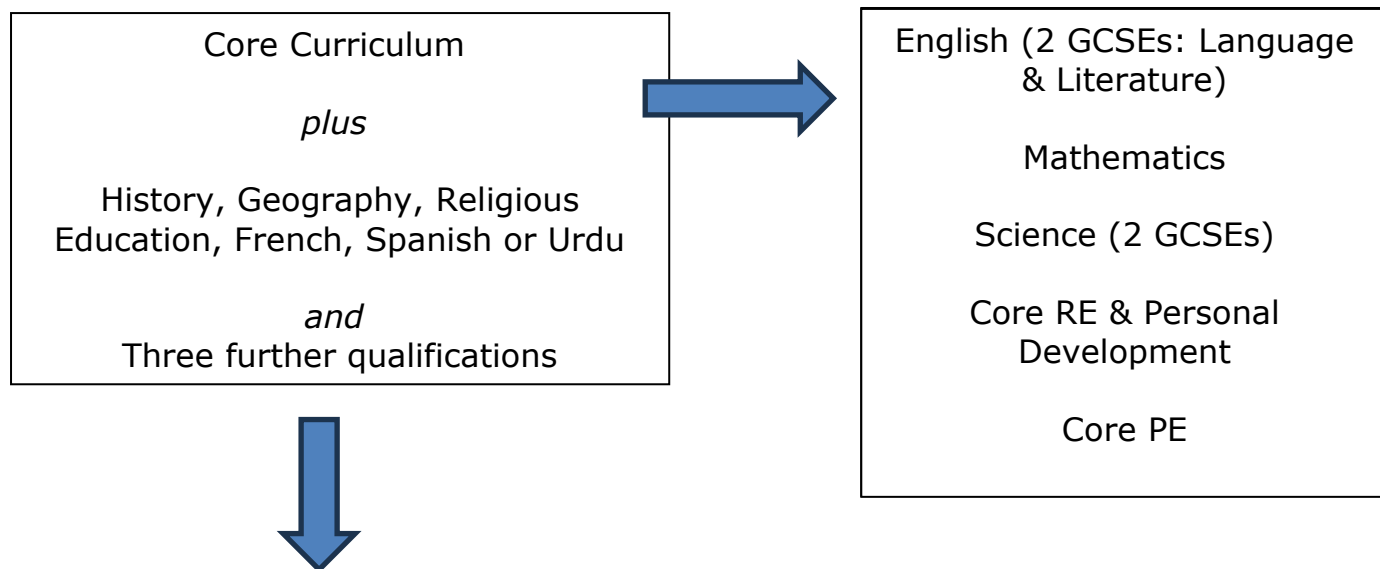
For students on the Orange pathway, we think that it is important that you should strongly consider leaving us being able to speak a modern foreign language. Our world is interconnected, and you will no doubt have ever-increasing opportunities to study, travel and work abroad. Study of a language will also enhance your understanding of other cultures and people, essential in modern society and is highly regarded by colleges and universities. The study of languages is highly regarded by employers as it shows the ability to learn something new from scratch, demonstrating tenacity and perseverance. Your employment prospects and opportunities will undoubtedly be enhanced through the study of a language.

It is also important that you consider the exciting vocational qualifications that we offer at TCA. Whether it's learning about the world around you in Travel and Tourism, deep diving into how we live our lives in Health and Social Care, learning how to become a successful entrepreneur in Business or finding your way into the vibrant world of media in Digital IT, there's something which you will enjoy and excel at.

Once you have read the information in the Subject Information Booklet and made your choices, please complete the MS Form emailed to you by **Friday 13th March, 2026**

Orange Pathway- Open

Your child is on the following pathway based on their Key Stage 2 results and most recent Year 9 data.



<u>GCSE's</u>	<u>Vocational/Other</u>
Art, Craft & Design	Fashion & Textile Design
Ceramics	Design Technology
Computer Science	Business and Enterprise
French	Construction and The Built Environment
Geography	Hospitality and Catering
History	Health & Social Care
Religious Studies	Digital Information Technology
Spanish	Music
Urdu	Performing Arts
	Sport
	Travel & Tourism

The following subject combinations are not possible:

- Art, Craft & Design AND Design Technology
- Art, Craft & Design AND Ceramics
- Fashion & Textile Design AND Design Technology
- Art, Craft & Design AND Fashion & Textile Design
- Fashion & Textile Design AND Ceramics

Who can help me with my choices?

There are lots of people who can help you with the decisions you need to make. Your aim at the end of this process is to have chosen a programme of study that includes a variety of subjects relevant to your future aims and aspirations.

Remember to look at subjects that you will enjoy and have the potential to do well in. If you have strong career interests at this stage you will need to research what subjects you will need to enter that career. If you haven't considered careers yet, you will need to make choices that do not limit your career choices later on.

