

Options Evening

Wednesday 25th February 2026

- Subject Showcase
 - Meet subject specialists in the Sports Hall from 6-8pm
- Options Presentation for Parents – Theatre Hall
 - 6:30pm
 - 7:15pm



Testbourne
Community
School

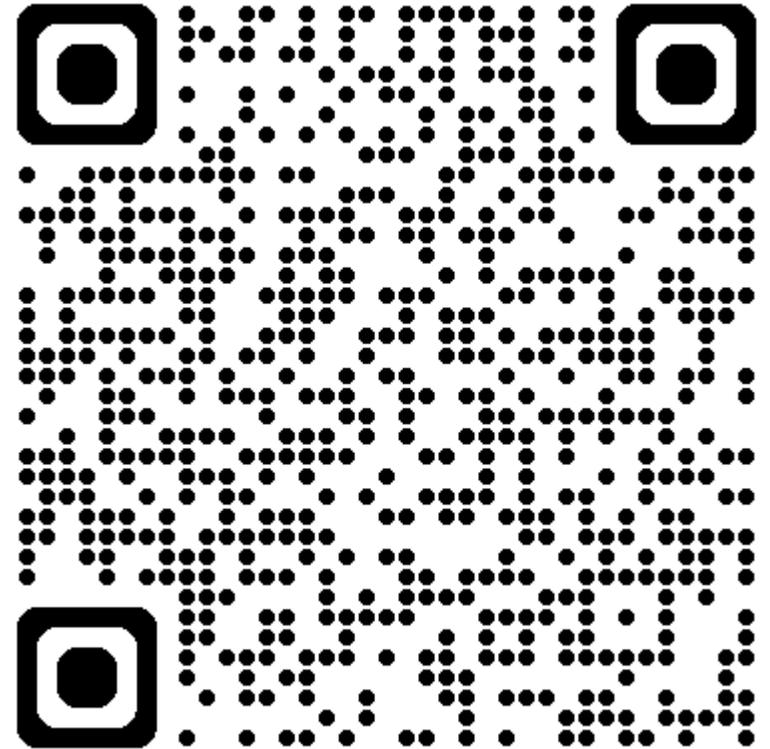


Welcome to Year 9
Options Evening
Wednesday 25th February 2026

Dr Wilson – Assistant Headteacher



Options Evening Information Booklet

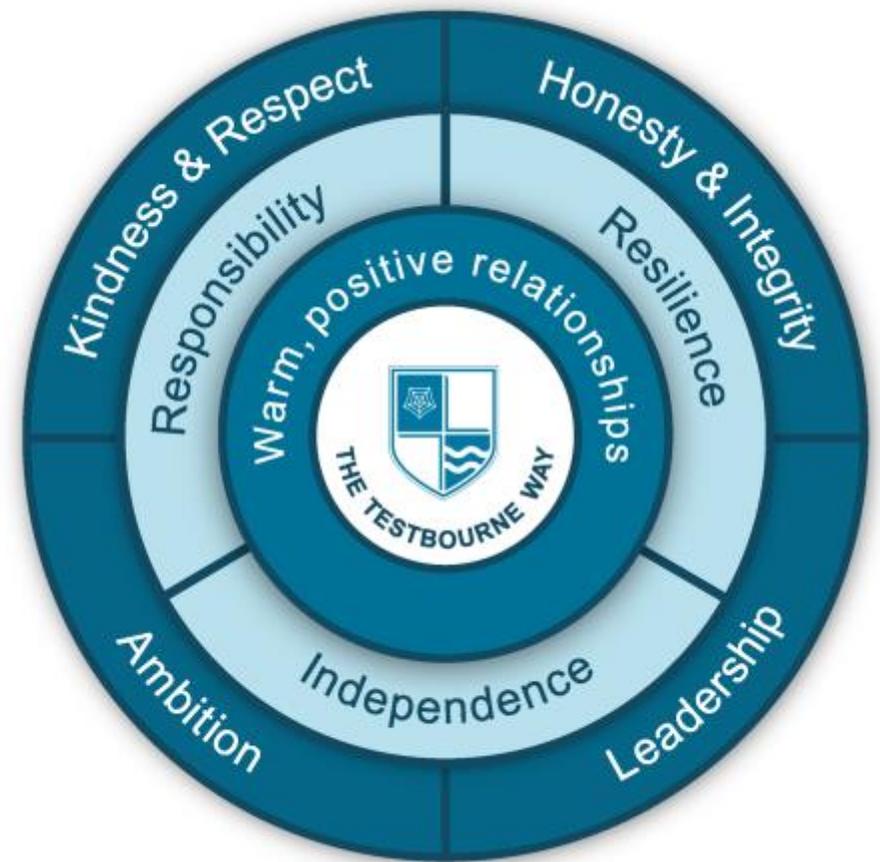


Ms L. Cartridge – Head of Year 9



The Testbourne Way

- We place great value on the importance of helping children become more independent, resilient and responsible.
- Year 9 students will assume responsibility for considering and choosing their Key Stage 4 options.
- They will independently make and submit their options choices using an online portal.



Testbourne Standards of Excellence

- Our standards of excellence are the cornerstones of our school ethos and exemplify how we want children to conduct themselves:
 - **Kindness and respect**
 - **Honesty and integrity**
 - **Ambitious learning**
 - **Leadership**
- Throughout the Year 9 Options process, we want your child to consider which option subjects will help them to achieve excellence during their final years at TCS.

How students should choose their options...

- Don't choose based upon friends/teachers – friendships and teachers can change.
- Choose a range of subjects to give a balance – career plans can change, so opt for a suite of subjects that will provide options.
- Choose subjects that develop useful skills for the future.
- Choose subjects that are enjoyable – students will be studying their option subjects for the next two years!

Commitment to subjects

- Some of our specialist subjects need students to have extra-curricular commitment to ensure their success.
- Ensure that your child checks the criteria for each subject carefully before making their choices.
- *Do they participate in a sports team for PE?*
- *Do they have peripatetic music or singing lessons for Music?*
- *Are they willing to perform their Dance or Drama work in front of the camera and to an audience?*

Options and Careers

- From my experience, choosing the subject that you enjoy is imperative – my GCSE options were Food Technology (which helped when I went on to be a pastry and private chef!), History, French, and Music.
- I enjoyed the practical element of Food Technology, and the written elements of History.
- Our interests and wants change over time – if you had asked me when I was 16 what I wanted to do with my life, teaching would have been the last answer I would have given you!

Good questions for your child to ask...

- What subjects am I good at?
- What do I want to be?
- What subjects motivate me and make me want to be there in the classroom?
- What subjects will help me take the next steps in my life?

Dr Wilson – Assistant Headteacher



A curriculum for excellence

- 80% of our Y9 students have middle or high prior attainment.
- The curriculum must cater for ***all*** our students – whatever their starting point – without closing doors.
- We want to ensure that our students have the opportunity to truly achieve excellence.
- We want to ensure that students develop deep knowledge and understanding of their subjects so that they can succeed in the new more challenging exams.
- We want to ensure that students leave us with the best chance of future success.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum objectives

- Quality not quantity.
- Develop greater depth of knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure that there is good *learning*.
- Equip students for a more competitive and demanding future.
- Instil a sense of social and cultural responsibility.
- Promote a healthy, active lifestyle.
- Fulfil the statutory requirements for students' education.

