NEW SCHOOL ROME

BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN ROME

SINCE 1972



NEW SCHOOL ROME · YEARS 10 AND 11

GCSE & IGCSE

Key Stage 4

GUIDE

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KEY STAGE 4

Introduction



Overview

At the start of Year 10 (age 14 to 15), students at New School Rome begin courses leading to GCSE and IGCSE examinations, which are taken at the end of Year 11 (age 15 to 16).

Our Key Stage 3 programme in Years 7 to 9 is designed as a foundation for these courses. Students who join New School Rome at the start of Year 10 receive guidance on their subject choices and support in their first weeks, so they can settle quickly into the two-year course.

These examinations prepare students for further academic work, including A Level study in Years 12 and 13. GCSE and IGCSE qualifications are recognised by academic institutions and employers around the world.

GCSE and IGCSE grading

At the end of the course, students receive a number grade for each subject on a scale from 9 to 1, where 9 is the highest. A grade of 4 or above is considered a pass.

Progression into the Sixth Form

Five or more grades from 6 to 9 are normally required for entry into Year 12. Students wishing to continue a subject at A Level should achieve at least grade 6 in the same or a related subject at GCSE or IGCSE. Mathematics requires grade 7, and Further Mathematics requires grade 8 or 9.

Exam boards

GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations are set by Pearson Edexcel and Cambridge International. New School Rome is an official centre for both.

YEARS 10 AND 11

A two-year academic pathway



Students begin their GCSE and IGCSE courses at the start of Year 10 and complete them at the end of Year 11. Over these two years, expectations increase steadily as students develop the skills and confidence required for advanced study.

The programme is designed to

- Develop deep subject knowledge and academic discipline.
- Strengthen independent learning and organisational skills.
- Encourage analytical thinking and problem solving.
- Prepare students for the demands of A Level courses.

Regular assessment, feedback and reflection help students understand their progress and identify areas for improvement, building a strong sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Joining in Year 11

Students can join New School Rome in Year 11, halfway through the two-year course. Each case is discussed with the Headteacher, who helps new arrivals build a balanced programme that allows progression into the Sixth Form.

A broad, balanced and flexible curriculum



The GCSE and IGCSE curriculum at New School Rome is carefully structured to provide both academic breadth and individual choice.

All students follow a core programme that builds strong foundations in literacy and numeracy. Alongside this, students choose optional subjects that reflect their interests, strengths and future aspirations.

Study programmes

Most students take eight GCSE subjects. English Language, English Literature and Mathematics are compulsory. Students choose their other subjects from a wide range of options, including Italian, and we encourage every student to take at least one science subject.

Some subjects, including Mathematics, offer two levels of examination entry, so each student works at the right level of challenge.

The overall aim is to keep future academic pathways open while allowing students to begin developing areas of specialism.

Understanding GCSEs



GCSEs and International GCSEs are globally recognised subject-specific qualifications, with academic content and assessment designed for students aged 14 to 16.

They mainly involve studying the theory of a subject combined with some investigative work. Valued by schools, universities and employers, they are the first step towards further study at A Level or direct entry into a range of careers.

Skills for the next stage

According to Pearson Edexcel, International GCSEs are recognised by universities around the world. Transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration are built into each course, so that students are ready for the next level of study.

For example, the focus on critical thinking in Biology, Chemistry and Physics helps prepare students for these subjects at A Level.

COURSE LENGTH
Two years, Years 10 and 11

EXAMINATIONS
End of Year 11

GRADING
9 to 1, with 9 the highest

EXAM BOARDS
Pearson Edexcel and Cambridge International

SUPPORT

Teaching and student support



Students are supported throughout Years 10 and 11 by experienced subject specialists who understand both the academic demands of GCSE and IGCSE courses and the importance of wellbeing. Our role is to guide students as they become independent learners, ready to take ownership of their progress.

Support includes

- Pastoral tutors
- Inclusion support
- EAL (English as an Additional Language) support
- Regular teacher feedback
- Clear assessment guidance
- Mock examinations
- Structured revision programmes and ongoing academic mentoring
- Direct communication with parents, with regular academic and pastoral reports and parent-teacher consultations

GCSE results, Class of 2026

56% of all grades were awarded at A* or A.

International families



The GCSE and IGCSE programme at New School Rome follows British educational standards within a supportive international environment.