Subject Teachers

Once you have read through this booklet you could talk to the teachers of the subjects you are interested in, they will be able to give you more specific information about the courses. You will find presentations from subject staff on the school website, and in the Year 9 Options Teams group. You should also use the internet to research the careers and subjects you are interested in.

Careers Advisor

The Careers Advisor in school can give you more details about Post-16 pathways that you may be interested in and advise you on appropriate option choices. Our careers advisor is Rob Crooke.

Our Careers Leader, Miss Walker, can be contacted in your Year 9 Careers group, in Teams.

Post 16 Careers Progression?

Since 2013, the Raising of the Participation Age law has stated that young people must be in some form of 'education or training' until they are 18. This can include:

- **Full-Time Study** – this could be a qualification taken at a sixth form, college or training provider, totalling 540 hours of learning time per year, or around 18 hours per week.
- **Apprenticeships** – this involves working for an employer while studying for a qualification as part of your training usually at a College. Usually, work makes up 80% of an apprenticeship and at least 20% (or one day a week) should be dedicated to studying.
- **Traineeships** – this is an option for students who would like to do an apprenticeship but may not have the experience, skills or qualifications to do so yet. Traineeships can last up to six months and involve a work placement, Maths and English qualifications and support with finding an apprenticeship.
- **Part-Time Study with Employment or Volunteering** – this could be working in a full-time job (classed as any work that takes place over more than two months and is over 20 hours per week) or volunteering (again, over 20 hours per week) while studying part-time at a college or training provider (totalling 280 hours of learning per year).

How do I pay for post-16 education and training?

Education and training in the UK are free for young people until they turn 19.

Sixth Form, Colleges and Training Providers

Sixth form colleges typically focus on A-Level (Advanced Level) qualifications – two-year courses that end in an overall examination and a grade from A*-E, with a similar structure to GCSEs but looking at the subject in a lot more depth.

Entry Requirements for sixth forms – Most sixth form colleges usually ask students to have 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above but make sure that you do your research, as some courses, such as A-Level Maths, Physics, Biology and Chemistry, require students to achieve a Grade 6 at GCSE in order to demonstrate their deeper understanding of the subject.

Colleges and training providers usually offer BTECs or other vocational qualifications that focus on a specific area of study in a practical way.

Entry Level/Level 1 – Can require anything from no qualifications up to 3 GCSEs (any grade)

Level 2 – Usually requires 3 GCSEs at Grade 3 or above

Level 3 – Usually requires 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above

As the competition for Post-16, Sixth Form and University places increases, the option choices you make for your GCSEs can influence the options you are able access later on in education.

Entry requirements for post-16 study

All Post-16 Further Education establishments have their own set of entry requirements. It is important to check each provider and each course. Most qualifications have a difficulty level. The higher the level, the more difficult the qualification is.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the school do if too many students opt for one subject?

We are usually able to fulfil all option requests. In the rare situation that the first choices result in a subject being oversubscribed, then we will do everything we can to find a solution. This will involve liaising with both student and parent/carers.

What do you do if too few students opt for one subject?

If demand for a particular subject is too small, it may not be possible to offer that subject. Should this situation arise we will liaise closely with students and parents/carers to find an alternative course.

Can all the choice combinations be timetabled?

In some cases, it may not be possible to timetable certain choice combinations. Should this situation arise, individual interviews will take place with students who have chosen these subject combinations. Students and their parent/carers will be kept informed at all times.

Do students have to follow a course at GCSE to be able to take it at College?

It is generally required and advisable for students to have studied the subjects that they choose for A Level at GCSE, where possible. However, in many circumstances students of a suitable aptitude may be accepted for Post 16 courses at college, even if they have not covered the GCSE course at Key Stage 4. For more information, please check the entry requirements of the college your child would like to attend.

What will happen if students change their mind about their option choices?

For most students we would hope when choosing their options, they will make informed and appropriate choices that they remain happy with. However, a smaller number of students may change their mind and wish to change option courses before the new timetable has started. Whilst this is generally not advisable, it may be a possibility if the timetable allows and if there is space in the subject they wish to switch to. The opportunity to move after the start of the courses is much more complex and may not be possible. It will also be more difficult, as the student would need to catch up on any work missed since the start of the academic year.

Options Choices Return Form- Orange Pathway

	My Choice
Humanities or Language (History, geography, Spanish, French or Urdu)	
Option Choice 1 (This could be a second language or Humanities)	
Option Choice 2	
Option Choice 3	
Reserve 1	
Reserve 2	

Please use the choices from your allocated Pathway. Remember that your reserve choices are important, so please consider these carefully. Do not fill this in until you have had your SLT interview.

Please complete the MS Form sent to your school email account by **Friday 13th March 2026**

Any problems, please contact me: lucinda.rudd@sharemat.co.uk

