



Northampton School *for Boys*

Year 8

Arts Preferences 2026-2028





INTRODUCTION

Welcome to your booklet introducing the arts subjects offered for study in Year 9. Here at Northampton School *for Boys* we believe that you should receive a broad and balanced education. As such, all students study a range of arts subjects in Year 7 and Year 8. In Year 9, we ask students to show a preference of two expressive arts, to allow deeper study into arts subjects that students may progress to GCSE study and beyond.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information about the subjects on offer in Year 9 in order that you can express a preference for the right subjects for you. The information provided below outlines both the content of the GCSE course in each subject, and the skills and attitudes you will need to be successful.

Expressing your Preferences

You should discuss which subjects to select with parents and teachers.

You will be sent a link to an online form that you can use to show your preferences. You can complete this as many times as you like, and **the most recent one will be the one that is used to determine your preferences.**

How should I choose?

Choose subjects which you enjoy and where you have performed strongly during Year 7 and Year 8. **It is important to consider that students in Year 10 cannot opt for GCSE arts subjects that they did not study in Year 9. Therefore, if you already know that you want to do certain arts subjects at GCSE, you must put them 1st and 2nd for your preferences.**

Make sure you AVOID the following traps and risks when selecting your preferences:

- Avoid choosing options based on what your friends are doing.
- Avoid making choices based on teacher preferences – you may have a different teacher during GCSE.



Will I get my first preference?

We always strive to ensure that most students can study your top preferences. **This cannot, however, be guaranteed;** there is a limit to the number who can study each subject. It is, therefore, extremely important that you consider carefully your second to fifth preference on the form which you will be asked to complete.

What do I do now?

- Read the whole booklet carefully. The information on each of the subjects below gives an overview of each subject at Key Stage 4, so you can consider longer term which arts subjects are best for you.
- Review the Preferences presentation from Mr Barker –a recording of this session is available on the NSB website under the **Parents** section and in '**Y8 Expressive Arts Preferences.**'
- Discuss your proposed preferences with your parents
- Discuss your proposed preferences with your teachers
- Fill in the online Preferences 2025 - 2027 form by **MONDAY 29th June 2025**



SUBJECT INFORMATION





Specification

- Coursework Portfolio(60%)
- Externally set assignment,
 - which includes a 10-hour exam (40%)

Overview

Art requires curiosity, a creative mind and a passion for the visual world. Throughout the course students are encouraged to develop their awareness of contemporary art and aesthetics, whilst exploring a variety of approaches to making and learning about art. Drawing will be a significant medium for development throughout the course in order to explore and record observations and ideas in response to each project. Any student who wishes to study Art GCSE should be prepared to experiment with materials and ideas to create exciting works of art.

Artistic Practice

Over the course of the GCSE students will be taught how to format a project to explore a creative journey through the development of ideas, techniques and processes. Students will have the opportunity to develop their artistic knowledge and work independently to establish personal responses to their chosen area of study. The course is designed to build upon prior knowledge from Key Stage 3 and enable individual development across different projects.

Skills, Techniques and Processes

Art is an exciting course which offers a broad range of approaches and techniques, including drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, collage, mixed media, ceramics, three-dimensional construction and relief work. There will be an emphasis on recording from direct observation to display the formal elements, which include, line, tone, shape, form and use of colour. An integral aspect of the GCSE is a willingness to experiment with materials, develop creativity and explore a range of techniques.

Knowledge and Research

Developing a good knowledge of Fine Art is a vital part of the course. Each project will be underpinned by research into the work of artists, practitioners, and movements to support contextual understanding and inspire the development of ideas. Through appropriate research students will develop the ability to critically analyse their own work as well as the work of other artists. There will be an opportunity to visit galleries and exhibitions and work alongside a visiting artist, which will play an important role in helping to make connections with the student's own practical work. Home Learning will be set on a regular basis and is an important aspect of the GCSE.



Specification

- Exam 40% Critical Appreciation Paper
- Practical Controlled Assessment 60%
 - (30% Performance and 30% Choreography)

The specification acknowledges the important role that dance plays in young people's lives. Any student who wishes to study GCSE Dance will bring previous experience of dance from their KS3 studies to the course. The specification aims to build on that experience. The course places a major focus on Contemporary Dance, however, GCSE candidates may perform in and choreograph work in any dance style of their choice, provided it allows them to access the full range of assessment criteria. The study of dance as an art form contributes to students' aesthetic and social development.

In Year 9 students experience performing in front of a live audience. As a class, the students participate in creating choreography and preparing for performance over two terms. This culminates in full class participation in our annual dance show at The Cripps Theatre in front of an audience. Following on from this, the students respond to feedback and work towards a second smaller performance which takes place in front of family and friends in our dance studio. This is to prepare them for both practical requirements in the GCSE specification.

Performance

As a physical activity it promotes fitness and well-being. As performers, students develop confidence and self-esteem. They develop self and body awareness as well as sensitivity to others and team-working skills. Effective performance requires physical effort and the determination to succeed and improve.

Choreography

As choreographers, students employ the skills of problem-solving and creativity. Effective choreography requires imagination and the ability to synthesise a number of elements. In directing others, students develop their interpersonal and communication skills.

Critical Appreciation

As critics, students make informed decisions about the dances they see. They articulate their knowledge, opinions and preferences. Viewing professional dances fulfils students' cultural entitlement and broadens their artistic experience.

Overview

Dance expresses and communicates ideas and concepts through the interrelated processes of performance, choreography and critical appreciation. The practical emphasis of 60% will enable candidates to actively and physically demonstrate their knowledge and experience of dance in all three roles. The balance between performance and choreography is equally weighted at 30% each.