In order to deliver the objectives

- All students will study English, Maths and Science over an increased number of lessons compared to Year 9.
- Statutory RE will be taught as a discrete, non-examined core subject. It will not be offered as a GCSE subject at TCS in September 2026.
- Statutory PSHE, RSE and post-16 preparation will be delivered as a discrete, non-examined core subject - **Personal Development**.
- Core PE will be taught as a discrete, non-examined core subject, but additionally can be taken as a GCSE option subject.

Options Subjects – 2026

- **Art** (cannot be studied with Art Photography)
- **Art Photography** (cannot be studied with Art)
- **Child Development** (L1/2 Cambridge National – cannot be studied with Health & Social Care)
- **Computer Science**
- **Dance**
- **Design & Technology** (cannot be studied with Engineering or Food)
- **Drama**
- **Engineering** (L1/2 Vocational Award, cannot be studied with D&T or Food)
- **Food Preparation & Nutrition** (cannot be studied with D&T or Engineering)
- **Geography**
- **Health & Social Care** (L1/2 Cambridge National – cannot be studied with Child Development)
- **History**
- **Modern Foreign Languages** (French and Spanish)
- **Music**
- **Physical Education**

Option Subjects – GCSE or vocational

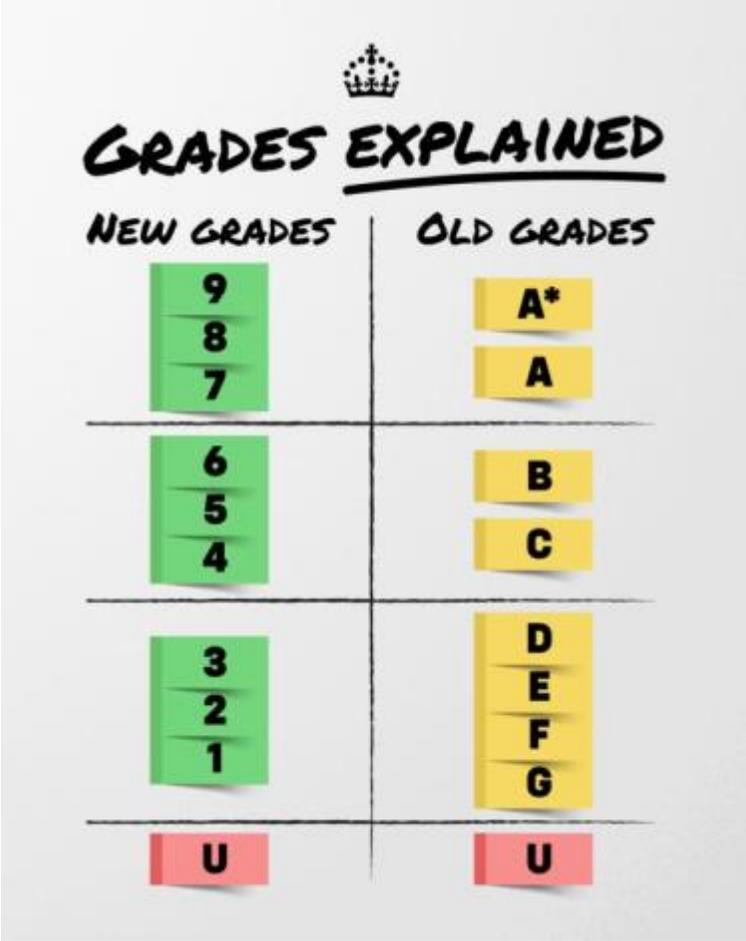
- Most of Testbourne's options subjects are GCSEs.
- Child Development and Health & Social Care are Cambridge National Awards.
- Engineering is a Level 1/2 Vocational Award.
- Child development, Health & Social Care and Engineering are vocational qualifications combining practical work with subject and theory content.

Grades - GCSEs

- GCSEs are graded from 9-1.
- 9 is the highest grade.
- 1 is the lowest grade.

- **Standard pass = 4**
- **Strong pass = 5**

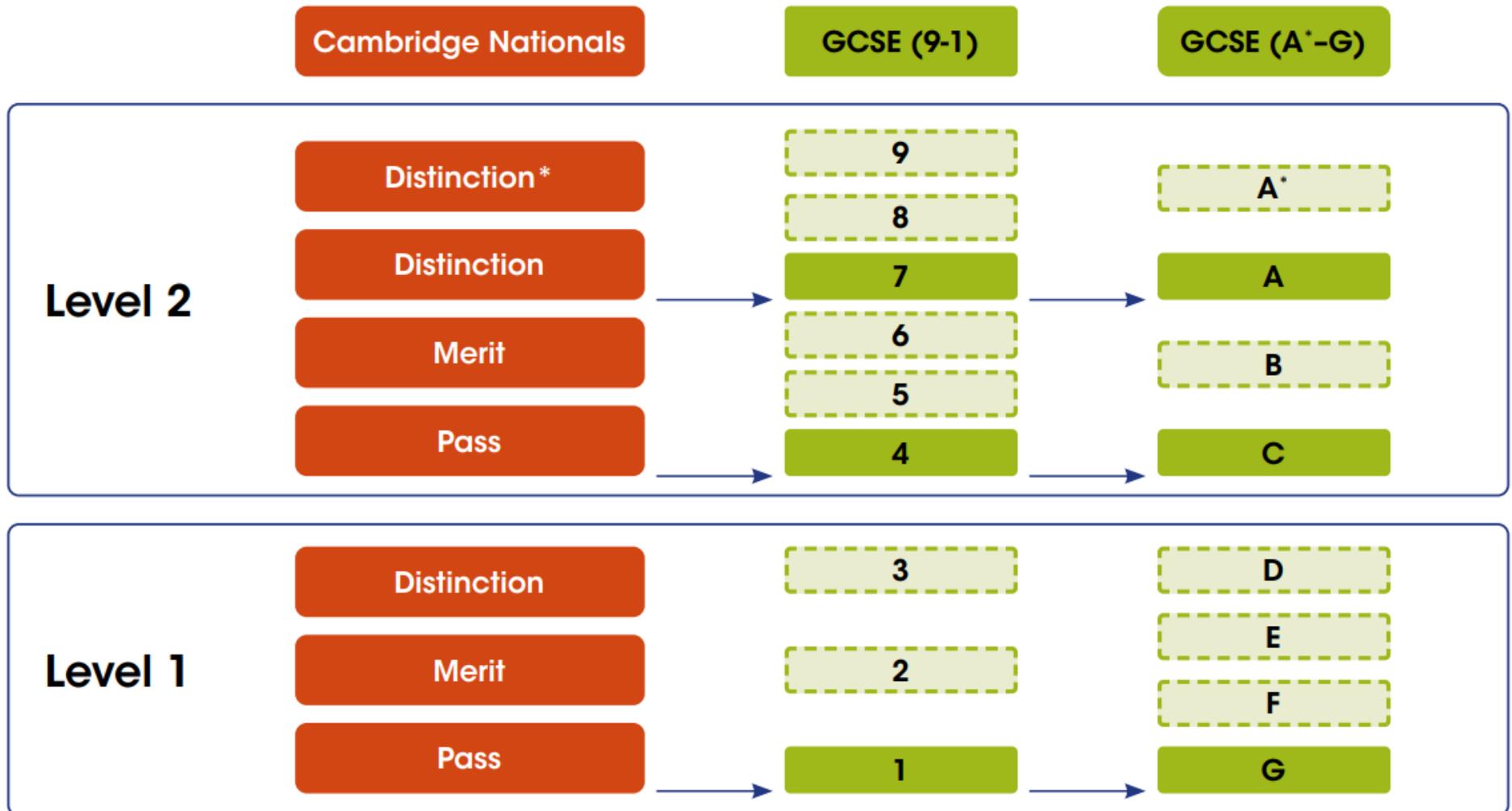
- Combined Science is double graded
- 9-9, 9-8, 8-8, 8-7 ... 2-1, 1-1.
- **Standard pass = 4-4**
- **Strong pass = 5-5**

