



THORNS
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Green Pathway Option Choices 2026

A guide for families



SHIRELAND
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY TRUST

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Introduction

This document is designed to guide you through the process of helping your child to choose their curriculum options for Key Stage 4. This includes information to help you prepare for the Parent Consultation Evening; and details about the subjects available. Subject specific content is provided on the academy website and can be found here www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/.

Options Pathways

There are two distinct pathways - green and blue - available for the 2026 options process. Students are thoughtfully guided into a pathway to optimise their progress based on their target grades, current attainment and individual learning requirements. No matter which pathway a student is signposted to, all students have access to the same wide range of subjects.

The Options Timeline

You have recently received documentation that outlines the stages within the options process which started February 2026. These are identified below:

Wednesday 25 February 2026 – All students attended an assembly during which the options process and timeline were shared with them.

Week beginning Monday 2 March 2026 – A variety of subject leaders presented their Key Stage 4 qualifications to students. These presentations included subjects that are less well known to our students such as Health and Social Care, Computer Science, Creative Digital Media, as well as clarifying the difference between Combined and Triple Science.

Week beginning Monday 9 March 2026 – All families will receive this options booklet which identifies the curriculum choices that students must select from along with further information regarding the Parent Consultation Evening.

Thursday 12 March 2026 – Year 9 parents evening; an opportunity for families to speak to subject teachers about their child's current attainment and suitability for Key Stage 4 courses.

Tuesday 24 March 2026 – Parent Consultation Evening and marketplace event. Families will be invited to attend a face-to-face meeting with a senior member of staff, during which your child's option choices for Key Stage 4 will be discussed and chosen. The marketplace event will allow families to meet with subject representatives who can answer any questions they may have before their child makes their final choices. You will be allocated a 15 minute appointment slot between 3.45 and 6.30pm. If the appointment you are given is not suitable then please telephone the academy on 01384 987973, or email using info@tca.shirelandcat.net to request a different time slot. **You will be able to see this appointment slot in the Guardian Consultation section on the Arbor App.**

Parent Consultation Evening

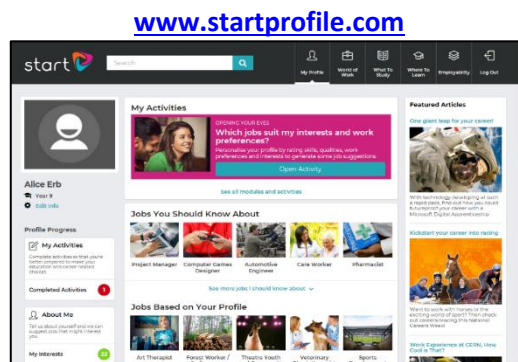
Below are some suggested questions you may like to ask your child before attending the event:

- Is there any particular career field you are interested in?
- What are your strengths? What subject(s) are you making the most progress in?
- Which subject(s) do you enjoy the most?
- What kind of training, employment or education are you considering post-16 e.g. studying A Levels, full-time vocational education at college, an apprenticeship?

There are several subjects available that students have not studied before. If your child is considering one of those subjects please ensure they are aware of the requirements of the course. Encourage them to talk to the subject leader before choosing these courses, encourage them to talk to Year 10 or 11 students who are currently doing the course.

Students should use the resources that are available to them to support their decisions. Heads of Department have shared key information with the students during the recent options assemblies. However, if your child still has unanswered questions then please ask them to speak to or email the subject teacher(s) to get those questions answered.

Your child can access an online platform for support with potential careers called startprofile. This is free to access and is often a good place to start when considering future career opportunities.



Families are encouraged to visit the Thorns subject choices website. Each Head of Department has produced a video introducing the course on offer, as well as providing detailed information explaining what is involved. Please use the following link: www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/.

Parent Consultation Evening and Marketplace Event

Tuesday 24 March

Parent Consultation Meeting – You and your child will meet with a senior member of staff. The purpose of the meeting is to guide you and your child through the choices which need to be made, in line with the skills and attributes of your child, as well as their career plans. There will be a set of questions we will ask your child during the meeting to guide the discussion and finalise their subject choices. We advise you bring along a copy of your child's report for reference.

Subject Marketplace - There will be subject teachers on hand to offer information about our Key Stage 4 courses should you wish to discuss your child's suitability for a specific course; this will take place in the Sports Hall. This information is also available on the Thorns choices website (www.thornsca.org.uk/year-9-choices/). There is no need to book appointments for the marketplace event.

Next steps following the Parent Consultation Evening

Your child's choices will have been made on **Tuesday 24 March**, however we acknowledge that some students may have a change of heart after a period of reflection. With this in mind, we will enable students to adjust subject choices up to and including **Friday 27 March**. If you would like to propose a change to your child's choices, please contact Mr Fletcher at the academy using the email address sfletcher@tca.shirelandcat.net. After Friday 27 March, class lists will be populated so changes will only be considered until the end of this academic year, and where courses still have available places.

On rare occasions a student may wish to change their option at the start of Year 10. If this scenario arises with your child, then a change **may be considered within the first 3 weeks of the new timetable for exceptional circumstances**. We will only consider a change up to and including **Friday 25 September 2026**. **Changes to subject choices will not be made after Friday 25 September**.

