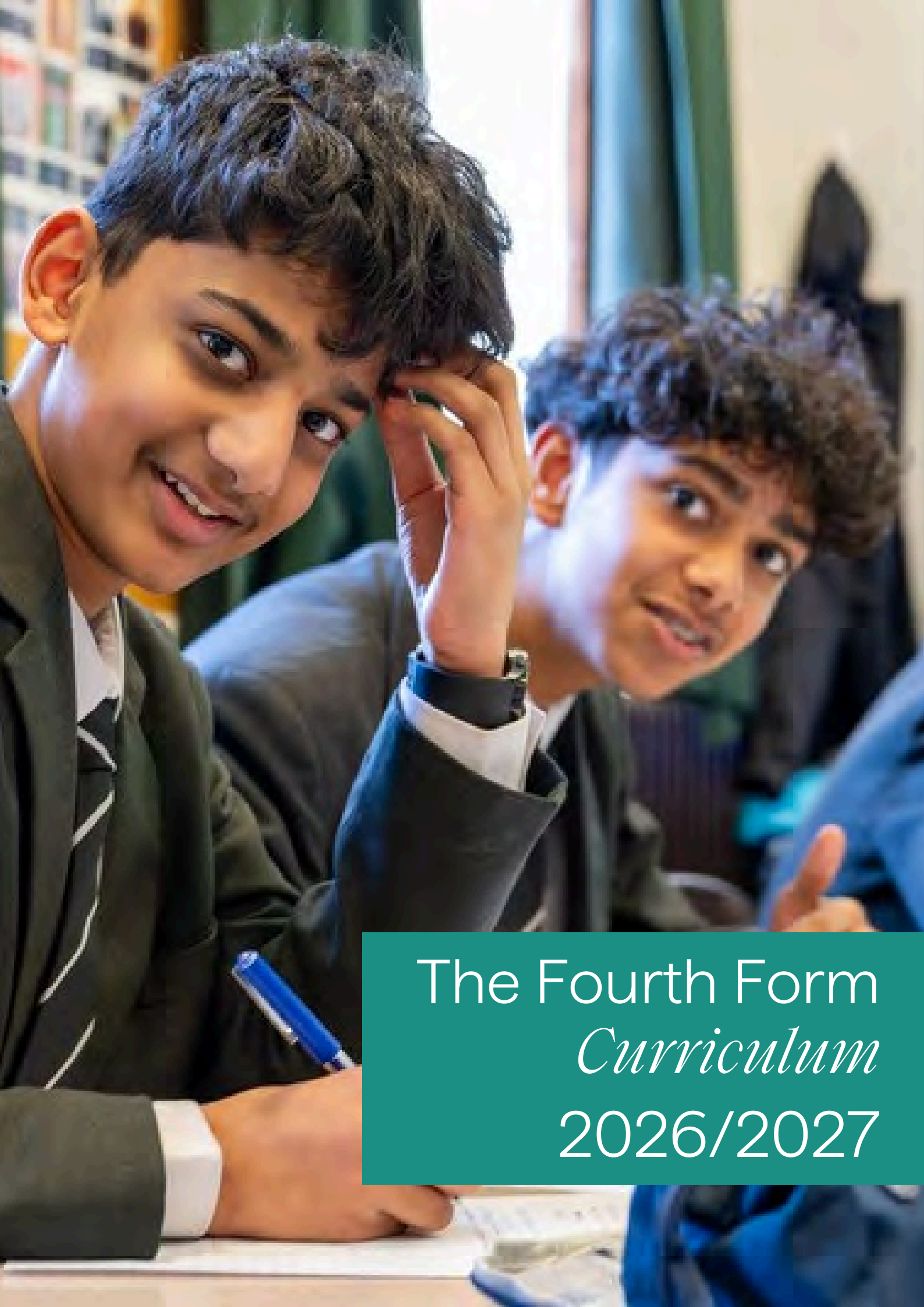