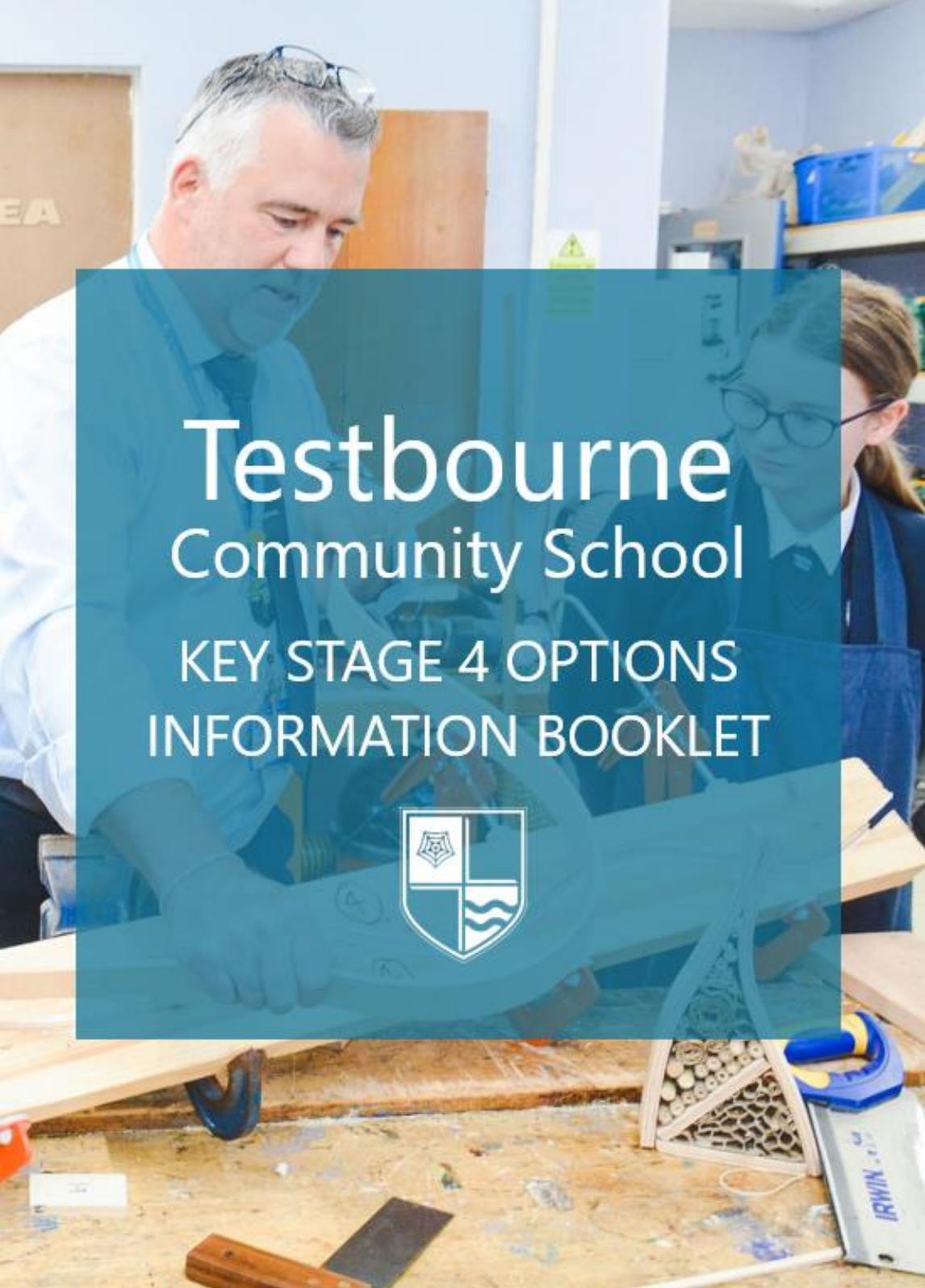


GRADES EXPLAINED

NEW GRADES	OLD GRADES
9 8 7	A* A
6 5 4	B C
3 2 1	D E F G
U	U

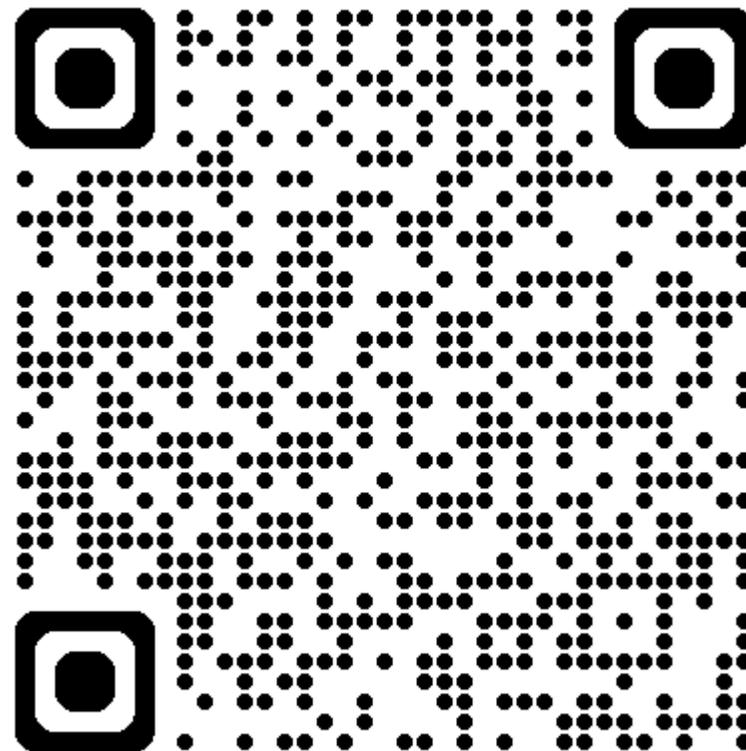
Grades – Vocational Subjects





Testbourne Community School

KEY STAGE 4 OPTIONS
INFORMATION BOOKLET



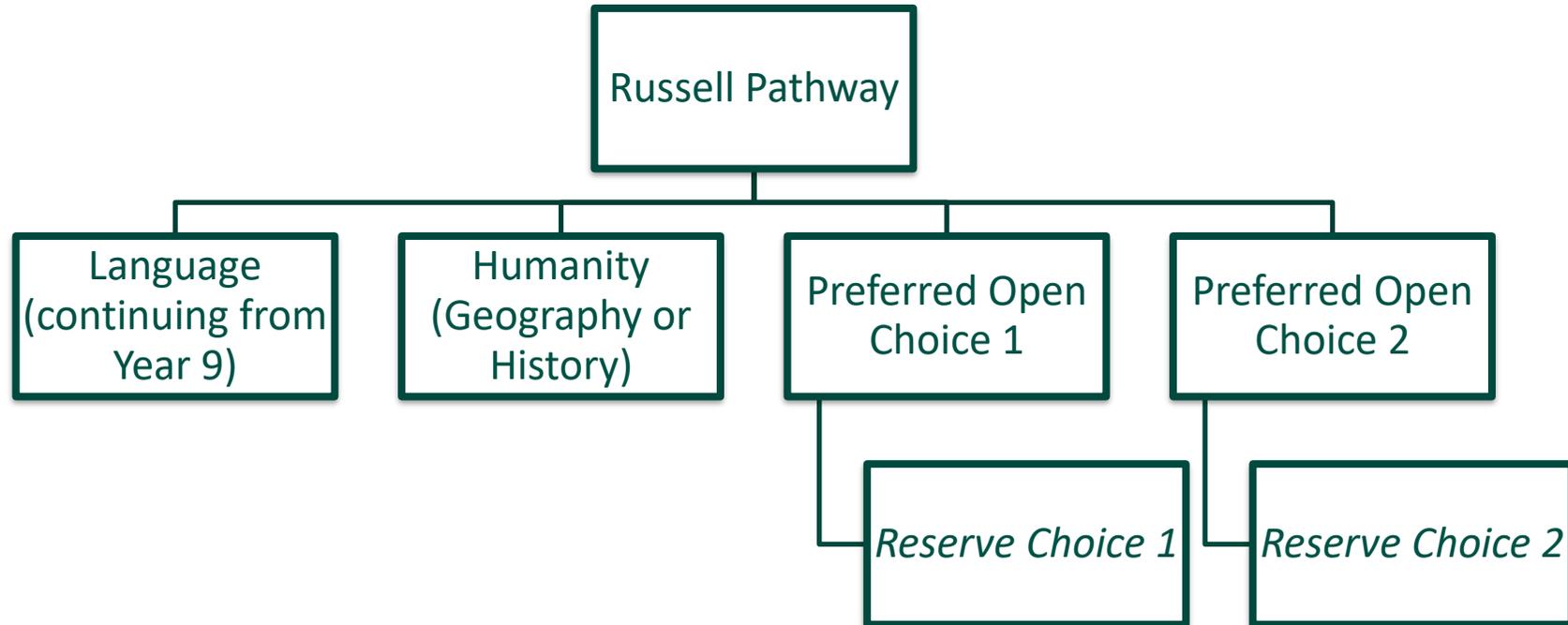
[Options - Testbourne Community School](#)

Year 9 Options Pathways

- The '**Russell**' pathway – name inspired by excellence in British universities.