International GCSEs are designed specifically for international learners. Their content includes international topics and examples, so that students learn in a local context to a global standard.

Italian is offered both as a foreign language and as a course for native speakers (see pages 19 and 20).

Additional language support is available where required, so that every student can access the GCSE and IGCSE courses.

Talk to our Admissions team

We are happy to talk through subject choices, language support and the right starting point for your child.

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Subjects at a glance



New School Rome offers a carefully selected range of GCSE and IGCSE subjects, taught by specialist teachers and set by internationally recognised examination boards.

Languages and communication

- English Language
- English Literature
- French
- Spanish
- Italian
- Italian for native speakers

STEM

- Mathematics
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Computer Science

Humanities

- History
- Geography

Creative and physical

- Art & Design
- Physical Education

This balanced offer allows students to combine academic rigour with creativity and personal expression.

The subject offer is reviewed each year. Please contact Admissions for the options available in a given year.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Art & Design



The GCSE Art & Design course encourages an adventurous, inquisitive and personal approach to creative expression. Students develop practical knowledge of art and design materials, techniques and technologies, while building skills in visual analysis, independent research and creative problem solving.

The course focuses on the process of developing ideas, documented in a work journal (sketchbook). Over the two years, students learn to express ideas through visual language, building a versatile foundation for higher education and future creative work.

ASSESSMENT

- Component 1, Personal Portfolio (60% of total grade): coursework projects completed in class and independently. Students research artists, experiment with media such as painting, sculpture, printmaking or digital art, and document their creative development.
- Component 2, Externally Set Assignment (40% of total grade): a project based on a theme released by the exam board in January of Year 11. After a preparatory period, students complete a final artwork during a 10-hour timed session under exam conditions.

Assessment objectives

- **Develop.** Investigating and analysing sources, showing critical understanding of historical and contemporary art.
- **Experiment.** Exploring and selecting resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, refining ideas as work progresses.
- **Record.** Recording ideas, observations and insights in visual and written forms.
- **Present.** Producing a personal and meaningful final outcome that links all areas of research.

The four objectives are equally weighted and are assessed throughout the course.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Biology



The International GCSE in Biology is a detailed study of living organisms, their structures, life processes and interactions with the environment. Students develop a strong understanding of biological facts, concepts and principles, while building scientific skills in experimental design, data analysis and critical evaluation.

The course emphasises the practical nature of science, developing experimental and investigative skills based on safe laboratory techniques. It provides a strong foundation for A Level sciences such as Biology and Chemistry, and for future pathways in medicine, environmental science and biotechnology.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1 (61.1% of total grade): core biological concepts from all major topic areas, with multiple-choice, short-answer, structured and open-response questions.
- Paper 2 (38.9% of total grade): all topic areas, including the more complex sub-topics, with a focus on data interpretation and application.

Areas of study

- **The nature and variety of living organisms.** Plants, animals, fungi, bacteria, protoctists and viruses.
- **Structures and functions in living organisms.** Levels of organisation, cells, nutrition, respiration, gas exchange, transport, excretion and coordination.
- **Reproduction and inheritance.** Sexual and asexual reproduction, genetics, DNA and inheritance.
- **Ecology and the environment.** Ecosystems, feeding relationships, nutrient cycles and human impact on the environment.
- **Use of biological resources.** Food production, selective breeding, genetic modification and cloning.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Chemistry



The International GCSE in Chemistry investigates the substances that make up our world, exploring their structure, properties and reactions. Students develop analytical, problem-solving and mathematical skills as they investigate chemical principles through practical laboratory work.

The course emphasises the practical nature of science, developing experimental and investigative skills based on safe laboratory techniques. It provides a strong foundation for A Level sciences such as Chemistry and Biology, and for future pathways in chemical engineering, environmental science and medicine.

ASSESSMENT

- Practical skills are integrated throughout the course and assessed in the final written examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Paper 1 (61.1% of total grade): a 2-hour written exam on core chemical knowledge, with short-answer and structured questions.
- Paper 2 (38.9% of total grade): a 1-hour 15-minute written exam on more advanced topics and further practical applications.