The written examination paper forms 40% of the final GCSE grade and is based on writing about their own practice in performance and choreography and on critical appreciation of dance performances that the students will study throughout the two-year course.



Drama

Specification

- 1. Understanding Drama: Written examination 40% of GCSE
 - Multiple choice (4 marks)
 - Four questions on a given extract from the set play chosen (44 marks)
 - A two-part question on the work of theatre makers in a single live theatre production (32 marks)
- 2. Devising Drama: Practical examination 40% of GCSE
 - Process of creating devised drama (devising log 60 marks)
 - Performance of devised drama (performer or designer) 20 marks
- 3. Text in Practice: Practical exams 20% of GCSE
 - Performance of two extracts from one play as a performer or designer (40 marks - 25 marks for each extract)

Overview

Drama will increase your confidence, improve social and communication skills and develop your creativity and imagination. You will learn about various performance and technical skills including acting, devising, directing and design, and gain knowledge of playwrights, theatre practitioners, genres and styles, placing these within their social, cultural, political and historical contexts.

You are expected to be enthusiastic and willing to participate in practical sessions (which use a wide variety of explorative strategies and dramatic techniques), performances (which take into consideration the elements of drama and the drama medium) and discussions. You should be prepared to give up time outside formal lessons for rehearsals and theatre visits. Home Learning will be set regularly and is an integral part of the course. Note taking after practical lessons is particularly important so that you have the necessary information prepared for revision purposes and in order to be able to evaluate your own work.

You will also be expected to experience a range of live theatre visits and, at times, participate in Drama workshops. It would also be beneficial if you took part in extra-curricular opportunities such as performances, festivals and competitions as this will help further develop your skills and experience of theatre.

The overall assessment is in three component parts; Understanding Drama, Devising Drama and Text in Practice. Each component part is broken down into varying sections to provide students with the opportunity to develop their understanding of drama as well as their practical skills:

Even if you choose the design route for Component 2 and 3 there will still be occasions where you will be expected to participate in practical tasks in Component 1.

A positive attitude, a high level of motivation and the ability to work co-operatively with others are perhaps more important than talent.

NB The topics and plays chosen for Component 2 and 3 are at the discretion of the drama teacher. For the examinations in Year 11 we choose topics/plays according to the theme given, those which are suitable for all boys (which can limit our choice) and which will engage the individual students and give them the best possible opportunity to gain the higher marks. In the past this has, at times, included topics/plays with strong language and hard hitting issues. If you have any concerns over your son participating in a performance of this nature in Year 11 please contact the relevant drama teacher. They will only be given a role in a play of this nature if we think they are mature enough to deal with it. Issues and the context of each play are always discussed as part of the rehearsal process.



Specification

- Component 1: Performing 30% of the qualification
 - Solo performing
 - Ensemble performing

Performance focuses on how you play your main instrument. We look at a solo piece and how you also play in an ensemble. This could be with classmates or your teacher.

- Component 2: Composing 30% of the qualification
 - 1 free composition
 - 1 composition written to a brief

Composition looks at your ability to write music. We will develop your composing style and focus on how and why melodies are created and harmonised in particular ways.

- Component 3: Listening 40% of the qualification

The final part of the course is an exam based on pieces of music you will have studied throughout the course. The music is wide ranging from Bach and Beethoven to Queen, the music of Star Wars and the songs of Broadway.

Overview

If you love playing an instrument in ensembles, compose music away from school or love listening to different styles of music then this is a perfect option for you. At GCSE level we enhance your skills learnt in Year 9 and push you on to even greater musical heights.

The course is split into three key categories: Performance, Composition and Listening.

You must be learning one or more instruments during the course and may choose pieces to perform in any style of music. **It is recommended that you take instrumental lessons and sometimes these can be arranged through school if needed.** You should see the Director of Music, for further details.

Composition tasks can be completed using Muse score, Sibelius or Cubase software. Music technology, both sequencing and recording, will be used during this part of the course. Students produce 2 compositions in different styles.

If you enjoy different aspects of music-making inside or outside of school and want to improve your skills in a focused but friendly environment, this could be the GCSE option for you!



Photography

Specification

- Portfolio of coursework (60%)
- Externally set assignment completed under controlled conditions (40%)

Overview

Photography is a creative and analytical course that combines practical image-making with the study of photographic techniques, styles and visual communication. You will learn how photographers use composition, lighting, camera settings and editing processes to create meaning and engage audiences.

The course encourages you to explore photography through both theory and practice. You will analyse the work of historical and contemporary photographers, developing the skills to recognise and evaluate techniques, visual language and creative intentions. Through topic-based projects, you will build confidence in discussing, interpreting and creating photographic images.

You will learn to use both digital DSLR and analogue SLR cameras, gaining an understanding of manual camera controls including aperture, shutter speed, ISO, depth of field and exposure. Practical workshops will develop your technical skills while encouraging experimentation and creative problem-solving.

You will have opportunities to work with a range of photographic equipment and software, including Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom and Bridge, alongside other industry-standard digital editing packages. You will learn how to organise, edit, manipulate and present images using both digital and analogue processes.

The course also provides experience of working with lighting in a variety of settings. You will experiment with professional studio lighting, flash systems and continuous lighting, as well as developing skills in using natural and location-based lighting to create different visual effects and moods.

The aims of the course are to:

- develop an understanding of how photographic images communicate ideas and meaning
- build confidence in analysing and evaluating photographic work
- develop technical skills using cameras, lighting equipment and editing software
- encourage creativity through experimentation with techniques, materials and processes
- develop independent research, planning and problem-solving skills
- explore photography in both historical and contemporary contexts
- refine and present personal ideas through a range of photographic outcomes



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