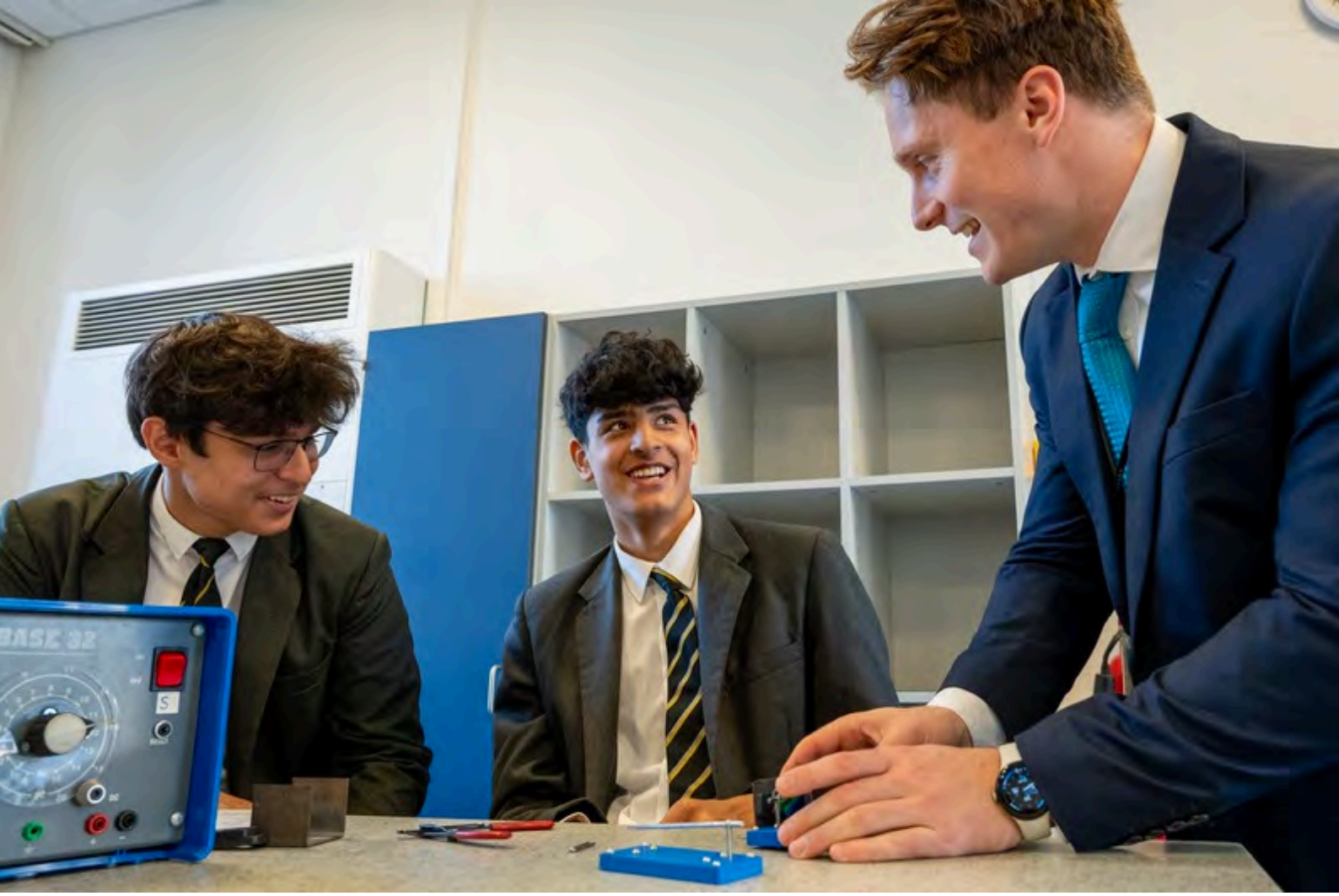