Areas of study

- **Principles of chemistry.** Atomic structure, bonding, states of matter and chemical formulae.
- **Inorganic chemistry.** Group properties (alkali metals, halogens), gases in the atmosphere and the reactivity series.
- **Physical chemistry.** Acids, alkalis, titrations, energetics, rates of reaction and reversible reactions.
- **Organic chemistry.** Crude oil, hydrocarbons, polymers and everyday chemical products.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Computer Science



The IGCSE in Computer Science explores computational thinking, data representation and computer systems. Students build analytical, logical and mathematical skills as they investigate how computers process information, store data and communicate across networks.

The course develops problem-solving and programming skills through algorithm design and logical reasoning. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as Computer Science and Mathematics, and for further study in technology, engineering and data science.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Computer Systems (50% of total grade): a 1-hour 45-minute written exam on hardware, software, data transmission and computer architecture.
- Paper 2, Algorithms, Programming and Logic (50% of total grade): a 1-hour 45-minute written exam on problem solving, database design, Boolean logic, and writing and correcting algorithms in pseudocode or a high-level programming language.

Areas of study

- **Computer systems.** Data representation (binary, hexadecimal), data transmission, hardware, operating systems and networks.
- **Security and ethics.** Internet technologies, automated systems, cybersecurity and the ethical impact of emerging technologies such as AI.
- **Algorithms and programming.** Designing, documenting and testing algorithms using pseudocode, flowcharts and high-level programming.
- **Logic and databases.** Logic gates, truth tables and relational databases.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

English Language



The IGCSE in First Language English develops the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively in speech and writing. Students learn to use a wide vocabulary and correct grammar, and to develop a personal, coherent writing style.

The course focuses on analysing a wide range of texts and writing structured, purposeful essays. It is a foundation for every academic subject, and in particular for A Level subjects such as English Literature and History, and for future pathways in law, journalism and business.

ASSESSMENT

- Students prepare for Paper 1 and complete a coursework portfolio.
- Paper 1, Reading (50% of total grade): a 2-hour exam with structured questions and an extended response based on several source texts.
- Coursework portfolio (50% of total grade): a portfolio of descriptive, narrative and argumentative writing.

Areas of study

- **Reading analysis.** How writers use language, structure and style to influence readers and convey meaning.
- **Coursework writing.** Descriptive, narrative and argumentative writing, well structured and technically accurate.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

English Literature



The Cambridge IGCSE Literature in English encourages an appreciation of literature as an enriching field of study. Students develop analytical skills and a personal, critical voice by reading a diverse range of poetry, prose and drama.

The course focuses on the close reading of texts, helping students build structured arguments and confident writing. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as English Literature and History, and for future pathways in law, journalism and international relations.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Poetry and Prose (50% of total grade): a 1-hour 30-minute exam with two essay questions, one on a studied poetry collection and one on a classic or modern novel or collection of short stories.
- Paper 2, Drama and Unseen (50% of total grade): a 2-hour exam with one essay question assessing themes, characters and dramatic techniques in a studied play. Additionally, students will respond to a piece of unseen prose or an unseen poem.

Areas of study

- **Poetry.** Form, imagery and voice in a selection of poems.
- **Prose.** Narrative techniques, characterisation and historical context in a novel or a collection of short stories.
- **Drama.** A studied play, and how dialogue and staging convey meaning.
- **Unseen texts.** Close reading of a piece of unseen prose or an unseen poem.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

French



The International GCSE in French develops the ability to use the language effectively for practical communication. Students build a strong foundation in grammar, expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of French-speaking cultures.

The course focuses on using the language in different contexts, building skills in spontaneous conversation and structured writing. It provides a strong foundation for students who wish to study modern languages at A Level, such as French, and for future pathways in international relations, hospitality and global business.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Listening (25% of total grade): understanding spoken French in a variety of everyday contexts.
- Paper 2, Reading and Writing (50% of total grade): reading comprehension, grammatical accuracy and written composition through structured tasks.
- Paper 3, Speaking (25% of total grade): a 10-minute speaking assessment with a picture-based discussion and two spontaneous conversations on different topics.

Areas of study

- **Home and Abroad.** Life in town and rural areas, holidays, travel and tourist transactions.
- **Education and Employment.** School life, future plans, jobs and careers.
- **Personal Life and Relationships.** Family, friends, daily routines and special occasions.
- **The World Around Us.** Environmental issues, media, technology and climate.
- **Social Activities, Fitness and Health.** Hobbies, sports, shopping, dining out and healthy living.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Geography



The International GCSE in Geography explores the relationship between people and their environments. Students develop spatial awareness, critical thinking and data analysis skills as they examine the physical forces that shape our planet and the human activities that drive global change.