The Key Stage 4 Curriculum – Compulsory Qualifications

The following qualifications are compulsory; all students study them as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum:

- GCSE English Language
- GCSE English Literature
- GCSE Mathematics (Foundation or Higher tier)
- GCSE Combined Science (Foundation or Higher tier) – this accounts for two GCSE qualifications, if students choose the triple science option then they will gain an additional third GCSE qualification

All students will gain five GCSE grades purely from the core offering above. It is our aim that all students will study a total of eight GCSE or equivalent qualifications. Students are set by ability in English, mathematics and science.

The core offering will also include non-examined physical education, personal development and religious education lessons, taught in mixed ability groups. Core lessons will take up the majority of teaching hours within the week.

The Key Stage 4 Curriculum - Optional Qualifications

Your child must select **three** qualifications which will make up the remaining hours of their weekly timetable. The subjects on offer to students are:

- History
- Geography
- French
- German
- Triple Science (Students must have a target grade of 6 or higher)
- Computer Science (Students must have a target grade of 6 or higher)
- Citizenship
- Product Design (DT)
- Fine Art (Cannot be selected with Textiles Design)
- Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with Fine Art)
- GCSE Physical Education
- Drama
- Music
- Dance
- Health & Social Care
- Digital Media (ICT)

Subjects in green and yellow are GCSE qualifications, blue subjects are BTEC qualifications

Options Expectations:

- You must select at least 1 green subject
- You must select 3 different subjects
- You are only able to select a maximum of 1 blue BTEC qualification

English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The EBacc is not a qualification in its own right but rather a combination of GCSE subjects. The EBacc was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2010 to encourage students to study a broad range subjects, to help them transition to higher education courses, as well as increasing the likelihood that a student will stay on in full-time education.

The Subjects included in the EBacc are:

- English Language and English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- A language qualification
- History or Geography

Should a student wish to follow the EBacc route and gain this accreditation they should select History or Geography, French or German plus one other subject.

How to select appropriate subjects

Experience shows that when students play to their strengths they succeed; and because of this some subjects have entry requirements. Students may be restricted from studying subjects which require a specific skill if they have not demonstrated an aptitude for those subjects over the past three years, e.g. GCSE Physical Education, Music, Drama, Dance and Art. If your child is considering one of these subjects and are unsure if they meet the requirements please encourage them to speak to their subject teacher prior to the Parent Consultation Evening. You will also have the opportunity to meet with representatives from these subjects at the marketplace event.

Some students may be asked to consider specific vocational programmes which we feel will maximise their opportunities for success. Discussions have taken place with Heads of Department, the Inclusion team and senior staff to determine what guidance is necessary for each individual student.

It is important for students and families to be aware that on occasions the options an individual decides to follow may require them to switch year halves in Key Stage 4.

Targets

The Department for Education have created a measure called Progress 8, to judge schools and students based on your attainment level when you start at the Academy.

We use this measure to develop a challenging target grade for all students. It should be noted that this is not your child's destiny, targets can be increased. It will take dedication and hard work for your child to reach their target and their commitment to their studies will be the determining factor at Key Stage 4.

In the recent student reports distributed to families during the week beginning 23 February you will see your child's target grade and current achievement levels. These indicate whether staff think that the student is performing in a way which is above, below, or at, the attainment level needed to achieve their target grade at the end of Key Stage 4. Departments will have different ways of determining if students are currently on track to achieve these target grades including assessment data, classwork, end of year examinations and staff professional judgement. This information is an excellent way to identify the strengths of any student and should be reflected upon during the options process.

Final Key Tips for Students

DO:

- Read information about the subjects
- Ask teachers if you have questions
- Think about your future career
- Talk to family and friends about your choices
- Make sure you meet the entry requirements

DON'T:

- Choose a subject just because your friends are choosing it
- Choose a subject just because you like the teacher
- Choose a subject without doing the research

Options Blocks 2026

The table below lists all the options available. You will be expected to choose **one** subject from each column; **these columns do not represent the final option blocks**. Please remember that some subjects have entry requirements and if you do not meet these you will need to make an alternative choice. These choices will need to be selected during the Parent Consultation Evening on Tuesday 24 March.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Reserve 1	Reserve 2
History	Fine Art	Fine Art	History	Fine Art
Geography	Citizenship	Citizenship	Geography	Citizenship
Triple Science	GCSE PE	GCSE PE	Triple Science	GCSE PE
French	Product Design (DT)	Product Design (DT)	French	Product Design (DT)
German	Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with fine Art)	Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with fine Art)	German	Textiles Design (Cannot be selected with fine Art)
Computer Science	Drama	Drama	Computer Science	Drama
	Music	Music		Music
	Dance	Dance		Dance
	Health & Social Care	Health & Social Care		Health & Social Care
	Digital Media (ICT)	Digital Media (ICT)		Digital Media (ICT)
	Computer Science (Grade 6 target for entry)	Computer Science (Grade 6 target for entry)		Computer Science (Grade 6 target for entry)
	Triple Science (Grade 6 target for entry)	Triple Science (Grade 6 target for entry)		Triple Science (Grade 6 target for entry)
	History	History		History
	Geography	Geography		Geography
	French	French		French
	German	German		German

Subjects in green and yellow are GCSE qualifications, blue subjects are BTEC qualifications

Although we will make every effort to run all of the courses listed above, a course may not be viable if there is very low demand. We will always endeavour to support students in following their first-choice courses. If this is not possible, students will be contacted at the earliest opportunity.