The Fourth Form
Curriculum
2026/2027



We are a community forged from innovation, courage, confidence, inspiration and joy.

We inspire a life-long love of learning and provide academic excellence for pupils, staff and support staff. We have a culture of collaboration, coaching and challenge. We are brave in our pursuit of excellence: progress is driven by innovation and reflection.

The co-curriculum supports and enriches the academic curriculum through clubs, societies, trips and publications. We celebrate and explore the relationship between academic excellence and co-curricular participation: at different points in a school career, the focus upon each element will vary. Similarly, we maintain the balance between our focus upon promoting excellence and wide participation. We provide co-curricular opportunities to develop the character of everyone in the school - pupils, staff and support staff. All aspire to become more well-rounded, charming, confident, enthusiastic and independent. We work as a team, creating lasting bonds within our community.

We care for each other in a civilised, collaborative and respectful manner. That spirit creates a safe, inspiring and inclusive environment that promotes self-esteem. Our focus is upon the individual and the community: knowing and caring for everyone in the school, whether pupil, staff or support staff, creates a place in which people feel they belong, have shared purpose and have a role to play. We use our strength to serve the wider community beyond the school.

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Introduction to the Fourth Form



We are looking forward to welcoming you and your sons to Merchant Taylors' School on Wednesday 29th April. The evening serves two purposes: to welcome you to the school and to provide guidance about the academic choices available. We begin the process of integrating your family into the school as you meet your Heads of House and guidance will come from our Academic Deputy Head, Dr Evans, about the academic choices available. The evening will start in the Great Hall with a welcome from the Head Master, Mr Everson.

5.30pm	Welcome
6pm	Time with your Head of House
6.30pm	Parents will have drinks and canapes with Heads of Department Pupils will have dinner with Heads of House
7.30pm	Pupils will be brought to parents to depart
7.45pm	Evening ends

The start of the Fourth Form at Merchant Taylors' is an exciting time for all boys to make a big step up and they will have opportunities to challenge themselves well beyond the curriculum. The school has magnificent grounds, world-class facilities and more than 450 years of history. Tutors and Heads of House are compassionate, stabilising guides, and the learning environment is shaped by motivated, skillful teachers. The school has engaged and ambitious Governors and a Head Master with a strong vision for academic excellence and holistic wellbeing. I have worked here for over ten years and can vouch for the dynamic and exciting opportunities on offer. It is a pleasure to work here, alongside inspiring colleagues as well as the boys who make Merchant Taylors' School what it is and give it its distinctive character. I have every confidence that you have made an excellent choice in choosing a school that will bring out the best in your son and support him through any challenging times.

This booklet should provide a starting point to consider academic choices, and on the evening, Dr Evans will outline the options process. As well as considering where their academic talents and interests lie, we also encourage the boys to discuss subject choices with their current teachers and within their Tutor Groups. Beyond the curriculum we have high expectations that the boys will fully engage with the range of academic and Co-curricular opportunities that exist so as to thrive and enjoy their time here.

A comprehensive welcome booklet and further details of these events, as well as the induction day for new boys in September, will be sent to you in due course.

I look forward to seeing you on 29th April to welcome you all into the Merchant Taylors' community.

Ellie Lemoine
Head of Lower School (Years 8 and 9)
elemoine@mtsn.org.uk

If you have any questions that you would like addressed on the evening that you would like to share in advance, please email questions@mtsn.org.uk

Introduction to the Curriculum

Welcome to you all, both those of you joining us for the first time and those of you who have been part of the community at Taylors' for the last two years. One thing is sure, no matter how long you have been here, you will all be part of the same Fourth Form and will move through the School as a collective and united year group. We wish you every success.

The first step on your academic journey into the Fourth Form at Taylors' starts here. The Fourth Form Curriculum is an interesting one; you are taught a wide range of subjects as part of your studies. Alongside those subjects which form part of the core, we have a number of subjects which are optional for you to choose between. The following table illustrates the makeup of the Fourth Form Curriculum:

Core Subjects	Optional Subjects
English	French
Maths	German
Biology	Spanish
Chemistry	Greek & Latin
Physics	Latin
Computer Science	Classical Civilisation*
Geography	Music
History	Drama
Religious Studies	Sports Science
Art & Design	
Design & Technology	
Physical Education	
PSHE	

* Classical Civilisation does not progress to a GCSE course, so is a subject offered in the Fourth Form only

Each pupil must select three subjects from the Optional column which he would prefer to study, including one of French, Spanish and German. The rationale behind our thinning out the curriculum a little is that boys in the Fourth Form do an awful lot. This is a preliminary step towards their choosing their GCSE options in late March of the Fourth Form. We have run this programme for a good number of years and have found that the balance has led to the boys in the Fourth Form having a manageable breadth in their timetable and enjoying the subjects they study.

We do our very best to accommodate subject preferences, but timetabling constraints do mean that not everyone can always have exactly their top three choices; for this reason, we do ask for a back-up choice too. It is not possible for pupils to choose both Drama and Sports Science in the Fourth Form. However, it is possible to pick up Sports Science as a GCSE option in the Summer Term of Fourth Form without having studied it during the Autumn and Spring Terms.

This booklet outlines the content and structure of those Optional Subjects. Each Head of Department writes about their subject. Their email addresses are in the handbook at the end of their outlines. Do please contact them if you have any subject specific questions. At the end of the booklet, you will find some frequently asked questions and the answers to them. I hope they are of use.