The course builds fieldwork, mapping and decision-making skills. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as Geography and Economics, and for careers in urban planning, environmental consultancy and international development.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Physical Geography (40% of total grade): a 1-hour 10-minute exam on river environments and hazardous environments, with a related fieldwork task.
- Paper 2, Human Geography (60% of total grade): a 1-hour 45-minute exam on economic activity and energy and on urban environments, a fieldwork task, and the global issue of fragile environments and climate change.

Areas of study

- **The physical environment.** River environments and hazardous environments, such as earthquakes, volcanoes and tropical storms.
- **The human environment.** Economic activity and energy, and urban environments.
- **Global issues.** Fragile environments and climate change.
- **Fieldwork and enquiry.** River and urban fieldwork, collecting, presenting and analysing real-world data.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

History



The IGCSE in History develops a strong understanding of major international issues, societies and events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Students learn to ask meaningful questions, analyse historical evidence critically and build well-supported arguments.

The course focuses on the key historical concepts of cause and consequence, continuity and change, and similarity and difference. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as History and English Literature, and for future pathways in law, journalism, diplomacy and public policy.

ASSESSMENT

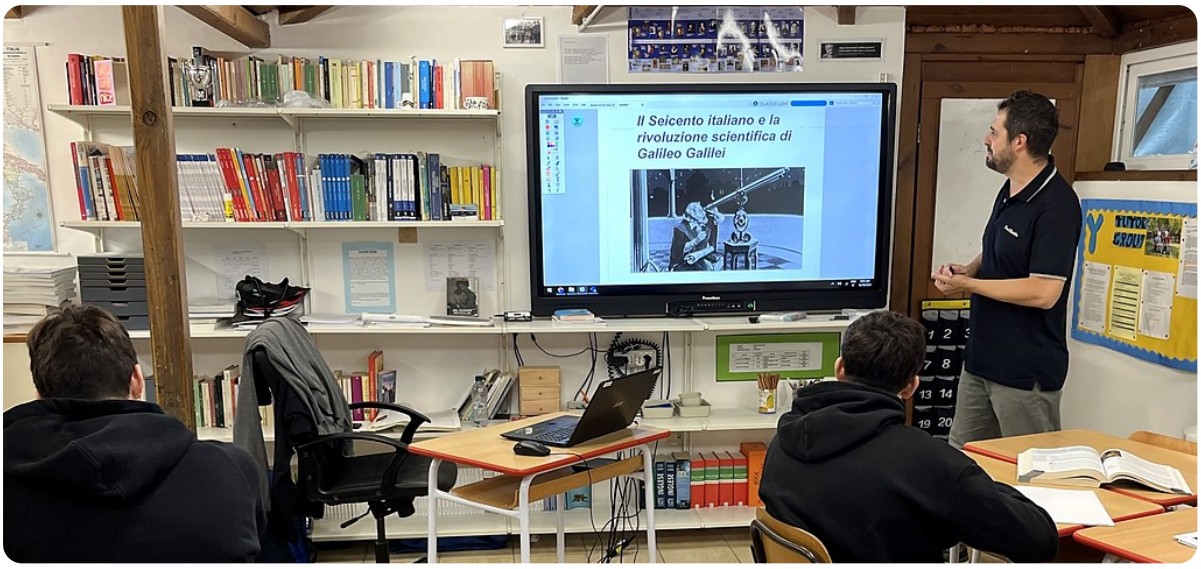
- Paper 1, International History.
- Paper 2, Document Questions.
- Paper 4, Alternative to Coursework.

Areas of study

- **International relations from 1919.** The interwar peace and the Cold War: the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations, how far Hitler was to blame for the Second World War, the origins of the Cold War, US containment of Communism and Soviet control over Eastern Europe.
- **Germany, 1918 to 1945.** The transition from democracy to dictatorship: the Weimar Republic, how Hitler gained control by 1934, how the Nazis kept control and everyday life in Nazi Germany.
- **Source analysis.** Analysing and evaluating primary and secondary evidence for bias, usefulness, reliability and significance, across both topics.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Italian



The International GCSE in Italian develops the ability to use the language effectively for practical communication. Students build a strong foundation in grammar, expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of Italian culture and traditions.

