



**MERCHISTON**  
EDINBURGH

**SUBJECT CHOICES  
FOR SHELL  
AND FIFTH FORM  
2022-2024**



# MERCHISTON

EDINBURGH

## Dear Parent

As we look forward to your son joining us in September 2022, I write now with further information on the next stage of the subject choice process.

This document includes the 2022-24 Curriculum Booklet which is intended to give you some up-to-date detail on different subjects at this qualification level. You may already have discussed subjects in your previous contact with us, but this booklet supplements that.

You will find a set of column choices at the end of this booklet. I appreciate that discussion around subjects is very useful in most cases and so we want to ensure that you can have that discussion with a member of staff as required. If you feel that a discussion with a member of the Academic Leadership Team would assist in making choices, this can be arranged and please do email me directly.

Please note that a subject may not run if uptake is low.

All boys will attend classes in Physical Education, Swimming, PSHE and Religious Studies.

The suggested process is:

- Review the columns in the context of your son's interests and the contents of the Curriculum Booklet.
- Come to an initial idea on which subject he would select from each column at this point in time (only one subject can be chosen from each column).
- Firm up on ideas and submit choices to us.

I hope this information is helpful for you.

Kind regards

## Dale Cartwright

Deputy Head Learning and Teaching

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**A Boarding and Day School for Boys aged 7-18.**

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## Introduction

Choosing your GCSE subjects can appear to be a daunting task, particularly when you are trying to balance interest and your abilities across a range of subjects, alongside keeping options open for future study and career paths. The choice can become easier if you have a clear idea of what is involved in each subject in terms of content, structure, and approach.

This booklet describes the arrangements at Merchiston to give you as wide a choice of subject combinations as is possible. The course descriptions it contains, written by the relevant Heads of Department, aim to give an idea of the content of each subject at GCSE so that you can consider whether the course is one that you will find interesting and stimulating. Please note that when we mention GCSE in general text, we are referring to either GCSE or International GCSE courses: there is specific information in the subject sections.

Spend time absorbing the information and advice within this booklet and discuss your thoughts with your parents. You may have firm thoughts already, and have already given us an indication of what you may wish to study, but still take time to reflect on these. You also have access to the column structure from which to make choices, and opportunities to discuss your thoughts at the Fourth Form Parents' Meeting: only after this do we ask that you give us a written decision on your GCSE choices.

Finally, it is worth noting that certain subjects may only run if there is sufficient demand. Equally, there may have to be restrictions on numbers studying certain practical courses to ensure that health and safety standards can be maintained.

### **Dr Dale Cartwright**

Deputy Head Learning and Teaching

### **Dr Calum Mechie**

Assistant Head Academic

## Careers and Subject Choices

The Fourth Form may feel that it's rather early to be thinking about future careers or indeed making any firm choices concerning a possible future career pathway, but it is important that you give some thought to the implications of subject choice before embarking on your GCSE programme. Even though Merchiston maintains a compulsory core to its curriculum in the Shell, certain subjects must nonetheless be dropped at this point and you must be aware that this might affect certain career pathways in the longer term. However, please be reassured that it is possible to pick up many subjects at A Level having not done them at GCSE and so there is flexibility here. Please seek advice if you are unsure.

From Fourth Form upwards you will be enrolled with Unifrog, a very versatile careers platform, which offers a vast diversity of information, tools and resources to explore pathways, record work experience, activities and skills hence building your personal profile. Going forward this will be very helpful in writing your curriculum vitae as well as your UCAS personal statement or any other applications such as Gap Year opportunities, internships, apprenticeships and future jobs. Careers topics and skills building lessons will also be delivered throughout the Middle Years using the Unifrog platform.

In V Form you will take the Unifrog Personality and Interests Quizzes the results of which form the cornerstone of our Careers Guidance. These provide an opportunity to reflect on your skills, your strengths and your interests, as well as the future implications of these. You will also have an individual careers interview with the Head of Careers at this point to discuss the results of the quizzes, explore your thoughts on future careers, outline the different pathways open to you and to guide you towards the next steps.

There will be many formal opportunities provided to raise your awareness of potential career routes, such as through PSHE Lessons, tutor time, as well as Careers Cafes and the annual Careers Convention but I would encourage you at this stage to come and ask for advice at any time and make use of the Careers Drop-In sessions each week.

### **Mrs Karen Coyne**

Head of Careers

## Making your choices

### The reasons for having to make choices

Making decisions is a vital part of the process of education and of managing your life. Deciding which subjects you would like to pursue to GCSE is the most important decision you have yet been asked to make during your career at Merchiston.

On completing the broad-based foundation of the Fourth Form you will in September move into the Shell to start a two-year course of studies leading to your first set of public examinations, the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or the International GCSE.

A choice is necessary because each GCSE subject has a demanding programme of in-depth academic study; it is not possible for you to continue with all of your current subjects to this level, and so a selection must be made. In addition, everyone has certain individual academic strengths and interests: it is sensible for you to build on these strengths by studying your preferred subjects in greater detail than has been possible thus far in your school career.

### Flexibility of choices

Most students of your age do not know what career path they are going to follow in later life. For this reason it is sensible for you to follow as broad a range of subjects to GCSE as you can: in this way a good base is provided for your further specialisation in the Sixth Form and beyond. The Shell and Fifth Form curriculum at Merchiston is designed to help you keep your options open.

**The National Curriculum has a set of core subjects that remain compulsory at GCSE level; this core is extended at Merchiston to comprise:**

- English Language and English Literature or English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Mathematics, which can be gained as either a Higher Tier or Foundation Tier qualification
- Science: three sciences are studied either as single subjects or through the Double Award route. Any desire to study only two sciences must be discussed fully with the Academic Leadership Team.
- Modern Foreign Languages: at least one to be studied (unless Support for Learning is required)
- Physical Education (non-examined)
- Religious Studies (non-examined)
- Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE)

To this core a menu of other subjects is provided in a series of columns; one subject only can be selected from each column.

### Textbooks / Core Learning Materials / eLearning

Departments are encouraged to tailor their delivery of learning materials to the requirements of each subject area, including effective use of eLearning technologies. In many departments a proportion of learning materials are now delivered digitally, including textbook-style core notes.

Boys should as a matter of course be able to confidently articulate how any learning materials have been provided and where they are to be found; but any parents with queries should please contact the relevant Head of Department in the first instance.

### Considerations when making subject choices

The details in this booklet give you a guide to what is involved in studying each particular subject at GCSE. However, you are not being asked to make your decision on your own! We will guide you carefully in this choice, and at the Fourth Form Parents' Meeting at the start of the Summer Term you will have another opportunity to discuss your ideas.