Jane Evans
Deputy Head (Academic)
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Modern Foreign Languages
French, German & Spanish

Modern Languages

Modern Languages are core subjects for GCSE in nearly all leading Independent Schools in the UK. At Merchant Taylors' we lay considerable importance on the necessity to reach at least a competent level in a **minimum of one foreign language**. We would encourage strong linguists to study two or even three modern languages in the Fourth Form as you will benefit from the many links and similarities between European languages and at the same time gain a different cultural perspective in each. In addition, you will gain a better grammatical understanding of your own mother tongue! We aim to achieve a positive language-learning experience that will enthuse you to continue your study of languages into the Sixth Form, university and to become lifelong language learners. You will acquire knowledge of contemporary and historical issues gleaned through the study of films, multimedia resources and short literary extracts and you will gain a study skillset that is different to all other subjects taught in the school. Recent Government initiatives have sought to counteract the desperate shortage of linguists in the UK and, needless to say, your university and career prospects are considerably enhanced with a language qualification.

Why do we teach French, German and Spanish? Because they are relatively easy to learn, and this ensures quick progress and a level of mastery that could not be achieved in the same time in a character-based or tonal language. The CBI conducts a business survey every year which, among other things, highlights the most useful languages for British businesses. Every year for the last five French, German and Spanish have come out on top with remarkably little change in percentages. In the Divisions and the Fifth Form, you will be able to study two modern languages and many of our best candidates choose to do so.

For German and Spanish we offer ab initio courses that assume no prior knowledge, so they are not suitable for those of you with extensive prior knowledge, at least at this point in your MTS career. As with French, the courses are delivered over two hours per week of tuition. We cover the basic topics and vocabulary and grammar that one would expect to cover in a new language and that lead on to the study of the language for IGCSE. We focus on all four skill areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking and we teach grammar explicitly to ensure a firm grounding.

For French we assume prior knowledge (2 years+ of study) and build on the Common Entrance & 13+ syllabus, progressing rapidly to IGCSE-style tasks. In the Fourth Form we study a film in each language about an important historical event to engender an awareness of the history, culture and traditions of the country. We also make use of online resources via IT platforms to reinforce learning of vocabulary and grammar through video clips and online games and resources. Merchant Taylors' has featured in an episode of Easy German, which is available to watch on YouTube. We also encourage pupils to get involved in activities beyond the curriculum such as Linguachef and the poetry competition in the Spring Term where every pupil learns and recites a short poem. We offer plenty of language trips in the Middle School – a French exchange or study visit, a German exchange and a Spanish study visit or exchange. Essentially, we place a lot of emphasis on communication and cultural awareness as these are the key skills to take away for use in later life.

There is no modern language that is better or easier than the other - it's more important to choose with the heart and where your interests lie. Spanish has many similarities to French in terms of grammar and vocabulary. German has many similarities to English and borrows some grammar from Latin. **For native speakers or semi-native speakers, we would ask you to avoid picking a language in which you are almost fluent and focus on a new language in the Fourth Form.** You will have the opportunity to pick up your background language in the Divisions or even sit the IGCSE qualification outside the timetable if you are extremely proficient. **It should be borne in mind that if you do not pick French, German or Spanish in the Fourth Form, you will not currently be able to pick these languages**

up in the Divisions unless you are a native/semi-native speaker. By the end of the Fourth Form, you should be in a position to decide whether you are suited to studying two modern languages and many of our pupils decide to do so to IGCSE and beyond.

Richard Bailey
Head of Modern languages
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Fourths French Exchange - 2024



Classical Languages

Greek & Latin (joint course)

The study of Classical Greek presents unique and exciting challenges for pupils who are fascinated by the workings of language, and who are interested in the ancient world. Like Latin, it is a language that is governed by changes to the endings of words but possesses more irregularities and complexities – as a result it is more challenging, but a richer language. We recommend the study of Classical Greek to those students who have enjoyed their experience of Latin and want to push themselves further. Each year around thirty pupils (two classes) choose to study the demanding and rewarding joint Greek and Latin course.

Time will be split evenly between the two languages, spending two hours in Week A studying Greek, and two hours in Week B studying Latin. We assume that all pupils are beginners in Greek, though knowledge of the alphabet before starting in September will be helpful. If your son has studied Greek already, we shall provide additional materials, to ensure that he is being stretched. Teaching will mainly be from Taylor's Greek to GCSE textbook, although we will also dip into Streamlined Greek and the department's own resources.