The course focuses on using the language in different contexts, building skills in spontaneous conversation and structured writing. It provides a strong foundation for students who wish to study modern languages at A Level, such as Italian, and for future pathways in international relations, hospitality and global business.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Listening (25% of total grade): understanding spoken Italian in a variety of everyday contexts.
- Paper 2, Reading and Writing (50% of total grade): reading comprehension, grammatical accuracy and written composition through structured tasks.
- Paper 3, Speaking (25% of total grade): a 10-minute speaking assessment with a picture-based discussion and two spontaneous conversations on different topics.

Areas of study

- **Home and Abroad.** Life in town and rural areas, holidays, travel and tourist transactions.
- **Education and Employment.** School life, future plans, jobs and careers.
- **Personal Life and Relationships.** Family, friends, daily routines and special occasions.
- **The World Around Us.** Environmental issues, media, technology and climate.
- **Social Activities, Fitness and Health.** Hobbies, sports, shopping, dining out and healthy living.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Italian for native speakers



Fluent Italian speakers follow a course based on Italian literature, history and current affairs, in line with the programme of the Italian Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM). The focus is on a much richer understanding of the language and its literature. Students sit the Italian GCSE examination at the end of Year 11.

The course prepares native speakers to continue Italian in Years 12 and 13. For students with Italian citizenship, it is the first step towards the Italian Language and Culture examination, which is part of one of the two routes to Italian university admission.

Two routes to Italian universities

For students with Italian citizenship, New School Rome offers two routes to Italian university admission, formally recognised under Italian law.

ROUTE 1

Three A Levels

At least three A Levels relevant to the chosen university course, not including Italian A Level.

ROUTE 2

Two A Levels and the Italian Language and Culture examination

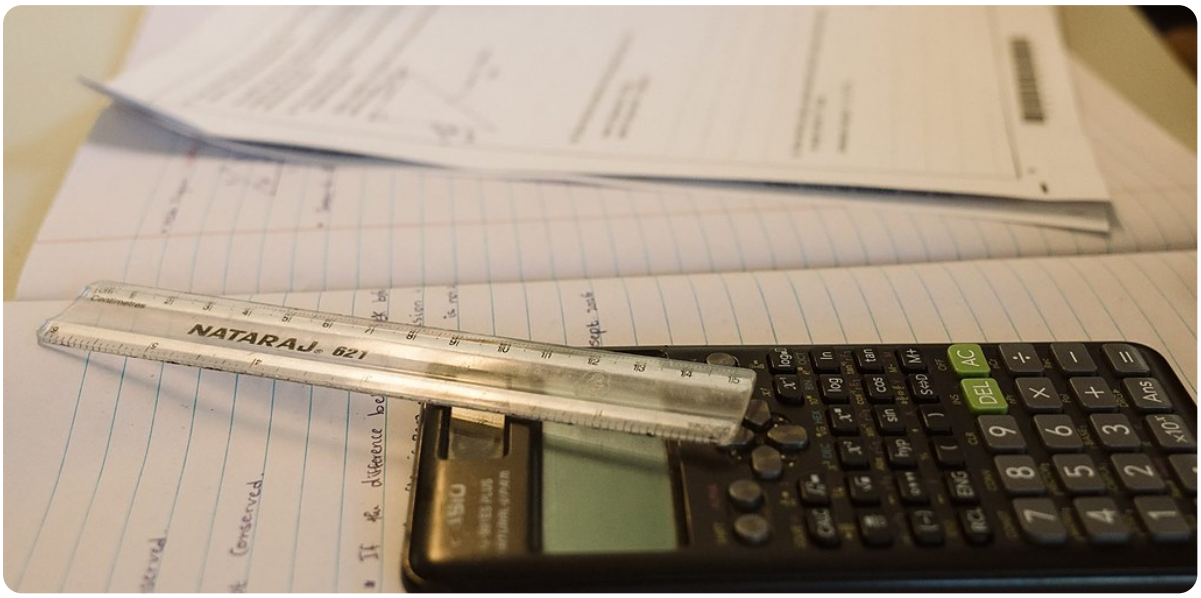
At least two A Levels relevant to the chosen university course, not including Italian A Level, and the written and oral Italian Language and Culture examination, held at New School Rome with a Ministry-appointed representative.