- The '**Open**' pathway.

The Russell Pathway

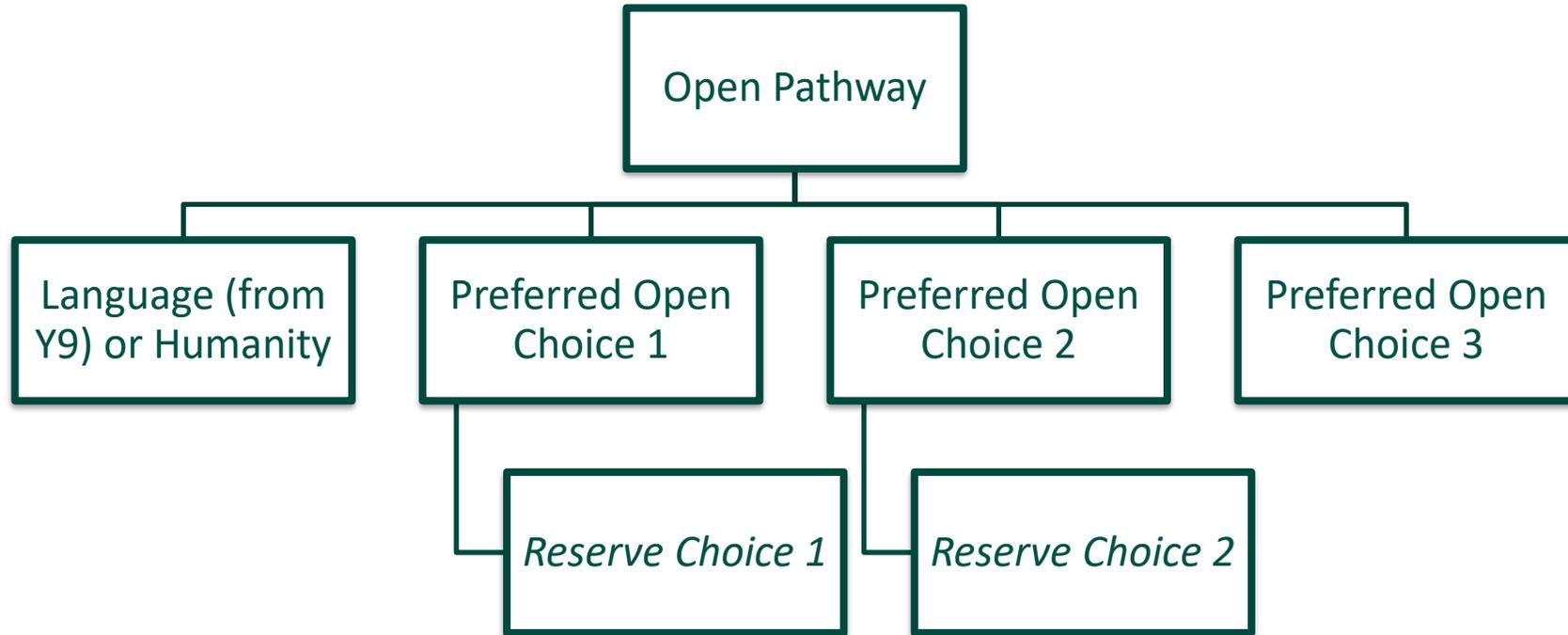
- **Academic focus for our most able learners.**



- **A broad, balanced pathway which provides an excellent platform for further and higher education.**

The Open Pathway

- A flexible pathway for students not on the Russell pathway.



- There is no restriction on Open Pathway students selecting the same suite of options as a Russell pathway student.