In their study of Latin, the pupils will cover the same material as those studying Latin only, in an accelerated manner. This means that by the end of the Fourth Form, those studying just Latin and those studying Greek and Latin will be up to the same point in the 'Latin Practice Exercises' course book and fully prepared for either the Latin or Greek GCSE, or indeed both. If time permits, we will also study a 40-line sample of a Latin prose author, in order to give the students experience of analysing ancient literature in its original text.

In the Divisions we aim to complete the GCSE grammar prescription in Greek by the end of the year. This then allows the students to focus on their set text authors, Homer and Herodotus, for the majority of the Fifth Form, whilst also revising the linguistic aspects of the course. By the end of the Fourth Form, around a dozen pupils tend to have seen the light at the mouth of Plato's cave and choose to continue their study of Greek. Around forty students go on to the Latin GCSE.

Latin (without Greek)

All pupils at Merchant Taylors' have studied Latin in the Third Form, and most of those who join at 13+ have studied it for several years already. It is therefore unsurprising that many pupils – around sixty each year – choose to continue their study of Latin (in addition to about thirty pupils studying the joint Greek and Latin course).

The first few weeks of the Autumn Term will be spent revising thoroughly the fundamentals of the language, to ensure that all pupils have a secure grasp of the basics, and by the end of the year pupils will have covered a large part of the grammar required for the GCSE. The main resource is 'Latin Practice Exercises', supplemented with materials from Taylor's 'Latin to GCSE'.

The most exciting aspect of the Latin course is the introduction to an extract of authentic Roman text. All pupils taking Latin will study around 40 lines from Apuleius's Metamorphoses, working on their translation skills as well as learning some advanced literary criticism terminology. Not only is this a rich text to study in its own right, but it also provides an experience of what is required at GCSE and allows pupils not only to demonstrate their sensitivity towards literature, but also to develop an appreciation of texts which have survived the judgment of 2000 years.

At the end of the Fourth Form course, students will be fully prepared to choose Latin as a GCSE option. Around forty students go on to the Latin GCSE.

If you have any questions at all about the study of Greek and Latin, and whether it is suitable for your son, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Michael Bull
Head of Classics
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Classics Trip to Greece - 2024



Classical Civilisation

Classical Civilisation

Classical Civilisation is a bespoke course, written by Merchant Taylors' teachers, which cherry-picks the most interesting and important parts of Greek and Roman history, which are then studied from a variety of angles. Unlike the Latin and Gratin courses, Classical Civilisation contains no study of language. This is an ideal course for pupils who have not studied Latin before but would like to learn about the Greeks and Romans, or for those who have enjoyed the historical and mythological elements of a Latin course but would like to experience less of the linguistic side. Alternatively, this course is a good complement for the Gratin or Latin courses, for aspiring Classicists who want to study not only the Greek and Latin languages, but also the rich and varied cultures that used them.

Pupils have probably encountered the Classical world earlier in their school careers, in the form of myths, gladiators and chariot racing. In this course, we will look at Ancient Greek myth, religion, art, architecture and literature through a variety of sources. We will study the Greek Pantheon, festivals, the hero Heracles, the structure of Greek temples, the rituals of prayer, sacrifice and burial, before finishing the year with a study of Books 9 and 10 of Homer's Odyssey (the Cyclops and Circe). Lessons will involve plenty of vigorous discussion and pupils will learn how to approach an ancient source - whether a written extract in translation, archaeological remains, or Classical art.

Fourth Form Classical Civilisation is a standalone course, and not currently offered as a GCSE at Merchant Taylors', although it is offered as an A Level. The skills gathered from this course will come in very useful for future study of English Literature, History, Art and RP at GCSE and, of course, Classical Civilisation at A Level. We do offer both Latin and Greek GCSE; please see 'Classical Languages' for more details.

Michael Bull
Head of Classics
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Music

Music

Whilst the Fourth Form Music curriculum lays the foundations for further study at GCSE and beyond, our ethos is that music is for everyone. We aim to provide a curriculum that is fun, engaging, and challenging, giving all pupils the opportunity to develop their ability in performing, composing, and appraising. Music is an art form which combines expression with communication and is found at the centre of cultures across the globe and throughout time. We believe that every pupil has the right to explore and inherit that culture.