**Your input is, however, vitally important. The following tips may help you:**

- Performance: it is a good idea to choose a subject because you have some ability and skill in it. You will have your own ideas about this from your performance in the subject so far. If you are uncertain do ask your subject teacher, academic tutor, Housemaster, or a member of the ALT for further help.
- Interest: as well as being good at a subject, it is helpful if you find it interesting and enjoyable. However, do remember that you should not choose a subject because of the teacher: you may have a different teacher next year!
- Future study implications: some university courses and careers will demand that you have studied certain subjects. Ask your tutor, a member of the ALT, or your parents if you are unsure.

Finally, do not choose a subject just because your closest friends are taking it: this choice is important for *your* future, and so you must try to make an individual decision.

## The Fourth Form Parents' Meeting

The object of this meeting is to offer your parents the opportunity to meet with your teachers to discuss your progress over the past year. At the same time important decisions have to be made concerning the courses you should follow over the next two years, so this should be a focus in the short discussion slots.

Although the number of GCSE subjects taken by a pupil at Merchiston is currently nine, it is better to succeed at a smaller number of subjects than it is to enter (and possibly underperform in) a greater number. For this reason, we will frequently review your academic programme over the course of the Shell and Fifth Form, and may recommend that you withdraw from an individual subject in order to focus on your other subjects.

Only after this parents' meeting will we ask for your final choices on subjects to be submitted.

## The role of your Tutor

Your Tutor should continue to be viewed as someone with whom you can discuss your ambitions, progress, and any issues. They will have an overview of your progress and, along with your Housemaster and teachers, will offer guidance over the GCSE years. It is important to note that your Tutor will not necessarily be able to offer subject-specific guidance: it may even be that your Tutor teaches a subject which you do not even study. What is important is that they offer you another "sounding board" on matters such as wellbeing, report cards, revision, and target-setting. Much of the schedule for tutorial time will be available to you in Google Classroom, along with a mechanism by which you can record key notes, but the schedule can be varied by you and your Tutor to suit your particular needs.

## Information on examinations

### Non-Examined Assessment

Any type of assessment that is not 'externally set and taken by candidates at the same time under controlled conditions' is classified as non-examination assessment (NEA). 'NEA' therefore includes, but is not limited to, internal assessment. Externally marked and/or externally set practical examinations taken at different times across centres are classified as 'NEA'. It covers controlled assessments, coursework and project work. More information on NEAs for different subjects can be found under the subject headings.

### Examination Entries

The cost of entry for public examinations is chargeable at the end of the term in which the entry is made and depends on the particular papers sat by each individual.

### IGCSE

The **International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE)** is a qualification for school students in the GCSE age group which is recognised by academic institutions and employers around the world. UCAS recognises the IGCSE as equivalent to the GCSE for entrance to UK higher education.

IGCSE syllabuses are designed with the express intention to develop successful students, providing preparation for their next steps in education, including progression to A Level study. IGCSE subjects can be taken either with or without coursework; in many cases this is a significant reason for schools choosing to opt for the IGCSE instead of the GCSE.

## GCSE and IGCSE Exam Boards and Grades

The GCSE and IGCSE exam boards and grading structure are as follows:

Subject	GCSE or IGCSE	Exam Board	Grade Allocation (high to low)
Art and Design	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Biology	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Chemistry	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Computer Science	GCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Classical Civilisation	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Design and Technology	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Electronics	GCSE	WJEC Eduqas	9 - 1
English Language	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
English Literature	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
EAL	IGCSE	CIE	9 - 1
Geography	IGCSE	CIE	9 - 1
Greek	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
History	IGCSE	CIE	9 - 1
ICT	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Latin	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Mandarin	National 5	SQA	A - D
Mathematics	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish)	GCSE	AQA	9 - 1
Russian	GCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1
Music	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Physical Education	GCSE	OCR	9 - 1
Physics	IGCSE	Edexcel	9 - 1

## MidYIS or Yellis forecast grades

MidYIS (the Middle Years Information System and Yellis (Year 11 Indicator System), operated by the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at the University of Durham, has for a number of years provided schools with a one-hour test which is designed to measure, as far as possible, a pupil's aptitude for learning, rather than his/her achievement. As such, MidYIS does not assess how well a pupil has been taught, but what his ability might be, with a firm emphasis on the "might": we do not want these to be limiting in any way, nor is there any guarantee.

Test results can be used to identify each pupil's strengths and development areas, to inform learning and teaching, and offer one way to set a benchmark for measuring progress. However, it is important to note that this is a one-off measurement and, as such, like any statistical extrapolation it has to be treated with caution and in the context of what we know about each individual.

Additionally, by providing a measure of a pupil's personal 'typical' performance, a set of tentative forecast grades are produced. At Merchiston, forecast grades are routinely made available to parents at the end of Shell, once progress has been made on the GCSE courses.

The academic departments at Merchiston pride themselves on often improving on the MidYIS forecasts by as much as two GCSE grades. This is made possible through consistent best efforts from the students, the dedication of the staff, and the support of parents.

### **Dr Dale Cartwright**

Deputy Head Learning and Teaching

## SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

Up to and including the Fourth Form all boys have studied the three sciences (Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) and have been introduced to Technology with classes in Electronics, Design and Technology, Computing, and Information and Communication Technology.

### **In the Shell and Fifth Forms, we now offer two main routes for the sciences through to GCSE:**

**Studying the three separate sciences** will enable you to study the full IGCSE subject content in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and be awarded an IGCSE grade in each of these subjects independently. This route offers a rigorous, in-depth study of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics and provides a solid foundation for study of any of the sciences at A Level. Boys who are particularly interested in science (and related subjects, such as Medicine or Engineering) will benefit from a wider scientific education and enjoy the more challenging extension work.

**The 'Double Award' science course** has a reduced level of content (two-thirds) in each of the three disciplines and, as a result, two GCSE qualifications are gained instead of three. However, it is important to note that this still provides a solid foundation for study of any of the sciences at A Level. Choosing Double Award science has the benefit of enabling continued study of all three sciences but only counting as two choices, therefore keeping options open in the other columns and enabling greater breadth to be maintained.

Studying two separate sciences is possible but the implications of this must be discussed fully with a member of the Academic Leadership Team.



## ART

The GCSE Examination is based largely on the coursework completed by pupils over the two-year period of study. It is therefore essential that boys show a high level of motivation, along with a reasonable level of potential prior to starting, in order that they may develop their skills to the required standard.

