



Welcome to the Year 9 Parent/Carer Options Evening

25th February 2026

Support Information for 2026

- Options Booklet – *on website*
- FAQ – *on website*
- Tutorial guidance
- Year 9 Parents' Evening
- Example Option Forms
- Options Form
- This PowerPoint – *on website*



Types of Qualification

- GCSEs (9-1)
- Cambridge Nationals (*Graded Pass, Merit, Distinction*)

Exams sat at end of Year 11



GCSE Information

- No coursework for most subjects
- Less coursework in some practical subjects
- Foundation/higher papers in Maths, Science, French and German only
- Emphasis on Literacy
- More content and more challenge in all subjects



“Gold Standard” since 2016

- The Old “Gold Standard”:
5 A*-C GCSE including English and Mathematics
- The New “Gold Standard”: Ebacc
Students must achieve at least **8** GCSEs (grade 5 and above)
divided into **groups** as below:
 1. *GCSEs in English and Mathematics*
 2. *3 English Baccalaureate GCSEs*
(Science, Computer Science, MFL, History, Geography)
 3. *3 other GCSEs or equivalents*



The Curriculum at The Gilbert

- All subjects studied Year 7 and Year 8
- Mini Options chosen in Year 8
- Transition to GCSE Year 9
- GCSE courses studied Year 10 and Year 11

Four options over two years to retain choice and to continue to support a broad and balanced curriculum.



The Curriculum at The Gilbert

- A fair balance that allows students to meet the government's requirements *AND* have a reasonable amount of choice in the subjects studied.



Compulsory Subjects

All Students will study:

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

English Language

English Literature

Maths

Combined Sciences (2 GCSEs)

Core PE (non exam)

RE (short course GCSE sat in Year 10)

Personal Development (non exam)



Compulsory Humanities Subject with some choice

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

Humanities	Choice
History	
Geography	



KS4 Option Subjects 2026-28

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

GCSE Subjects:

Art

Computer Science

Dance

Food Preparation & Nutrition

Geography

History

PE

Science

Business

Design Technology

Drama

French

German

Music

Religious Beliefs in Action

Textiles

Technical Awards:

Health & Social Care Cambridge Nationals



KS4 Option Subjects 2026-28

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

Students can not study the following combinations:

- Art AND Textiles



How many Qualifications will students study?

The vast majority of students will study **9 qualifications** at KS4:

- 5 GCSEs in the core subjects - English Language, English Literature, Maths, Science (2 GCSEs)
- 4 GCSEs/Technical Awards in their **4** option subjects



STEPs Course

(Supportive Training & Education Pathways Scheme)

- Students who would benefit from studying a reduced number of options are advised by our SENCO (Miss Parker) to take the STEPs Course.
- Students study **two option** subjects of their choice and the core subjects.
- They also work towards an accredited Level 1 CoPE qualification that post-16 providers recognise.



PACE Course

(Practical Assistance for Curriculum Enhancement)

- Students who would benefit from studying **one** less option will be advised by their tutor or our SENCO (Miss Parker) to take the PACE Course.
- Students study **three option** subjects and the core subjects. *One of their choices must be either History or Geography.*
- They will then spend 5 lessons a fortnight working on their study skills to support their other GCSE subjects. They may also work towards an accredited Level 1 CoPE qualification that post-16 providers recognise.



“Open doors to the future ...”

- Modern Foreign Languages
The student must achieve at least a grade 6 in the language to take it at A level.
- Music
Music GCSE is not essential to access Music A level or music at the Institute. The student must be able to prove their ability to perform and read music to grade 5 standard.
- Art or Textiles
GCSE Art or Textiles are not essential to access Art or Textiles A level or any Art course at the Institute.



www.colchsfc.ac.uk/courses

www.colchester.ac.uk/courses/

“Open doors to the future ...”

Broad and Balanced Curriculum

A Consideration?

- To study ‘A’ Levels that require extensive essay writing skills, (eg Economics or Philosophy) at Colchester Sixth Form College you must have 2 GCSEs at grade 5 in
 - English Literature
 - English Language
 - History or
 - (full course) Religious Studies.



“Open doors to the future ...”

Thinking about going abroad for A levels?

- The entry requirements may well be different
- Make sure the research has been done before choices are made



Separate Science or Core?

- Separate Sciences option – “core” science time, 9 lessons – plus the 5 lessons of option time.
- Study Chemistry, Physics and Biology and get 3 GCSEs at the end of Year 11.
- Combined Sciences – study Chemistry, Physics and Biology and get 2 GCSEs.
- To study Science ‘A’ Level you do not need to have studied Separate Sciences. You need grades 6 and above in Combined Science. You also need to have at least a grade 6 in maths.



