



SIR JAMES SMITH'S SCHOOL

Our young people invest in their futures



Welcome

We are very proud of our curriculum offer which is broad and balanced and enables the best possible experiences through Key Stage 4. It can feel daunting to make decisions about your future in Year 9, but this leaflet will guide you through the process.

This leaflet will help you understand the process and help you select your Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure you have the qualifications, skill, knowledge and experience that you need for your future.

Select your option subjects based on...

- Academic strengths and where you attain well.
- What you are interested in and enjoy learning.
- What you may need for your future careers, employment or further education ambitions.
- Advice and opinions of your parents/carers, tutor and your subject teachers - tell them your ideas and listen to theirs.
- Researching the subjects you study, so you are fully informed about the Key Stage 4 knowledge and skills you will be expected to learn and enact.
- Things you should not base your decisions on...
- What your friends are doing.
- Who your favourite teachers are - you may not be in their class in Year 10 and 11.

We know that through partnership with your parents/carers and your teachers, you will arrive at an exciting program of study that will maximise your future potential and help realise your future aspirations.

Next Steps – Careers Advice

It is our mission for every one of our young people to be able to continue their chosen educational journey with a plethora of excellent GCSE and Level 2 grades; fulfilling their aspiration to reach their potential and achieve the career of their dreams.

We have a Futures program overseen by Miss J. Hocking (Assistant Head Teacher) and led by Mr B. Langton. If you would like further advice in supporting your young person with the next steps in their decision-making process, navigating the options available to them, please email Mr Langton on blangton@nclt.academy



CLASS OF 2028!

"Maximising your child's chances of success."

WE ARE CONNECTED | WE ARE CREATIVE | WE ARE COMMITTED

Parent and Carer 'Top Tips' to support your young person through the Options Process

1. Start the Conversation Early

Give plenty of time for informal chats about strengths, interests, and future aspirations before decisions need to be made.

2. Ask Open Questions

Prompt thinking without leading: "What do you enjoy most?", "What subjects come naturally?", "Where do you see yourself in a few years?"

3. Encourage Curiosity, Not Pressure

Help your child explore possibilities without making them feel they must follow a particular path.

4. Attend the Options Evening Together

Use the opportunity to speak with teachers, ask about course content, workload, and assessment methods.

5. Understand Course Requirements

Some subjects have coursework or practical components — others are exam-heavy. Help your child think about what suits them best.

6. Balance Enjoyment and Practicality

Choosing only favourite subjects may limit future choices; choosing only "useful" subjects may harm motivation. Encourage a healthy mix.

7. Think Beyond GCSEs

Consider how certain subjects may connect to A-Level, vocational pathways, apprenticeships, or careers — without trying to map out life at 14!

8. Avoid Comparing to Siblings or Friends

Each child has their own strengths, interests, and future goals.

9. Manage Misinformation

Friends, social media, and rumours can distort expectations. Help your child check facts — what is the course really like? How is it assessed?

10. Reassure and Support

Choosing options can feel high-stakes for young people. Remind them it's not a permanent life decision and that support exists throughout

Options Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/> Attended Options assembly	<input type="checkbox"/> Spoken to Subject Teachers for more info
<input type="checkbox"/> Attended Options Evening	<input type="checkbox"/> Spoken to Parents/Carers about your options
<input type="checkbox"/> Booked an appointment for a clinic slot if needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Completed your Options Choices ON TIME 😊

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Options Process

Year 9 Timeline

KSL briefing to students during assembly

The best thing we can do to maximise your child's chance of choosing the best options for them is to make sure that they are well informed.

Options Clinics

These clinics are so that your child can come and ask the questions they may have before the official process starts after half term. Each break one of the weeks beginning 9th Feb and 23rd Feb Ms Precious will be available in her office. There will be a signup sheet outside on which they can book their slot.

1:1 Conversations

Some Students may need a more in depth 1:1 conversation. You will be informed by telephone if we believe that this may be useful – nothing to worry about, this will be more bespoke guidance for that child.

Narrated powerpoints/ assemblies

Each subject running an option has prepared an assembly that will be shared with every Year 9 student. This is an opportunity to learn more about the GCSE course

Start of the new term
Tuesday 06, January 2026 – Friday, 13 February 2026

Options Process - Phase 1
Clinics and release of Timeline

From Monday 09, February 2026

Options Clinic (Week 21)

Monday, 09 February – Friday, 13 February

February Half Term
Monday, 16 February 2026 – Friday, 20 February 2026

Options Clinic (Week 22)

Monday, 23 February – Friday, 27 February

Options Process - Phase 2
Subject Leader presentations and Options Assembly

Wednesday, 05 March – Wednesday 11 March
SL Options presentations

Subject Leader Presentations

During tutorial – two per morning Each held in the main hall.

Options Assembly and Options Guidance 'Sways' released

Period 5 Wednesday 11, March 2026

Options Assembly repeated narrated version

Tutor time Thursday 19, March 2026

Options Evening

Thursday, 19 March 2026

Options Selection - Phase 3

Options Selection Form emailed home

Options DEADLINE

Friday 27 March 2026

Easter Holiday
Monday 30 March 2026 – Friday, 17 April 2026

Options Released – Phase 4

Tuesday, 05 May 2026

Options Finalised

Tuesday, 19 May 2026

Options Assembly

An assembly will be presented by Ms Precious the week before Options evening and repeated again as a narrated version during tutor time on the day of Options. This will be a full walk through of the process and what to expect.

Subject Sways

All subjects have written a Sway (electronic booklet) about their subject. This complements the assemblies and this leaflet so you can view and discuss your child's options at home with them

1:1 Conversations

In some cases, it may not be possible to assign your child with all their first choices. Their will be a bespoke conversation with your child to find an agreeable solution. Parents/carers may be involved at this stage.

Options Choices released

Your child will find out their Options on Tuesday 05 May 2026



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