In the Fourth Form, the music curriculum focuses on 'When?'. Pupils study music through the ages, including the development of Western music from the Baroque to modern eras. Understanding broad historical brushstrokes and stylistic development over time enables us to contextualise the music we play and hear, leading to a deeper appreciation of why music sounds the way it does, and enriching our palette of analytical tools. The curriculum is divided into three main historical topics: the Baroque Concerto, Variations in the Classical & Romantic eras, and Pop Songs. Pupils receive two hours of music each week. Music lessons always include a practical element, with pupils learning through hands-on experience of the different styles.

But the curriculum is not simply three topics: there are threads of learning which weave them together. Each topic develops key musical skills which transcend genre and style. Pupils develop their sense of pulse, practical musicianship, ability to work with others, reflective rehearsal practice, use of music technology, listening and analytical skills, and musical literacy.

As a creative, expressive, and performative subject, we believe academic lessons are enriched by co-curricular music and vice versa. There is a huge range of musical activities offered to all pupils at Merchant Taylors'. Currently over 320 instrumental and singing lessons are delivered each week in school by a team of 23 visiting music teachers. There are 22 ensembles, ranging from full-size orchestras and choirs to jazz bands and chamber music, which rehearse every week to perform in concerts throughout the year. Pupils are encouraged to combine academic and co-curricular music options to facilitate the greatest progress and to have the most rewarding experience of the subject.

Content

Pupils develop skills in performance, composition, and appraisal through the practical study of the Baroque Concerto, Variations in the Classical & Romantic eras, and Pop Songs.

Assessment

Topics are assessed through a combination of performing, composing, and appraising activities.

End of Year Grade

This is comprised of an end-of-year listening and notation test (60%) and a solo performance (40%). The performance is recorded in lessons prior to the end-of-year listening paper; it should be at least 1 minute in length and can be freely chosen by the performer (normally in consultation with their instrumental teacher).

Simon Couldridge

Director of Music

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Daniel Tonks

Head of Academic Music

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Drama

Drama

Boys considering taking GCSE Drama must opt for Drama in the Fourth Form as preparation for GCSE Drama begins in the Fourths.

Drama in the Fourth Form allows the boys to explore a range of creative and critical thinking skills. They are encouraged to become imaginative and confident performers. They develop the key skills needed to begin GCSE Drama, which are also relevant to various careers. Pupils learn to present themselves in public with confidence. They are required to collaborate, communicate, and negotiate with others, to think analytically and evaluate effectively.

Pupils study and perform a range of plays exploring the journey from page to stage. Highlights currently include texts such as Lord of the Flies by Nigel Williams, The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde and Blood Brothers by Willy Russell, one of the GCSE AQA Drama texts. They are also introduced to key practitioners as a way of approaching character and text.

Alongside the practical elements of the course, pupils are introduced to drama theory as preparation for the GCSE course. They watch live theatre and study digital theatre pieces which currently include productions of One Man, Two Guvnors by Richard Bean and Shakespeare's The Tempest.

Pupils are also introduced to Technical Theatre and Design: Lighting, Sound, Set design and Costume.

Finally, many pupils who opt for Drama on the curriculum also audition for and take part in the Junior Play. Those who don't have the opportunity to watch and review school productions during the year as part of the course.

Cheryl Clarke
Director of Drama
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Taylors' Production of Oliver



Sports Science

Sports Science

Sport is one of the most popular Co-Curricular options at the school and Sports Science is an ever popular subject at GCSE and A Level. The aim of the Fourth Form Sports Science course is to inspire a passion and interest in the world of Sports Science. It would prepare students for GCSE Physical Education, giving them an engaging introduction about how to improve their sport, health and well-being.

The course will look at many different elements of a traditional Sports Science curriculum without directly duplicating any GCSE content. There will be a strong practical emphasis with an assignment at the conclusion of each half-term. Units of work will include:

Term 1 - Training programmes and physical health

Each pupil will learn the steps in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating their own self-designed training programmes.This will help them to understand: why they might undertake different types of training; how to measure certain aspects of fitness; and how to ensure a training programme is appropriate, safe, effective and achievable. The majority of this will be practical based with an evaluative assignment at the end of the term. This will give boys a sound understanding of how to utilise these skills in making sure they look after themselves physically throughout their life.

Term 2 - Practical sports psychology, diet & nutrition

Each pupil will learn some of the theory behind sports psychology and performance. This is helpful in providing pupils with a good understanding of practical ways to approach the mental side of sports and exercise.Practical workshops and experiments will allow the pupils to experience the impact of psychology first-hand.