Russell Pathway or Open Pathway

- We look at how all students are progressing and make a recommendation for them to follow either the **Russell Pathway** or **Open Pathway**.
- When students log in to the SIMS Options website to choose their options subjects, they will find out their recommended pathway.
- All students should consider a broad suite of options subjects which will provide access to a wider range of opportunities after post-16.
- If a student wants to get advice about their recommended pathway, they can see their tutor, subject teachers, Ms Cartridge or Dr Wilson.

Benefits of a language subject

- Studies have demonstrated there are cognitive benefits in learning a second language, such as improved memory, attention span, and achievement in English.
- Studying a modern foreign language aids development of a desirable skills set for future education and employment.
- Many employers view applicants who can speak a foreign language more favourably than those who can't.
- Learning a second language is challenging but fun – it offers further opportunities for travel and appreciation of different cultures.

Preferred Choices

- We will try our best to accommodate all options preferences but there is **no guarantee** that a course can run.
- We may be constrained by:
 - Number of students choosing the subject
 - Specialist accommodation, facilities and staffing.
- Students **must** select **two reserve choices** in case we are unable to accommodate all four of their preferred choices.

Year 9 Options Timeline

Date	Stage
Wednesday 25th February 6-8pm	Options Evening - presentation for parents in Theatre Hall (6:30pm, 7:15pm) - subject showcase in Sports Hall (6-8pm)
Wednesday 4 th March	Y9 Parents Evening – online from 4-7pm
Friday 6 th March	Y9 Options submission window opens – online submission by students (www.sims-options.co.uk)
Friday 27 th March	Y9 Options submission window closes.
Summer term 1	Review of choices & allocation of students to classes. Confirmation of option allocations sent to students.



Year 9 Options

Frequently Asked Questions



Frequently asked questions

- **Does it matter when a student submits their options choices? Is it first come, first served?**
- *No, students just need to choose and save their options by the deadline. If they need help, they should speak to their tutor.*
- *We can track students as they submit their options choices – support will be offered to those students who need it to ensure they submit their choices by the submission deadline.*

Frequently asked questions

- **I'm not sure about the pathway I'm on. Who should I talk to?**
- *Talk to your tutor first. They can confirm which pathway you're on and offer you guidance about choosing your subjects.*
- *Your pathway is recommended based upon your progress reports from Years 7-9. If you need to swap pathway, this is something your tutor can arrange for you.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Can a student study Geography and History together?**
- *Yes, if a student chooses to and we can accommodate this when timetabling – make sure that the student speaks to their Geography and History teachers and understand what is involved before making this choice.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Can a student study Art and Art Photography together?**
- *No – Art and Art Photography both require significant portfolios of work to be produced as part of the course. We therefore ask students to choose either Art **or** Art photography.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Can a student study Engineering, Food Preparation & Nutrition, and Design & Technology together?**
- *Due to the specialist facilities required there are limited spaces available in these subjects, so we are not able to allocate students to multiple technology subjects.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Child Development is a new course. Will it definitely run in September?**
- *All subjects depend upon the number of students opting to study that subject and the number of staff available to teach it.*
- *If there is not enough interest in a subject, or if there are not enough teachers available, subjects may not run.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Can a student study a different language to their Year 9 language?**
- *When a student chooses a language GCSE, their language must be the one they studied in Years 7-9.*
- *If a student is fluent in another language, please speak to our Exams Officer as we may be able to facilitate them completing an additional GCSE in that language.*

Frequently asked questions

- **Can a student study triple science as an option subject?**
- *Triple Science (separate sciences) is not an option subject – students are offered the chance to study the separate sciences as part of their GCSE studies – the Science department will communicate advise students and parents about their child’s suitability to study the course.*



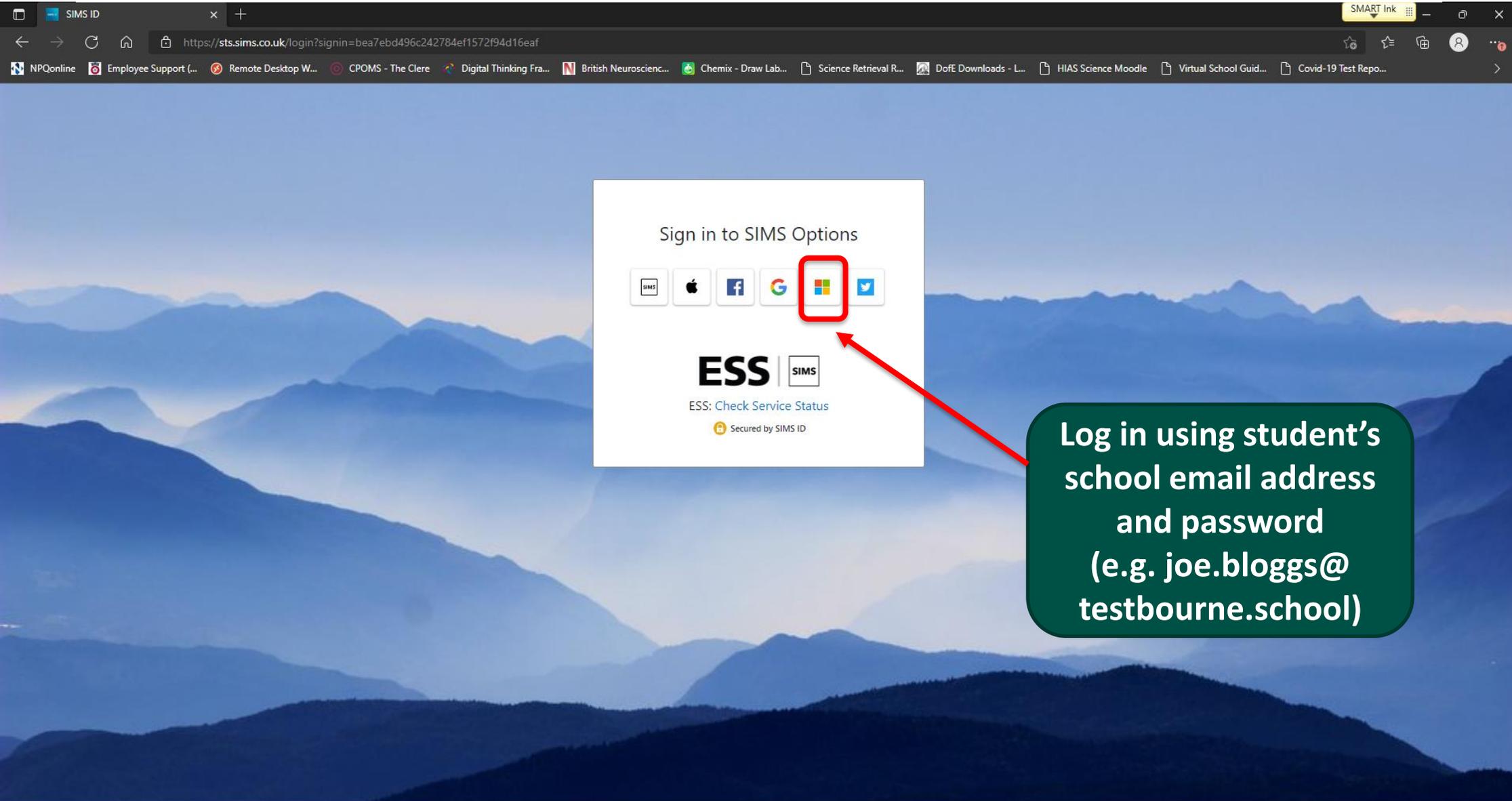
Year 9 Options

Selecting Students' Options Choices



Logging in - Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://sts.sims.co.uk/login?signin=bea7ebd496c242784ef1572f94d16eaf>. The page content includes the heading "Sign in to SIMS Options" and a row of social login icons: SIMS, Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Twitter. The Microsoft icon is highlighted with a red square, and a red arrow points from a callout box to it. The callout box contains the text: "Log in using student's school email address and password (e.g. joe.bloggs@testbourne.school)". Below the icons are the "ESS" and "SIMS" logos, the text "ESS: Check Service Status", and a "Secured by SIMS ID" badge.