Both routes are explained in our Sixth Form Prospectus and in our Italian university entry factsheet.

Reference framework: Law of 16 April 1998, No. 121.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Mathematics



The International GCSE in Mathematics (Specification A) builds problem-solving, logical reasoning and analytical skills. Students learn to think mathematically, analyse data and apply structured techniques to solve complex, real-world problems.

The course develops both theoretical understanding and mathematical fluency, including constructing mathematical arguments and proofs. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, and for future pathways in engineering, finance, computer science and medicine.

ASSESSMENT

- The qualification is assessed through two written examinations at the end of Year 11. A calculator is permitted in both papers.
- Paper 1 (50% of total grade): a range of mathematical skills, problem solving and modelling.
- Paper 2 (50% of total grade): the rest of the curriculum, with a focus on multi-step problems and mathematical reasoning.

Areas of study

- **Number.** Arithmetic, fractions, decimals, powers, roots and rounding.
- **Algebra.** Expressions, equations, formulae, sequences and functions.
- **Graphs.** Plotting and interpreting linear, quadratic and other functions.
- **Shape, space and measures.** Angles, trigonometry, vectors, transformations and circle theorems.
- **Handling data.** Probability, statistical measures and diagrams.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Physical Education



The Cambridge IGCSE in Physical Education combines practical participation with the study of the theory behind sport and exercise.

Students develop the knowledge and understanding to perform effectively and safely, improve performance, and make informed choices that support health and wellbeing.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Theory (50% of total grade): a written examination of 1 hour 45 minutes, externally assessed.
- Practical coursework (50% of total grade): four physical activities from at least two activity categories.

Areas of study

- **Anatomy and physiology.** Body systems, movement and the effects of exercise.
- **Health, fitness and training.** Components of fitness, training principles, nutrition and recovery.
- **Skill acquisition and psychology.** Learning, practice, feedback, motivation and mental preparation.
- **Social, cultural and ethical influences.** Participation, sport and society, the media, technology and ethics.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Physics



The IGCSE in Physics explores the laws that govern the natural world, from subatomic particles to the solar system. Students develop analytical, mathematical and problem-solving skills as they investigate how energy, forces and matter interact.

The course emphasises the practical application of physical principles, developing experimental and investigative skills through laboratory work and data analysis. It provides a strong foundation for A Level subjects such as Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry, and for future pathways in engineering, astrophysics, computer science and medicine.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 2, Multiple Choice (30% of total grade).
- Paper 4, Theory (50% of total grade).
- Paper 6, Alternative to Practical (20% of total grade): experimental skills, data analysis and laboratory procedures.

Areas of study

- **Motion, forces and energy.** Kinematics, forces, momentum, work, energy, power, pressure and density.
- **Thermal physics.** Kinetic theory, states of matter, thermal expansion and transfer of thermal energy.
- **Waves.** Light, sound, seismic waves and the electromagnetic spectrum.
- **Electricity and magnetism.** Circuits, electromagnetic effects, digital logic and electrical safety.
- **Nuclear physics.** Atomic structure, radioactivity, half-life, fission and fusion.
- **Space physics.** The Earth's motion, the solar system, the life cycle of stars and cosmology.

GCSE AND IGCSE SUBJECT

Spanish



The International GCSE in Spanish develops the ability to use the language effectively for practical communication. Students build a strong foundation in grammar, expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of Spanish-speaking cultures.

The course focuses on using the language in different contexts, building skills in spontaneous conversation and structured writing. It provides a strong foundation for students who wish to study modern languages at A Level, such as Spanish, and for future pathways in international relations, hospitality and global business.

ASSESSMENT

- Paper 1, Listening (25% of total grade): understanding spoken Spanish in a variety of everyday contexts.
- Paper 2, Reading and Writing (50% of total grade): reading comprehension, grammatical accuracy and written composition through structured tasks.
- Paper 3, Speaking (25% of total grade): a 10-minute speaking assessment with a picture-based discussion and two spontaneous conversations on different topics.

Areas of study

- **Home and Abroad.** Life in town and rural areas, holidays, travel and tourist transactions.
- **Education and Employment.** School life, future plans, jobs and careers.
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