



Year 8 Options Evening FAQs

What does 'non-examined' courses mean? Is it basically no GCSE?

Correct. The school has a statutory requirement to teach relationship and sex education (RSE) and health education which we refer to as PSHE which is not examined and there is no formal qualification. PE and Games are also not assessed and do not lead to a qualification.

What does double-weighted for maths mean?

Maths and English are double-weighted when it comes to how a school's performance is measured. Because Maths and English are double-weighted (and as English is actually two separate subjects) we allocate more lessons time to these subjects, 7 periods per fortnight as opposed to five periods per fortnight for all other subjects.

Is it possible to select 5 instead of 4 subjects? The 5th one being say Music.

No, as it would not be possible to timetable and there are not enough periods in the week to fit this. We also feel that 10.5 GCSE is the right number. The most recent pupil survey indicated strongly that 10.5 GCSE was enough. Pupils may enter exams with an external exam centre, however we would not be involved in any of the administration and teaching. If this was an option you are considering then I would urge caution as this will considerably add to pupil workload pressures and will dilute efforts of the GCSE's sat within school.

What would be the limit of students per class on optional subjects?

Typical class sizes are approximately 25. However, this does vary on how many pupils select the subject. Art and DT are usually smaller due to the requirement and access to specialist resources.

Is there any benefit from submitting the form early, i.e. is it first come first served?

There is no benefit to submitting early. Organising blocks and preparation of the timetable will not happen until after the deadline of 8th March.

On parents evening, do we get a chance to talk to each subject teacher?

Absolutely. I would encourage you to seek advice from teachers about your option choices.

Would you be able to choose a subject at A level that you didn't take at GCSE?

In the majority of cases you must have taken the GCSE to study the subject at A level. The exceptions are:

Economics. At least Grade 7 in both GCSE Maths and GCSE English (either English Language or Literature accepted) is required by pupils wishing to study A-Level Economics.

Religious Studies. At least Grade 7 in GCSE English (either English Language or Literature accepted) is required by pupils wishing to study A-Level Religious Studies.

Is a 9 the maximum grade you can achieve for GCSE or are there higher grades?

Grade 9 is the maximum.

How is the allocation done if a subject is over-requested, for example DT?

If a subject is over-subscribed, we would ask all pupils who have selected DT as their fourth ranked subject if they would consider a change.

Are reserved choices what we have if our preference is not available?

Yes, if one of your four choices can not to be fulfilled, we will then offer your highest preferred reserve subject.

If we change our mind after the deadline what do we do?

After the deadline of 8th March we will begin to organise blocks and the timetable. It may not be possible to accommodate changes. I would encourage you to consider all the data available in the next month to make firm choices.

Can you confirm where the videos for each subject will be?

<https://www.saintolaves.net/37/gcse-options>

If the student does not opt for a particular subject, do they completely stop studying that, or do they have limited classes?

You only attend lessons for the subjects you have chosen, and the core subjects and non-examined subjects.

Are classes setted?

Only Maths. At the start of Year 9, pupils are placed in one of five sets. There are two parallel accelerated sets (1a and 1b), a middle set (2) and two parallel smaller sets (X and Y). Some pupils may move class at the end of Year 9 or Year 10, based on summative assessment data.

Once the options have been chosen, are they final? or does one get a chance to make amends later in Yr 9/10?

It is very unusual for pupils to change subjects once Year 9 has started. Pupils will struggle to catch up on lesson material that has been missed. If any pupil has concerns once Year 9 has started please discuss with your Form Tutor or Head of Year.

Why is RE only a half subject?

'Short Course' refers to a reduced quantity of material; the difficulty level is not reduced. This allows a GCSE-level qualification to be achieved within the constraints of a tightly-packed timetable.

What is the difference between GCSE and iGCSE?

IGCSE stands for “International General Certificate of Secondary Education”. It is equivalent to the GCSE qualification which is taken by pupils in Year 9 – 11 in the UK. The IGCSE is the ‘international’ version of this academic qualification as it’s available in many countries around the world. In the UK, the IGCSE is typically taught at international schools or private schools, rather than at state schools.

Are there certain subject areas in which St Olaves students have performed better in the past and can we see past results?

Examination results can be found here: <https://www.saintolaves.net/23/school-performance>

If you finish a curricular GCSE, e.g music, are you still required to attend the lessons?

It is highly unlikely that curricular content will be finished significantly prior to the exam period. If new content is completed prior to exams then lesson focus will shift to exam preparation and revision.

From which year will the GCSE subjects be taught?

All GCSE content begins in Year 9.

Which GCSE exam board will the school follow?

This varies subject to subject please check the GCSE Options Booklet on the School website <https://www.saintolaves.net/37/gcse-options>

What would happen if you missed the deadline to hand in your Options Form?

We will email you a reminder to complete your Option choices.

If somebody does a GCSE outside school, can they do just 9.5 GCSEs at School?

No, that is not an option. Pupils would need to be supervised for the periods of the week they are not being taught which we can not cater for.

Should you choose your GCSE options based on how good you are at the subject or how much you enjoy it?

This is a good question. There is no doubt that achieving the Sixth Form Entrance Criteria is a key factor and thus choosing subjects that you are good at makes sense. However, we have full confidence that all Olavian pupils have the potential to meet the Sixth Form Criteria and therefore pupils should have the confidence to choose subjects they enjoy.

Is it possible to do some GCSE tests early and repeat the next year if needed?

That is not possible, as course content will not be completed by the end of Year 10.

Will the students take mock exams for their subjects prior to the real exam?

Yes. Usually Year 11 sit mock exams in January to familiarise them with the process and as an assessment point which by then allows the mock to cover the vast majority of the course content.

How many lessons do we have per week of our optional subjects?

All option subjects have 5 periods per fortnight allocated.