Log in using student's school email address and password (e.g. joe.bloggs@testbourne.school)

Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac

Plan Status **Design**

Save Show Notes Hide Notes

Personal Details

Russell Route

Russell Pathway Options

Russell Group pathway students should make the following choices:

- **Option 1:** Humanity - **one preferred choice**
- **Option 2:** Language - **one preferred choice**
- **Option 3:** Open block (including Art or Art Photography) - **one preferred choice** and **one reserve choice**
- **Option 4:** Open block (including Design Technology or Food Preparation & Nutrition) - **one preferred choice** and **one reserve choice**

Choose preferred options by clicking on subject name.

Humanities

Select one preferred choice for your humanity subject.

You have chosen 0 of 1 courses from this list

Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>	History GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>
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Languages

Select one preferred choice for your language subject.

You have chosen 0 of 1 courses from this list

French GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>	Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>
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Open Choice 1

Select one preferred choice and one reserve choice from the subjects below.

Priority Choices

(Total Choices: 0)

Course priorities do not need to be sorted by order of preference.

No priority courses selected.

My Choices

(Total Choices: 0)

To change your order of preference select a choice and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

No courses selected.

My Reserves

(Total Reserves: 0)

To change your order of preference select a reserve and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

No reserves selected.

Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac

Humanities
Select one preferred choice for your humanity subject.
You have chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list

Languages
Select one preferred choice for your language subject.
You have chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list

Open Choice 1
Select one preferred choice and one reserve choice from the subjects below.
You have chosen 1 of 1 courses and 1 of 1 reserves from this list

Priority Choices (Total Choices: 2)
Course priorities do not need to be sorted by order of preference.

My Choices (Total Choices: 2)
To change your order of preference select a choice and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

My Reserves (Total Reserves: 2)
To change your order of preference select a reserve and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

Choose reserve options by clicking on subject reserve button.

Subject	Course	Reserve
Art Photography	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Art	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Computer Science	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Dance	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Drama	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Engineering	BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2	Reserve
French	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Geography	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
History	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Health and Social Care	BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2	Reserve
Music	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Physical Education	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve
Spanish	GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course	Reserve

Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac

Review selected choices. All tick boxes should be green.

The screenshot displays the SIMS Options website interface for selecting a student's options. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Humanities:** Select one preferred choice for your humanity subject. The user has chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list. The selected course is **Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course**. A green tick box indicates the selection.
- Languages:** Select one preferred choice for your language subject. The user has chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list. The selected course is **Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course**. A green tick box indicates the selection.
- Open Choice 1:** Select one preferred choice and one reserve choice from the subjects below. The user has chosen 1 of 1 courses and 1 of 1 reserves from this list. The selected course is **Art GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course** (Open Choice 1), and the reserve choice is **Art Photography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course** (Open Choice 2). Both have green tick boxes.

On the right side, there are three summary panels:

- Priority Choices (Total Choices: 2):** Course priorities do not need to be sorted by order of preference. The list includes:
 - 1 Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Humanities
 - 2 Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Languages
- My Choices (Total Choices: 2):** To change your order of preference select a choice and click the position in the list you would like to move it to. The list includes:
 - 1 Art GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 1
 - 2 Drama GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 2
- My Reserves (Total Reserves: 2):** To change your order of preference select a reserve and click the position in the list you would like to move it to. The list includes:
 - 1 Art Photography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 1
 - 2 Dance GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 2

Adding a supporting comment – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac

Plan Status **Design**

Save Show Notes Hide Notes

This course is also available in Open Choice 2 You have selected this course in Languages

Open Choice 2

Select one preferred choice and one reserve choice from the subjects below.

You have chosen 1 of 1 courses and 1 of 1 reserves from this list

Computer Science GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>	Dance GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>	Drama GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Choice <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>
Design Technology GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	Engineering BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>	French GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>
Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>You have selected this course in Humanities</small>	History GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in other lists.</small>	Health and Social Care BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>
Music GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>	Physical Education GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>	RE GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>This course is also available in Open Choice 1</small>
Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve <small>You have selected this course in Languages</small>	Technology Food GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	

School Approval

School Comments

Student Comments

Add any comments here

Add a comment to support option choices (e.g. sports achievement, performing arts achievement)

Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via PC/Mac

Save Show Notes Hide Notes

Plan Status **Design**

Humanities

Select one preferred choice for your humanity subject.

You have chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list

Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course
This course is also available in other lists.

History GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course
This course is also available in other lists.

Languages

Select one preferred choice for your language subject.

You have chosen 1 of 1 courses from this list

French GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course
This course is also available in other lists.

Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course
This course is also available in other lists.

Open Choice 1

Select one preferred choice and one reserve choice from the subjects below.

You have chosen 1 of 1 courses and 1 of 1 reserves from this list

Art Photography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	Art GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	Computer Science GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve This course is also available in Open Choice 2
Dance GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve You have selected this course in Open Choice 2	Drama GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve You have selected this course in Open Choice 2	Engineering BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 Reserve This course is also available in Open Choice 2
French GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve This course is also available in other lists.	Geography GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve You have selected this course in Humanities	History GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve This course is also available in other lists.
Health and Social Care BTEC Tech Award Level 1/2 Reserve This course is also available in Open Choice 2	Music GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve This course is also available in Open Choice 2	Physical Education GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve This course is also available in Open Choice 2
PE GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	Spanish GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Reserve	

Priority Choices

(Total Choices: 2)
Course priorities do not need to be sorted by order of preference.