Students are expected to show considerable maturity in the way they apply themselves both within and without the Arts Centre (where they are often expected to develop themes through a variety of media including painting and drawing, photography and printmaking). Sketchbooks are used as the main means for the development, refining and recording of their work. Field trips and visits to local Museums/galleries are used to enrich the pupils' experience and having access to a digital camera or decent mobile phone camera is extremely useful.

Work in both two and three dimensions is produced during the course, and for the GCSE Examination pupils produce both a coursework project along with a timed examination project. Internal marking is moderated by an external assessor.

Boys also have the opportunity throughout their time at Merchiston of following an interest in Art as a creative pastime without examination.

Apart from those interested in following a career in Fine Art, or in the many areas of design covered by 'artists', this course is also seen as being suitable for pupils interested in careers such as Architecture, Town Planning, Landscape Architecture, Fashion, Game Design, Advertising, Set Design.

### **Mr Jason Cordingley**

Head of Art

## BIOLOGY

Similar to the Physics and Chemistry departments, the Biology syllabus we teach is the Edexcel International GCSE ('IGCSE'). This is an excellent, well established Biology course that provides a rigorous and firm grounding for A Level study as well as providing a broad and varied knowledge of the living world for any student with an interest in the scientific study of nature and life.

### **The IGCSE course covers the following areas:**

- Nature and variety of living organisms: what makes up the living world
- Structure and functions of living organisms: how they work and health matters
- Reproduction and inheritance: how life continues and evolves
- Ecology and the environment: how organisms interact with each other
- Use of Biological resources: how humans use and misuse living resources.

Within these areas you will learn about a wide variety of examples, processes, and technical terms that are specific to this subject. Biology is largely a knowledge-based subject and you will learn a large amount of information and then apply it in the exam. The course will involve much practical work including dissection of various animal organs and the use of live organisms in humane experiments.

Biology is at the cutting edge of science at the moment with many exciting developments in genetics, cloning, and medical research. In this course we will explore the very latest areas of Biological research and reflect upon how they impact society and the future of mankind.

### **Ms Hannah Williams**

Head of Science

## CHEMISTRY

Boys studying Chemistry follow the Edexcel IGCSE syllabus. This is intended to provide a framework which will serve as a sound basis for future study, as well as providing pupils with a grounding in the key principles of the subject. Chemistry has to be studied experimentally, with emphasis being placed on the use of safe techniques and on the development of observational and reporting skills. Furthermore, the work is related to economic and social development at local, national, and international levels. Thus, the finite life of mineral sources, the need for pollution control, the importance of fertilisers, and the role of the chemist in benefiting society are all stressed in the course.

**The IGCSE course involves the study of four modules:**

- Principles of Chemistry
- Inorganic Chemistry
- Physical Chemistry
- Organic Chemistry

There is no coursework component, however there are core practicals with 15% of the final exam assessing these skills. This allows more teaching time for topics to be explored in greater depth.

Often seen as the 'central science', Chemistry is essential for any career in Science or Engineering and also complements a student's understanding of physical and biological processes.

**Mr Robin Greenwood**

Lead Teacher Chemistry

## CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

Classical Civilisation GCSE explores the foundations of Western culture, by examining aspects of the Greek and Roman worlds. No prior knowledge of the classical world is necessary, and no study of Latin or Greek language is involved

Modern-day life owes a huge debt to classical antiquity: while the Romans were engineers and a redoubtable military force, the Greeks were thinkers, giving us philosophy, economics, theatre and a belief in freedom of thought and speech. They also fundamentally shaped our political structures and assumptions about democracy. This course is designed to provide an interesting and enjoyable study of the ancient world and its literature and ideas, as well as to develop an awareness of the influence of the classical civilisations on our world today. Students learn to interpret both literature and visual/material culture and, more generally, develop a range of transferrable skills such as critical analysis and argument, creative response, essay writing, research and communication.

**The two units are:**

- Myth and religion: this unit includes some of the favourite Greek myths, such as stories about the gods and about Hercules. It also involves a study of Greek and Roman temples and festivals, exploring the role of religion in these societies. Beliefs about the afterlife are also examined.
- War and warfare: this unit involves a study of Sparta and Athens at war, looking at the organisation of their armies and navies and some key battles against the Persians. It also includes the Roman army and navy and some particularly significant battles in the development of the Roman Empire. War is one of the most significant aspects of human behaviour; this unit enables a consideration of the purposes, conduct and effects of war and its impacts on wider society.

Some of the artefacts and material remains on the syllabus are on Hadrian's Wall and in the British Museum in London, and trips will be made to see these during the course.

**Mr Matthew Hillier**

Head of Classics

## COMPUTER SCIENCE

The GCSE Computer Science course offers an insight into the science and technology behind computer systems, and how computers and the software they run are a pivotal component of our lives. It covers highly relevant concepts such as cybersecurity, global communications, and the impact of technology on society.

The course includes a significant element of computer programming, which many students find both creatively and intellectually absorbing. It uses the popular Python programming language to teach and refine the skills of logical analysis and problem decomposition, both of which are highly valued in a wide variety of related fields in science, engineering and financial technology. The course structure will help pupils to put together a strong set of tools and techniques for solving problems through practical programming.

The GCSE has two assessment components: a written paper “The principles of computer science”, and a practical paper “Application of computational thinking”. The practical paper is an on-screen exam where pupils will design, write, test, and refine programs to solve problems. Each paper has a weighting of 50%.

### The aims of the GCSE in Computer Science are to enable learners to:

- understand and apply the fundamental principles and concepts of computer science, including abstraction, decomposition, logic, algorithms, and data representation
- analyse problems in computational terms through practical experience of solving such problems, including designing, writing and debugging programs
- think creatively, innovatively, analytically, logically and critically
- understand the components that make up digital systems and how they communicate with one another and with other systems
- understand the impact of digital technology on wider society, including issues of privacy and cybersecurity
- apply mathematical skills relevant to computer science.

### The subject content of the course is divided into six topics:

1. **Computational thinking** - understanding what algorithms are, what they are used for and how they work; ability to follow, amend and write algorithms; ability to construct truth tables;
2. **Data** - understanding of binary, data representation, data storage and compression;
3. **Computers** - understanding of hardware and software components of computer systems and characteristics of programming languages;
4. **Networks** - understanding of computer networks and network security;
5. **Issues and impacts** - awareness of emerging trends in computing technologies, and the impact of computing on individuals, society and the environment, including ethical, legal and ownership issues.
6. **Problem solving with programming** - understanding how to decompose and analyse problems, the ability to read, write, refine and evaluate programs

**Mr David Thomson**

Head of Computing

## DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Design Technology is offered as a GCSE subject, with the iterative design process being the focal point of the course content.