Dos and Don'ts for students

Do choose a subject because:

- you enjoy it
- your teacher thinks you will do well at GCSE
- you know it will help you in the future
- you like the sound of the lessons/type of activities
- you are willing to fulfil what is expected



Dos and Don'ts for students

Don't choose a subject because:

- a friend is doing it
- a sibling did it
- you like the teacher
- you think you might get away with less work!



**The priority order
chosen is crucial.**



The Process

Processing the Option Forms

- The order of **subjects is important** because we try to build the blocks around students' choices.
- Students must be prepared to study **any** of the six choices they make.
- It is not usually possible to allow more than two Arts or Technology subjects per student – the staffing doesn't work!



Finding out their options:

- Timetable is finalised - usually mid-June
- If there are any students who cannot have 4 of their 6 options, they will be spoken to.
- Options are published to students.
- If a student is unhappy with their options, they will need to come and talk to Ms Wren or Mrs Percival to see if they can help. There will be specific times and dates for this.





School Copy—Standard Form

X Pop - Return to your tutor by 20th March 2026

Y Pop - Return to your tutor by 27th March 2026

ALL students **MUST** choose either History or Geography as their number 1 choice of subject from Box A.

Do not choose this subject again from the blocks below.

BOX A	Choice
History	
Geography	

- All students need to select **5** further subjects from the blocks below, so their choices total 6 subjects.
- Please **number** these in **order of preference**. *If you are unsure how to fill this in, please refer to the example form attached.*
NB: *If you do not make 6 choices you may be allocated to a subject where there is space, rather than one of your choices.*
- You can choose **ANY** combination of subjects from the blocks below but **please read the notes comments below, where there are a few exceptions.**
- All students will be **allocated 4** subjects from the 6 chosen.



Technology	Choice
Food Preparation & Nutrition	
Design Technology	
Textiles (Art & Design Textiles) *	

The Arts	Choice
Art & Design: Fine Art *	
Dance	
Drama	
Music	

Science	Choice
Separate Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics**	
** Note: Students need to be achieving highly to study this science course.	

Modern Foreign Languages	Choice
French	
German	

Humanities	Choice
History	
Geography	

Other Subjects	Choice
Business GCSE	
Health and Social Care Cambridge Nationals	
Computer Science GCSE	
Physical Education GCSE	
Religious Studies Full Course GCSE	



*** Note:** Students cannot study:

- both **Art & Design: Fine Art and Textiles (Art & Design Textiles)**

Please note:

The school cannot guarantee that courses will run, or that there will be space for all students who wish to study a particular course. Please also note that some courses may alter, depending on any decisions made by the government regarding curriculum changes.

Student's Name: Form Group:

Parent's Signature: Student's Signature:

Checked by Form Tutor: Date:





School Copy—Standard Form

X Pop - Return to your tutor by 20th March 2026

Y Pop - Return to your tutor by 27th March 2026

ALL students **MUST** choose either History or Geography as their number 1 choice of subject from Box A.

Do not choose this subject again from the blocks below.

BOX A	Choice
History	
Geography	1

- All students need to select **5** further subjects from the blocks below, so their choices total 6 subjects.
- Please **number** these in **order of preference**. *If you are unsure how to fill this in, please refer to the example form attached.*
- **NB:** *If you do not make 6 choices you may be allocated to a subject where there is space, rather than one of your choices.*
- You can choose **ANY** combination of subjects from the blocks below but **please read the notes comments below, where there are a few exceptions.**
- All students will be **allocated 4** subjects from the 6 chosen.



Technology	Choice
Food Preparation & Nutrition	
Design Technology	
Textiles (Art & Design Textiles) *	

The Arts	Choice
Art & Design: Fine Art *	
Dance	
Drama	2
Music	

Science	Choice
Separate Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics**	3
** Note: Students need to be achieving highly to study this science course.	

Modern Foreign Languages	Choice
French	
German	6

Humanities	Choice
History	
Geography	5

Other Subjects	Choice
Business GCSE	
Health and Social Care Cambridge Nationals	
Computer Science GCSE	4
Physical Education GCSE	
Religious Studies Full Course GCSE	



What Next?

- Read the Options Booklet
- Contact relevant Subject Leader if you have a subject query
- Check Post-16 requirements
- Check FAQs
- See subject teacher at Parents' Evenings – X Pop 11th March; Y Pop 25th March
- Submit forms to form tutors by 20th March (X Pop) and 27th March (Y Pop)



20th March (X-Pop)

27th March (Y-Pop)

Deadline for form tutors to hand completed and signed forms to me.