- Geography**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Humanities
- Spanish**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Languages

My Choices

(Total Choices: 2)
To change your order of preference select a choice and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

- Art**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 1
- Drama**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 2

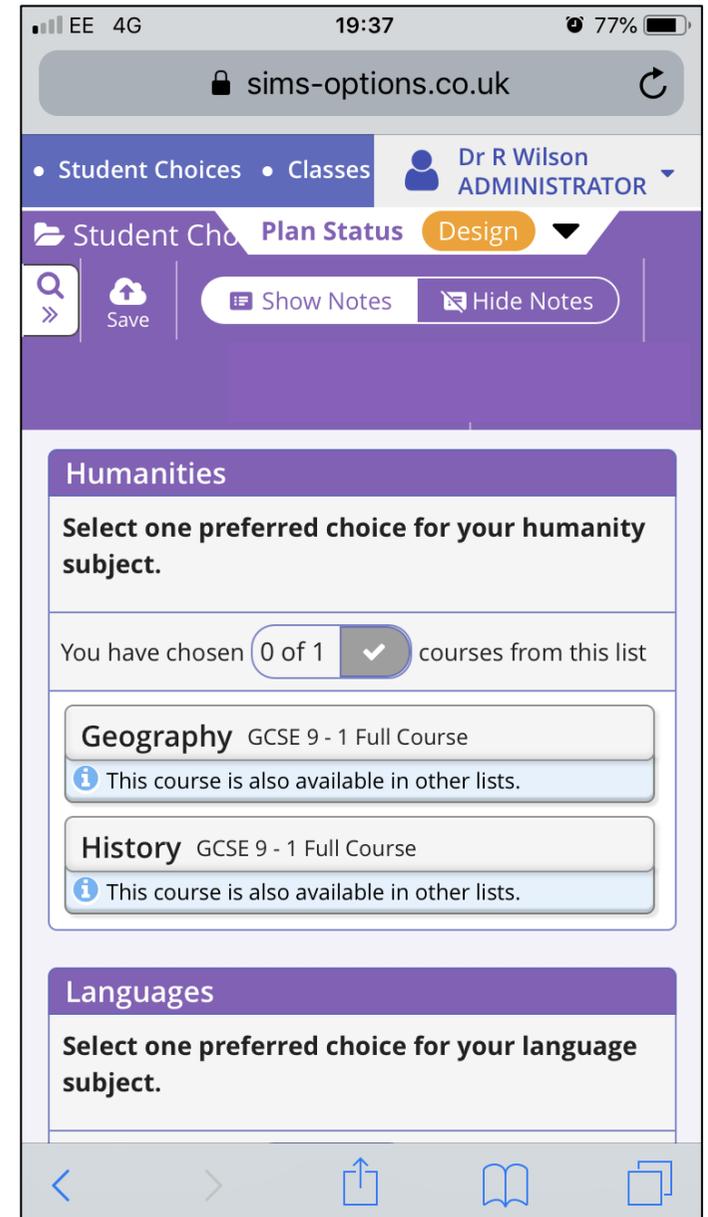
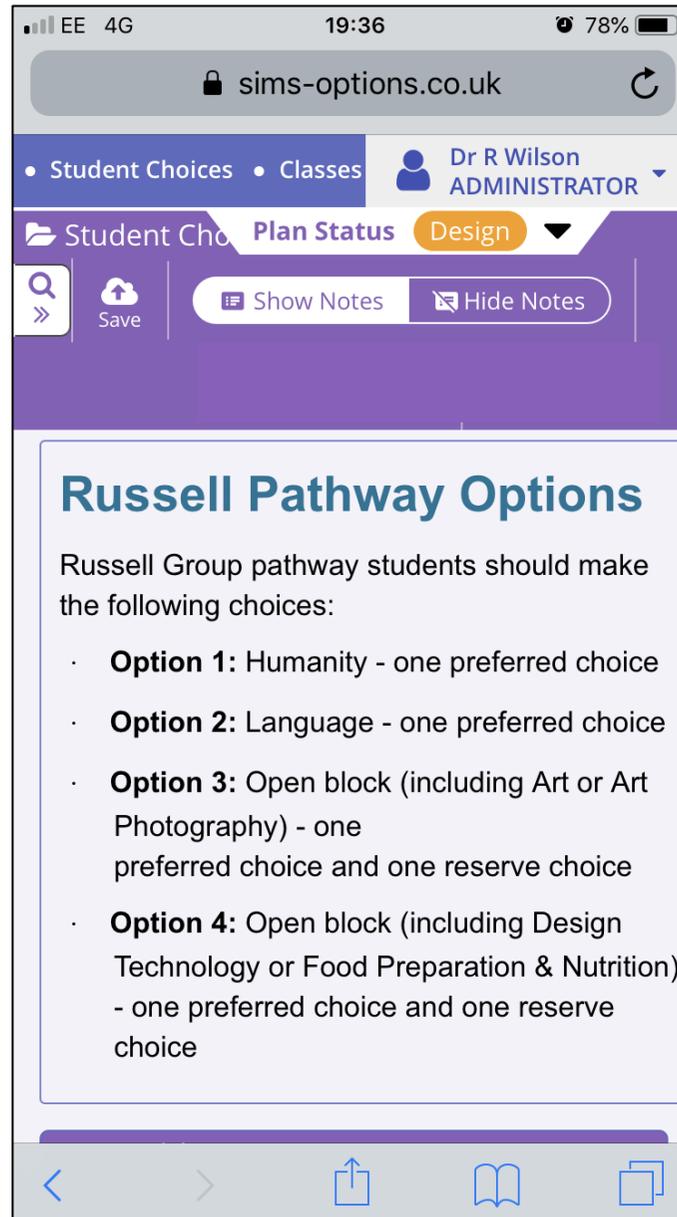
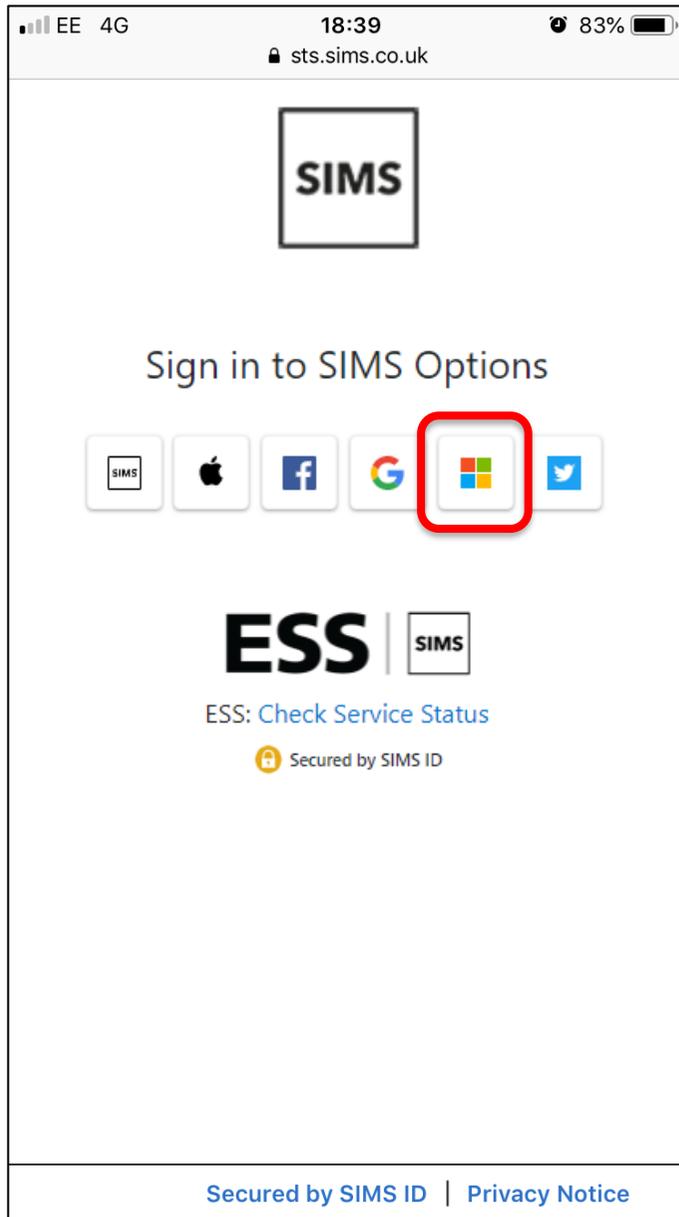
My Reserves

(Total Reserves: 2)
To change your order of preference select a reserve and click the position in the list you would like to move it to.