**The course content is delivered through a combination of theory lessons to cover the ‘Knowledge and Understanding’ aspect of the subject and ‘Practical Work’ to help you develop your designing, prototyping and manufacturing skills. The course is divided into the following two units:**

- Principles of Design and Technology (50%)
- Iterative Design Challenge (50%)

### Principles of Design and Technology

You will spend time throughout the course covering a range of theoretical aspects of the Principles of Design and Technology. This knowledge will be reinforced through practical activities and visits to design facilities outside of School whenever possible. This aspect of the course forms the basis for the written examination. The question paper is split into two sections. ‘Core’ knowledge of Design and Technology principles demonstrates learners’ broad understanding of principles that all learners should have across the subject. ‘In-depth’ knowledge allows learners to focus more directly on at least one main material category. A minimum of 15% of the paper will assess learners’ mathematical skills as applied within a design and technology context.

### Iterative Design Challenge

Students complete a range of small practical projects and a larger design and manufacture project during the first year of the course. These projects aim to improve practical skills and give a clear understanding of the demands of the coursework – both written and practical.

The Iterative Design Challenge is undertaken in the Fifth Form. As an outcome of their challenge, learners will produce a chronological e-portfolio and one final prototype. It is through the iterative process that learners draw on their wider knowledge and understanding of Design and Technology principles.

Design and Technology is recommended for those boys who are considering a career in design or engineering-related fields. Good practical skills (such as drawing, modelling, manufacturing), an interest in Computer Aided Design (CAD) or ability in Art, Physics, ICT, Computing or Electronics would be advantageous for those students wishing to pursue a GCSE in Design Technology.

The use of IT is a very important aspect of this GCSE course as pupils have to complete chronological e-portfolios that include CAD. As part of this they must use real-time media to evidence their progress throughout their GCSE years. Pupils are required to have access to CAD packages on an iPad or laptop. If pupils choose to work on iPads it is recommended that they invest in an Apple Pencil.

### Dr Clare Nugent

Head of Design Technology and Engineering

## ELECTRONICS

The Electronics course aims to stimulate a genuine interest in the subject and is an excellent choice for boys thinking about studying Science or Engineering in the future. However, the course is also good fun for boys who enjoy practical activities and want to develop a level of electronics that can be used outwith the classroom. The course includes a large amount of practical work which is fully supported by on-line resources and theory sessions. As well as developing their practical skills boys can also choose to manufacture small projects throughout the course as part of the extension activities. The Electronics course makes full use of IT with all resources being on the course website and, as a result, develops valuable IT skills and independent learning skills along the way.

In the Shell year boys study a wide variety of sub-systems and learn to combine these to make complex systems. In the Fifth form year boys study large scale systems and spend a significant amount of time completing a major coursework project which is worth 20% of the final grade.

**Dr James Mayoh, Dr C Nugent, Mr Will Ogilvie Jones**

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE and ENGLISH LITERATURE

In English, we study the Edexcel IGCSE course for English Language and the Edexcel IGCSE course for English Literature. These are two separate subjects, leading to two discrete qualifications.

Despite this, the two courses are co-taught alongside one another through both the Shell and the Fifth Form years as this allows for the students' skills as readers and writers to develop in a natural and holistic way.

### IGCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Building on skills and knowledge acquired through the Junior School, this course extends students' abilities to manipulate and comprehend language.

Students will take one external examination, which consists of one reading section and one writing section. The exam contributes to 60% of the overall marks, and is divided into two sections:

#### Reading - Non-Fiction

- comprehension questions on an unseen passage
- analysis questions on a taught passage from the Edexcel Anthology for IGCSE English
- a comparison of the two texts.

#### Writing - Transactional

- one writing task, based on a choice of two prompts involving a given audience, form or purpose
- marked for both the effectiveness of the writing as a response to the task, and for the technical security of the writing in terms of spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar.

**Pupils will, additionally, submit a coursework portfolio, which is made up of two tasks:**

#### Reading - Poetry and Prose Fiction

- a short, analytic essay exploring two texts, from a range of taught poems, extracts from novels and short stories.

#### Writing - Imaginative

- a short creative response to a choice of prompts
- marked for both the effectiveness of the writing as a response to the task, and for the technical security of the writing in terms of spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar.

### IGCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

As with the English Language course, IGCSE English Literature develops the skills of literary analysis you have worked on throughout your studies of English and will extend your knowledge and understanding of Literature through exploration of a range of literary works.

Students will take one external examination. Titled Poetry and Modern Prose, this accounts for 60% of the final mark for the course and is divided into three sections:

#### Part A - Unseen Poetry

- a short analysis of a new, previously untaught poem.

#### Part B - Anthology Poetry

- a comparative analysis of two poems from Edexcel Anthology for IGCSE English
- students will have covered the poems in class, but the examined combination will be novel.

#### Part C - Modern Prose

- an explorative essay linking a 20th-century novel to its contexts
- although students will have been taught the novel, this is a closed-book exam, and therefore requires students to memorise quotations.

**Pupils will, additionally, submit a coursework portfolio, which is made up of two tasks:**

#### Modern Drama

- an analytic essay responding to a thematic concern or a character as developed throughout the whole of a 20th-century play.

### **Literary Heritage**

- a contextually-influenced analysis of one of Shakespeare's plays.

Given the importance of drama in the English specifications, wherever possible the English Department will organise trips to theatrical productions in the Shell and Fifth Form which enhance understanding of the set texts. These are often in conjunction with the School Arts Programme.

### **Dr Calum Mechie (Dr Kate Anderson from 1 September 2022)**

Head of English

## **ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL)**

The EAL Department provides continuing and appropriate support and tuition for pupils who are non-native speakers of English.

Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language runs in place of the English Department's IGCSE courses. This course is created specifically for international pupils, offering learners the opportunity to gain lifelong skills and knowledge required for their next steps in education or employment.

For shorter-term Fifth Form pupils, there is also the opportunity to take a B2 First Cambridge English qualification.

In addition, EAL staff work in partnership with subject teachers to provide subject and prep support on an individual basis as required.

A separate charge for textbooks, workbooks and examination fees is applied if appropriate.

### **Mrs Susan Hardman**

Head of EAL

## GEOGRAPHY

The teaching of modern Geography has never been more relevant. Not only does it teach pupils about the contemporary processes and patterns apparent in the world, such as climate change and globalisation, but also provides training in the basic skills of data gathering, presentation, interpretation, analysis, debate, decision making, and much more. Using IT in various ways to research information sources, as well as present findings, is embedded throughout the IGCSE syllabus (including use of the Department's Twitter, Blog, mobile phones, lap tops, iPad Apps, and models using a variety of media including those gathered from the natural environment, also plasticine and Lego), along with other standard and digital measuring and monitoring equipment. As a result, Geography is favoured by future employers, as Geographers are known to be good communicators, spatially aware, problem solvers, good team players, IT literate, socially, environmentally and economically aware, and well rounded, flexible thinkers.

Geography is unique in being accepted by universities and future employers as either an arts subject or a science subject, and so it uniquely compliments well both arts and science focused GCSE choices. It also provides beneficial foundation knowledge for other post GCSE choices, such as Economics, or Government and Politics.

**The IGCSE syllabus we use has an international focus, and covers a broad range of topics through which issues and skills are learnt about and debated. The main topics covered include:**

Population and Settlement	Economic Development	The Natural Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Population structure and change</li><li>• Migration issues</li><li>• Urbanisation</li><li>• The structure and functioning of cities</li><li>• Problems and solutions in MEDC and LEDC cities</li><li>• Squatter settlements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wealth and inequalities</li><li>• Globalisation</li><li>• Farming systems and food security</li><li>• Industrial systems</li><li>• Tourism</li><li>• Renewable versus non-renewable Energy</li><li>• Water supply and scarcity</li><li>• Environmental risks of development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tectonic processes</li><li>• Tectonic hazards and their management</li><li>• River dynamics and flooding</li><li>• Coastal processes and landforms</li><li>• Coastal hazards and opportunities</li><li>• Weather and climate</li><li>• Tropical rainforests</li><li>• Hot deserts</li></ul>

Practical skills, key skills, and IT skills are an integral part of the course. Pupils also undertake a number of fieldtrips to illustrate course material, and which provide the data collection for the coursework assessed fieldwork investigation.

**Assessment is modular and comprises:**

- Coursework (27.5%) made up of one Controlled Assessment Task based on fieldwork undertaken whereby the results are then analysed, presented, interpreted and evaluated.
- Two terminal examinations:
  - Paper 1 (45%) examining knowledge and understanding of the main geographical themes
  - Paper 2 (27.5%) examining the interpretation and analysis of the full range of geographical information types, decision making, and the application of graphical and other techniques learnt during the course.

The Geography Department has three resource-based rooms which are equipped to enable the studying of a broad range of teaching materials, including maps, video, and many other resource types accessed through pupil IT (using the classroom Wi-Fi) and the interactive

whiteboards. Emphasis is placed on regular use of IT, the Geography department blog, and the Virtual Learning Environment for class activities and research, and coursework.

**Dr Tanya Bower**

Head of Geography

## HISTORY

History is not just the study of the past, but the study of the forces that makes us what we are. In studying IGCSE History you will find out about some of the people, events, and ideas that have made our world what it is today. You will study big personalities such as Hitler, Stalin, and Gorbachev; big ideas such as Communism and Nazism; and huge events such as the Second World War and the Cold War. You will learn to deal with high level historical concepts such as causation, interpretation, and consequence, but within the context of some enormously exciting and fast-moving events.

We study IGCSE History because it gives us more freedom to structure a course that we think Merchiston boys will enjoy. The course begins in 1918 at the end of the First World War and ends as recently as 2000 with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. There are three exam papers, but no coursework. **Here are some of the topics that you will study in IGCSE History:**

- The peace treaties that ended the First World War
- The League of Nations and the failure to keep the peace
- The causes of the Second World War
- The rule of the Nazis in Germany
- The Cold War in Europe and in Asia
- The Persian Gulf 1970-2000

History will also teach you some essential skills that you will use elsewhere in life. It teaches you to make judgements about importance and to distinguish the significant from the trivial. It teaches you to prioritise and to recognise different points of view. It also helps you to construct a convincing argument and to recognise how reliable or trustworthy someone else's judgement is. People who study History often go on to careers that need all these skills, such as journalism or law, but it is also a great humanities subject to carry alongside the Sciences and Mathematics.

### **Mr Simon Thompson**

Head of History

## LATIN

There are two areas of study in the GCSE Latin specification: linguistic skills are tested through translation and comprehension work, and literature examines the knowledge of a Latin verse and prose set text.

The course is designed to develop linguistic skills, to reveal the ancient world to twenty-first-century students, and to provide a sound basis for further study. You will, for the first time, experience some of the greatest and most influential texts in Western literature in the original Latin, and appreciate for yourself what gives them their lasting power.

Latin is highly regarded by universities and employers because of the intellectual discipline involved in studying the language, and the analytical, linguistic, and critical skills it provides on the GCSE course.

GCSE Classical Greek is available, provided there is sufficient demand. As this is not in the column structure, requests to study this subject should be passed to a member of the Academic Leadership Team. The course has the same structure as Latin and gives access to the foundations of Western civilisation.

### **Mr Matthew Hillier**

Head of Classics



## MATHEMATICS

Mathematics is a compulsory subject. The course covers Numerical work, Algebra, Geometry and Probability and Statistics.

We offer the IGCSE Mathematics course, which focuses on mathematical skills, techniques and concepts and how to use them to solve problems. This content is covered at two levels, Foundation Tier and Higher Tier. The Higher Tier includes all that is in the Foundation Tier course with the addition of a selection of more complex mathematical concepts. A decision as to whether students will follow the Foundation or Higher Tier course in Fifth Form is taken towards the end of Shell but can be decided as late as February of Fifth Form.

The IGCSE Mathematics course is examined externally with the pupils sitting two separate papers, each worth 50% of the final grade. Foundation Tier is graded from 5 – 1 and Higher Tier is graded from 9 – 3.

As a Department, we have built up many years of excellence in the delivery of GCSE and now IGCSE and believe that it provides a strong foundation for Sixth Form studies in Mathematics.

We are conscious not only of the external examinations at the end of Fifth Form, but also of future requirements for Sixth Form courses and of the need to prepare students to be able to use Mathematics in society, employment and study. It is our desire to instill a love of the subject in each of our students.

### **Dr Naomi Steen**

Head of Mathematics

## MODERN LANGUAGES

### **French, German, Mandarin, Spanish**

It is mandatory to pick at least one language for study in Shell and V Form. In choosing, please prioritise your own enjoyment and interests.