- Art Photography**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 1
- Dance**
GCSE 9 - 1 Full Course Open Choice 2

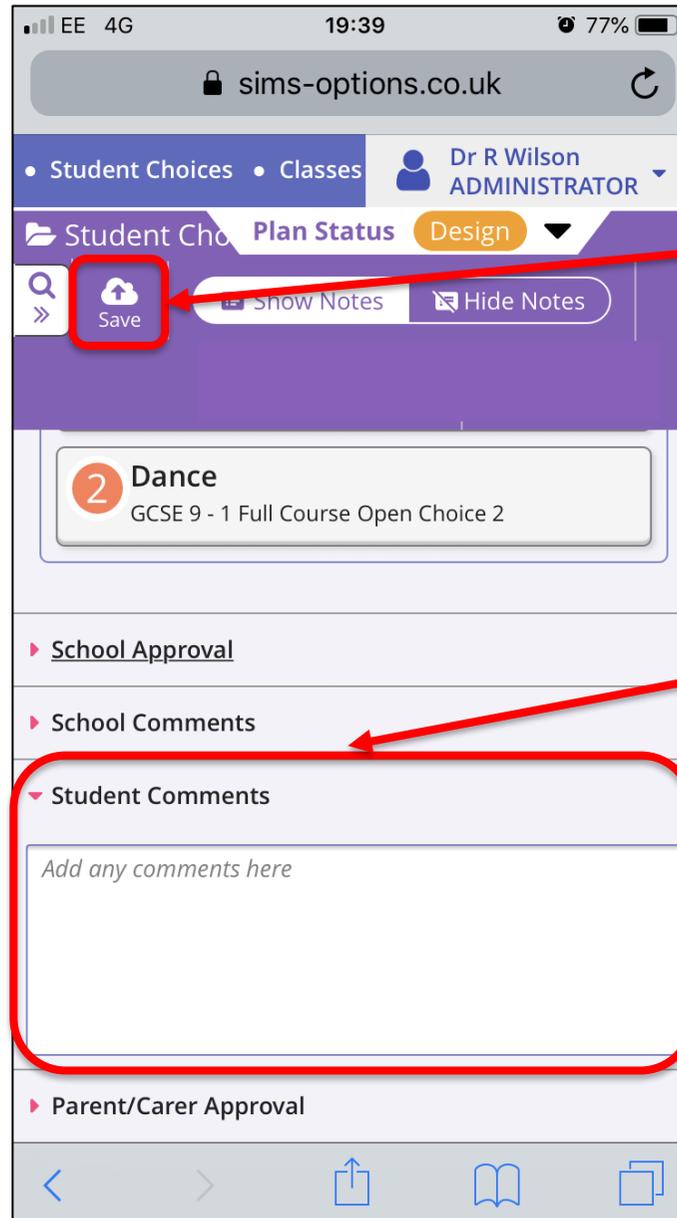
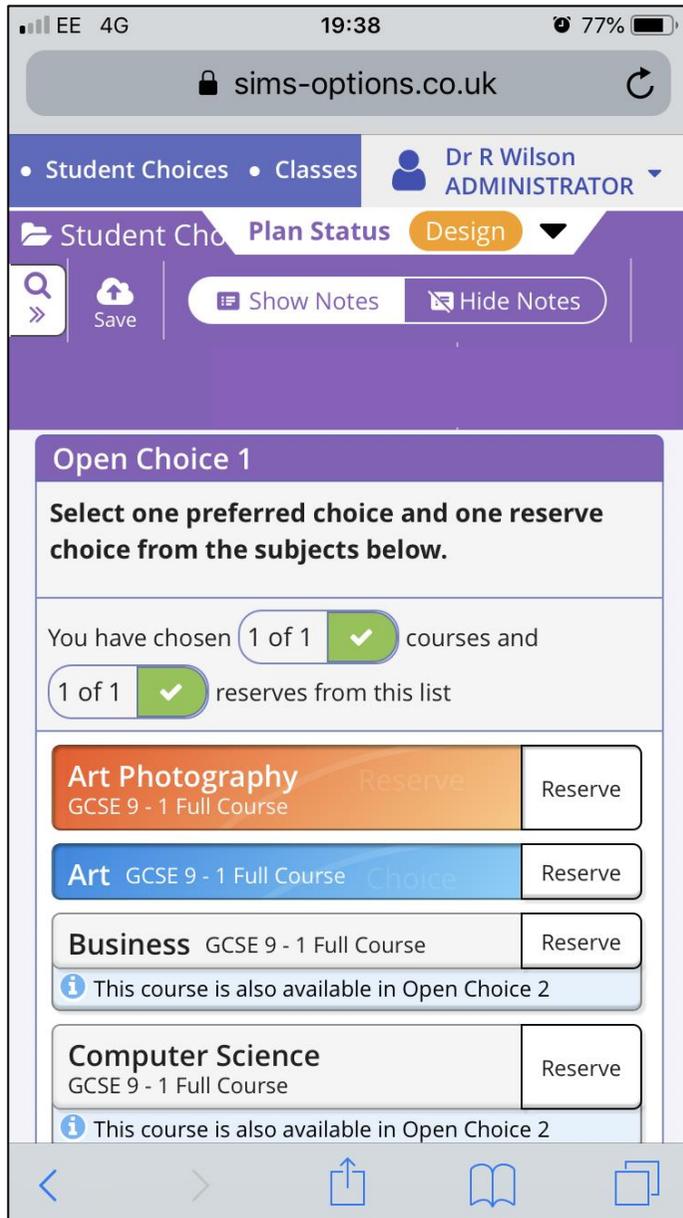
Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via mobile site



Selecting a student's options – Students

www.sims-options.co.uk via mobile site



**Remember to click save.
This submits the options
choices for review by
the school**

**Add a comment to
support option choices
(e.g. sports clubs, music
lessons, any special
achievements)**

Approving a student's options - School

- Senior Leadership Team will review all students' options.
- Pathway and subject criteria **must** be met.
- All students need to have selected **reserve choices for each of their open choices.**
- Meetings will be arranged with students where necessary (e.g. we are unable to allocate all of a student's preferred choices or student hasn't met subject-specific criteria).

Thank You

***Please visit the subject showcase in the
Sports Hall (6-8pm)***

www.testbourne.school