All language qualifications involve the testing of candidates' abilities in four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

#### **You may pick from:**

- **French** Candidates will do GCSE.
- **German** Candidates will do GCSE.
- **Spanish** Candidates will do GCSE.
- **Mandarin** Candidates will do National 5.

Where pupils are interested in studying more than one language, please speak to the Head of Department in the first instance.

#### **Additional Languages**

Qualifications in Arabic, Italian, Japanese, and Russian may be possible. Please enquire if interested.

### **Dr Clare Flanagan**

Head of Modern Languages

## MUSIC

To follow the GCSE course, you should be competent with either an instrument or voice, musical keyboard skills are desirable but not required. Pupils holding Music Scholarships are under no obligation to pursue the subject at GCSE.

**The specification involves:**

### **Coursework (60%)**

This element links the skills of performing, composing and appraising music. The performance and composition are linked to Areas of Study within the course.

### **Examination (40%)**

These components involve a listening paper, covering a wide variety of types of music studied over the course, and a creative composition task, based on a given stimulus. Further details may be obtained from the Music Department.

Pupils should be aware that the GCSE course in Music will only be offered if sufficient numbers of pupils request it: an update on the availability of the GCSE course can be obtained by contacting the Director of Studies at School.

**Mr Stephen Dennis**

Director of Music

## PHILOSOPHY and ETHICS: Religious Studies

**Although not offered as a formal qualification, in Shell and Fifth Forms we aim to:**

- develop an understanding of Christianity and other religions and a recognition of religion as an important expression of human experience;
- help pupils (irrespective of their own personal religious conviction) to understand the place of religion in the development of our society's history and culture;
- lead pupils to appreciate moral values such as honesty, liberty, compassion for others, and justice;
- investigate and understand the questions and answers that philosophy can offer about the nature and meaning of life;
- develop pupils' own beliefs, attitudes, moral values, and behaviour through a process of search and critical evaluation.

**The Rev Nicholas Blair**

Head of Religious Studies

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The GCSE (9-1) Physical Education specification content is divided into three components. Each component is further sub-divided into topic areas and the detailed content associated with those topics. Components 1 and 2 are assessed via written examination papers (60%). Component 3 is NEA (Non Examined Assessments), and is assessed, externally moderated (40%). The written papers are designed in manageable bite-size chunks rather than massively long papers.

		Marks	Duration	Weighting
<b>Component 1</b>	<b>Physical Factors Affecting Performance</b>	60	1 Hour	30%
	Anatomy and Physiology			
	Physical Training			
	<b>Section A</b>	30		
	30 marks, 20 questions ranging in size/mark allocation across the topics			
	<b>Section B</b>	30		
	3x10 mark questions, 2 on A&P and 1 on Physical Training; broken down into part questions. Including the use of extended response and use of data			
<b>Component 2</b>	<b>Socio-Cultural Issues And Sports Psychology</b>	60	1 Hour	30%
	Sports Psychology			
	Socio-Cultural Influences			
	Health, Fitness and Wellbeing			
	<b>Section A</b>	30		
	30 marks, 20 questions ranging in size/mark allocation across the topics			
	<b>Section B</b>	30		
		3x10 mark questions, 2 on A&P and 1 on Physical training; broken down into part questions. Including the use of extended response and use of data.		
<b>Component 3</b>	<b>Performance with Physical Education</b>	80	NEA	40%
	1) Performance practical in three activities, equally weighted at 20 marks.	60		
	2) Analysing and Evaluating Performance (AEP)	20		

**Useful link** - <http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/231458-gcse-9-1-physical-education-summary-brochure.pdf>

**Mr Craig Harrison**

Head of Physical Education

## PHYSICS

Boys studying Physics follow the Edexcel IGCSE syllabus, which covers all aspects of modern Physics through a well-structured course of practical work, investigations, theory and challenging problem solving. The course aims to develop a better understanding of how the universe works at a fundamental level and how this knowledge is applied in the realms of Science, Engineering and Technology.

Practical work is at the heart of physics teaching and you will learn to become a competent experimentalist and develop skill in carrying out experiments using a wide range of different equipment. The course has been newly revised to come in line with GCSE and A Level syllabus changes in recent years. As such, it is assessed on a 1-9 grading structure. Students will sit two exam papers at the end of the second year of study.

**Topics studied build on the work covered in the Fourth Form, and include:**

- Forces & Motion
- Electricity & Electronics
- Waves (including light & sound)
- Energy resources & Energy transfer
- Solids, Liquids & Gases
- Magnetism & Electromagnetism
- Radioactivity & Particles
- Astrophysics

The study of Physics is essential for boys considering a career in Science, Engineering, or another technology based subject and is highly desirable for many other careers. Physicists are highly prized in a wide range of areas for their problem solving skills. These range from computing, engineering, architecture and medicine to finance, business and data science. Physics can, of course, be studied just because it is interesting and relevant to our modern world.

**Dr James Mayoh**

Physics Lead Teacher

## MISCELLANEOUS

### DEBATING

At present Debating is run as both an in-house activity in the Middle and Senior school and as a competitive activity. At present the School enters the English Speaking Union's Junior and Senior National Competitions; at Junior level we were Scottish runners up in 2013. We also are involved in a number of short prep competitions run by Edinburgh University Union Debating.

We have previously entered the Law Society for Scotland's National Debating Competition and Merchiston has achieved notable success as quarter and semi-finalists. We have also entered Debating Matters, a national competition which involves the boys defending arguments against a panel of adult experts. Last year the Merchiston team were national runners up. Merchiston also took the national runners up prize in the St Andrews Day National Debating Tournament organised by the English Speaking Union.

Debating is also a popular in-house activity and we meet on a weekly basis to discuss and debate a wide variety of topical motions. From these meetings we make team selections. Motions are sometimes dictated by competition but more often than not arise from the boys' own interests and topical issues. The Inter-Clan Debating also allows novice debaters to become involved and this has consistently spotlighted new talent across the School every year.

### DRAMA

Although Drama is not an academic subject at Merchiston, we attempt to create an activity programme that provides a continuity of dramatic experience and the opportunity to develop and sustain skills in both performance and supporting roles. These are often highly transferable skills that build confidence in performance and communication. Equally, we endeavour to pass on a love of theatre and an understanding of the rich experience it provides to all pupils.

Productions at Merchiston are staged jointly with St George's School for Girls, with main roles usually going to Senior pupils in Fifth Form and above. Productions range from musicals including *Beauty and the Beast* and *West side story*, to more 'serious' drama such as *A View from the Bridge* and *A Christmas Carol*. We also stage comedy, most recently *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*. Ensemble acting is considered to be just as valuable and important as principal roles and the key emphasis throughout productions is the importance of a team effort to produce a unified and polished performance. All actors are introduced to a range of skills during the preparation for these performances, with the aim that each year they can build a repertoire of new skills. In recent years, pupils have learned formation dancing, improv as well as unarmed and armed stage combat.

Throughout the term, options are available for developing theatre management skills and techniques. Stage Management and Sound and Lighting roles introduce pupils to the technical side of the theatre, developing both the specific skills required for these roles and more general skills of organisation and communication.

## DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD SCHEME

We strongly believe in inspiring your son to become an independent, resourceful and resilient young man, eager to take on a challenge, able to accept and manage risk, and aware of his own strengths and weaknesses. The Duke of Edinburgh Award helps us to do just that and the Bronze and Silver Awards can be taken as an activity throughout the Shell and Fifth Form. All Shell pupils should use the Chalmers East year to fulfil their three sections (see below) in order to complete the Bronze Award which many will have begun with the compulsory Expedition in their Fourth Form year. Fifth Form boys then have the option to progress to Silver if they wish. Candidates who have not previously undertaken the Bronze Award (i.e. who have joined the School after Fourth Form) will be subject to slightly longer timescales at Silver.

Although the administration of the Award scheme falls under the Outdoor Education umbrella, only one quarter of the scheme is actually about expeditions. The remainder comprises the Volunteering, Physical and Skills sections the imaginative array of activities undertaken to fulfil the criteria of these sections is remarkable, from learning the bagpipes to making scrubs for the NHS. Full details of the requirements can be found on the DoFE website ( <https://www.dofe.org/> )

All Bronze level candidates undertake a walking expedition, but a choice of walking, canoeing, or mountain biking is offered at Silver and Gold levels, depending on interest. Regardless of the mode of transport, the venues for the expeditions change on an annual basis, and we try to target some of the most beautiful and wild places in the UK: The Trossachs (Bronze), Kintail & Knoydart, the Cairngorms, the Borders, the Lake District and the Peak District.

### **Mr David Thomson**

DoFE Award Manager

## MUSIC: CHORAL MUSIC and INSTRUMENTAL TUITION

Merchiston offers many opportunities for pupils to become involved in practical music-making. A variety of choral and instrumental groups are available, from large groups (such as Choral Society, Pipe Band, and Chapel Choir) to smaller ensembles that include the Folk, Jazz Band, Close Harmony, and the String, Wind, and Brass groups. The School has a strong tradition of choral music with on average 140 boys as members of the Choral Society. The Chapel Choir and Close Harmony group perform regularly in chapel services and at other functions: concerts are given in School and at other venues in Edinburgh.

Instrumental Music lessons are timetabled by rotation through the School week; over one-third of our pupils take instrumental lessons, and many pupils play more than one. A wide selection of instruments is available: accordion, bagpipes and chanter, bassoon, cello, drumming (bass, side, snare, and drum kit), percussion, flute, French horn, oboe, piano, recorder, trombone, trumpet, viola, violin, and voice. Tuition in other instruments may be provided after consultation with the Head of Music.

The Drama and Music departments collaborate in the production of musicals in collaboration with St George's School for Girls.

### **Mr Stephen Dennis**

Director of Music

## OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Outdoor Education forms a significant part of the co-curricular programme at Merchiston and your son will be encouraged to participate at every opportunity. The benefits of being outside and experiencing nature in all its wonder are well documented, and mental wellbeing is irrefutably linked to one's ability to get out into the natural world. It matters very little whether your son is on a week-long adventurous trip or having a Physics lesson in the grounds of the school hauling different masses up and down in the trees to investigate forces: the simple fact of being outside and of learning in a different environment is invaluable and as a Department, the Outdoor Education staff are keen to connect with as many of the academic subjects as possible.

### Rock climbing

Climbing is a popular activity helped by easy access to the indoor facility at Ratho and at Eden Rock. It is run as a weekly activity on Thursday afternoons and/or as a series of Sunday trips. In the Summer and Autumn Terms there are trips to outdoor venues across the South of Scotland and the North of England.

### Mountain biking

Mountain biking outings will often include a trip to the justifiably famous Glentress, near Peebles, with its excellent selection of graded trails and skills courses.

### Hill walking & camping

Most Merchiston boys' hill walking and camping experience is through D of E expeditions or in-House hill walks and trips. Winter trips to areas such as Glencoe also run on an annual basis, usually in February. An October trekking trip to Morocco has also been added to the calendar.

### Canoeing & kayaking

Destinations for canoeing have included the River Tummell and the River Tweed.

### Hill running

A weekly outing every Sunday morning takes place in the Pentland Hills for any boys keen enough to drag themselves out of bed on a Sunday!

### Sailing

This is available in the Summer Term as an activity option and also through Sunday trips to Port Edgar Water Sports Centre.

Merchiston is ideally situated to take advantage of the surrounding countryside. We have easy access to the Pentland Hills and the Water of Leith for mountain biking, walking and hill running, and we are only a short drive from the Lammermuir Hills, Glentress and the Borders. The Edinburgh International Climbing Arena (the largest indoor climbing wall in the world) is a 15-minute drive away and there are two other indoor climbing venues close to the school: Eden Rock and Alien Rock. We also have access to two outdoor crags within 45 minutes of the School and good transport links to bigger climbing venues in the Lake District and Northumberland. Sailing and paddling activities take place on the nearby Firth of Forth, whilst hill walking and winter mountaineering trips see us cross the Forth Bridge and head up to the Highlands.

Many of the above activities are provided by qualified full-time members of the School staff. In some cases, we contract out to relevant AALA-licensed providers.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL and HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)

In the **Shell** you will attend classes throughout the year. A diverse range of issues is examined, including Health Issues (drugs education, the dangers of smoking and alcohol abuse, sex education), Family and Relationships, Resilience, Equality and Diversity and Study Skills.

In the **Fifth Form** PSHE continues to feature on the timetable, building on understanding of Health Issues and Careers Guidance. Topics covered include Relationships, Time Management, Stress, Presentation Skills and Assessing Risk around us. In both cases, pupils will increasingly make use of the UniFrog online platform to help them record their experiences and learning.

**Mr Stuart Buchanan**

Head of PSHE

## SPORT

At Merchiston we strive to achieve excellence in our three major games: athletics, cricket, and rugby. Games afternoons are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the Autumn and Lent Term, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in the Summer Term, with regular interschool fixtures on Saturday. There is a very strong tradition of boys representing the School and also going on to achieve district and national honours.

Merchiston also offers a wide range of other sports, including badminton, basketball, cross-country running, football, golf, hockey, Rugby fives, sailing, shooting, squash, swimming, and tennis, along with a range of Outdoor Education activities. These are offered during the half-days, at weekends, or as part of the senior sports programme.

**Mr Rory McCann**

Director of Sport



## SUPPORT for LEARNING

The Support for Learning department has two important roles in Shell and Fifth Form - to provide support with the challenges boys may experience while studying for GCSEs, and to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place so that all boys are able to fully access GCSE examinations and show their knowledge and understanding.

There are a range of options available for support - choosing to take Support for Learning as a subject in place of one GCSE option, boys arranging occasional 1:1 lessons when they have a specific problem or calling in to weekly Drop-In sessions which are open to all boys irrespective of whether they have a previously recognised need.

The process of ensuring that all boys have a fair opportunity to fully access their GCSE examinations at the end of their courses may involve putting in place special arrangements (access arrangements), and starts with screening of the whole year group in Fourth Form and all boys who come into School after this point. The Support for Learning Department liaises closely with individual boys, parents, the School's Examinations Officer, subject departments, academic tutors, external agencies, and the examination boards to ensure that each pupil receives the access arrangements he requires in both internal and public examinations. This may include extra time, a reader, a scribe or access to ICT. The examination boards issue very strict guidelines: pupils must be assessed and evidence provided to support every application for access arrangements.

Pupils who attend Support for Learning lessons or Drop-In, will be supported to find their strengths and preferred ways of working so that they can use these to develop appropriate strategies to help overcome areas of difficulty and challenges that they face. When needed, assessment, advice and support may be sought from external professionals such as Educational Psychologists.

### **Depending on individual needs, support in timetabled lessons may include:**

- support for GCSE English, including help with essay-writing, summaries, and responses to literature;
- support for GCSE Mathematics;
- support for other subjects - either provided in the department or arranged with subject specialists for specific issues
- cross-curricular support, such as help with coursework and subject-specific vocabulary;
- advice on learning styles, study skills, note-taking, time-management, and thinking skills;
- developing good practice in the presentation of work
- structured reading, spelling and numeracy programmes;

Pupils with additional support needs will have been assessed by Support for Learning staff and will have an individual Profile which can be shared with parents and is easily accessible to all teachers.

### **Mrs Carole Weaving**

Head of Faculty of Support for Learning

## APPENDIX 1: MERCHISTON'S 'ABLE' AND 'VERY ABLE' PUPIL POLICY

The Merchiston Castle School Mission Statement shows our commitment to leading students towards 'personal excellence'. Our Additional Support for Learning provision has long recognised the needs of boys with specific learning difficulties; however, we also believe that able pupils have their own requirements and we are keen that academic Departments and individual teachers adapt their curricula in order to provide these pupils with the additional academic stimulus that they need. Although our performance in public examinations is very strong, we recognise that the able pupil very often needs to be presented with more demanding challenges than national syllabuses alone can provide.

### Identification

We begin the process of identifying boys with learning strengths and weaknesses before they join the school. Parents and feeder schools are asked to inform us of particular academic aptitude; our pre-screening procedures, Entrance and Scholarship Examinations supply us with concrete evidence of the ability of a potential pupil. We do, however, accept that examinations are only one part of helping us to build an accurate picture as, depending on the pupil's age, these may only test for a certain range of academic abilities.

Once a pupil has joined the School, we formally follow up our findings by means of our system of internal Report cards (on which boys receive a comment and grades for both effort and achievement from their subject teachers) and biannual internal examinations. Each pupil at Merchiston is assigned a personal academic tutor whose role is to oversee academic progress. The InCAS, ALIS, and MidYIS systems benchmark pupils against the national cohort and provide further indications of appropriate academic targets for able pupils.

We value the opinion of parents about their children but do caution that this cannot be our sole method of identification. All parents consider their children to be special and often believe them to be displaying exceptional academic ability; however, our experience enables us to judge to what extent this ability is similar to that displayed by many other of our pupils.

### Provision

The work of individual Departments is key to our provision for able students. Our policy of setting pupils by ability (up to the start of the Sixth Form) ensures some degree of differentiation. Additionally, internal examinations at every level contain differentiated material to provide opportunities for able pupils to be challenged.

Individual departmental classroom strategies may also include negotiated individual targets for an able pupil, group work (allowing pupils with similar strengths to challenge each other), and 'higher order' or open-ended tasks. Our concern here is always that the able child should not 'tread water' by repeating material he already understands fully or become bored by moving through the curriculum at too slow a pace.

One part of any able pupil provision is a range of Extension activities. Currently our extra-mural initiatives include entry for the Mathematics and Physics Challenges and Olympiads, Mathematics Clubs, English Speaking Board exams, foreign language exchange trips, Arkwright Scholarships (Design and Technology), entry of pupil artwork in external exhibitions: our audits of departmental provision give fuller details of what we offer. In the Sixth Form we enter pupils for the STEP exams in Mathematics and, although we are aware that Oxbridge is only one aspect of academic success, we are proud of our pupils' performance in this area. The Cecil Stagg Society provides further opportunities for more academic pupils to meet and be challenged, including the opportunity to tackle a Cecil Stagg Research Project in Lower Sixth.

In short, although Merchiston's Able Pupil Policy is always evolving, we challenge our able pupils to the very outermost limits of their potential; indeed, to the point of failure.



# MERCHISTON

EDINBURGH

## GCSE/IGCSE Subject Choices for boys entering Shell 2022-23

Please find below the subject choice columns for GCSE. Boys must choose one subject from each column. We strongly recommend that three sciences are studied either as single subjects or through the Double Award route. Any desire to study only two sciences must be discussed fully with the Academic Leadership Team.

Name of Pupil:

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
English	Maths	Biology	Biology	French	Biology	Classical Civilisation	Art
(EAL)		Chemistry	Chemistry	Mandarin	Design & Tech	Computer Science	Design & Tech
		Physics	Physics	Spanish	History	Geography	Electronics
		Double Award	Double Award	Support for Learning	Physics	History	Geography
					Support for Learning	Mandarin	Latin
						Music	PE

Please note that it may be that certain subjects shown above will not run if uptake is low.

Name:

(Parent/Guardian)

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 Signature:

(Parent/Guardian)

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**MERCHISTON**  
EDINBURGH

**A BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL FOR BOYS AGED 7-18**

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**MERCHISTON.CO.UK**



Charity number: SC016580