Pupils will also look at their approach to diet and nutrition with a focus on its importance for health and well-being and sports performance. Pupils will discover what constitutes a balanced diet and some simple tools to begin to practically apply this knowledge. The pupils will engage in a hands-on exploratory approach and challenge their behaviours and habits around food along the way.

Term 3 - Research project, practical coaching & officiating

Each pupil will be tasked with producing their own individualised research project in an area of interest from across the course.They will develop their research skills and critical thinking to help evaluate and analyse an area of interest.

Practical coaching and officiating will also give the pupils an opportunity to develop a sporting interest other than solely performing. Pupils will be taught how to coach and officiate in a number of sports with an opportunity to gain an official qualification.

Luke Peace
Head of Sports Science
ljp@mtsn.org.uk



Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions - Options

Can I choose all three modern languages?

Yes, absolutely. If you are a talented linguist then you should feel no hesitation in immersing yourself in all three modern languages for the entirety of your Fourth Form.

Can I take a subject for GCSE which I don't study in the Fourth Form?

Not normally, so if you know you want to do something for GCSE you should choose it now too. However, pupils can take Sport Science GCSE without taking it in the Fourth Form in consultation with the Head of Department.

I like more than three of the optional subjects. Can I squeeze in four or five?

Sadly not. There are only so many teaching slots in the timetable and as such we are only able to offer boys three of the optional subjects.

I don't like modern foreign languages, can I do three subjects that don't include modern languages?

It is a curriculum requirement at Merchant Taylors' that every boy does at least one modern foreign language during the Fourth Form. This reflects the value placed on languages by universities and employers, as well as the high value which we hold language acquisition and the cultural benefits of learning a new language in. Of course, very many boys take more than one language, especially when the Classical languages are included.

Are there extra-curricular options that I can pursue even if I don't choose a subject in the Fourth Form?

Yes, there are a vast array of extra-curricular options at Taylors' and you can be involved even if you don't study the subject. The most obvious of these are our extensive Games programme, our opportunities in Music and the chances to perform in Drama. It is true though that if you wish to do languages, then the principal place to really do these is in the classroom, although we do have a foreign language cooking club (Linguachef) which many Fourth Formers love.

Are you able to guarantee that the preferences I have indicated will be able to be fulfilled?

No. We do our best to meet every requested preference, but timetabling constraints mean we are not able to guarantee it, so every year we have to also allocate some boys to their back-up choice.

Who should I talk to about my choices?

These are pupil choices first and foremost – they are the ones taking the classes! However, parents will certainly have an informed opinion and pupils should discuss and agree choices with them. Pupils should also talk to their current subject teachers for their thoughts on taking a given subject.

How will my subject preferences be registered?

Following the 'Welcome to the Fourth Form Evening' we will send you a link to our system where you will be asked to register your preferences.

Frequently Asked Questions - Life in the Fourth Form

How is my House chosen?

Unless you have a family connection, Houses are usually chosen at random.

How do I get my coloured House top online?

Visit the PlayerLayer website and look up Merchant Taylors' School Northwood, remember to click on the Senior School Merchant Taylors' School Northwood - Senior Boys Sizes - Merchant Taylors' School Northwood - Teams . Tops are £34.

What is the Tutor Group?
This is a group of around 14 boys who may range from the Third Form to Upper Sixth Form led by a member of staff who will stay with you throughout your time at School.

Who is my first point at contact at School?
Your Tutor, for any matter.

What is the difference between a Tutor Group, Form and class?
Tutor group is your pastoral support. Form is with boys in your year and for this you have a different Form Teacher. Your class is the boys you have your lessons with.

What happens if I get lost?
Don't worry! Ask anyone and they will direct you. Teachers will not be cross if you are late in your first two weeks and after that you will have a secure knowledge of the layout of the School. You will be given a map!

How are the English/Maths sets decided, and can I move between them?
At the start of the Fourths, there are no sets for neither Maths nor English. In November, tests in Maths will determine the band you are placed into, ranging from band A to C, with band C pupils receiving more support. In English you may be in a smaller group that benefits from additional support which is based on your Upper Third experience or information we have from your previous school. Classes are dynamic and not set in stone. There is no stigma attached to any class – on the contrary, it is a privilege to receive any extra support.

How can I see the Clubs on offer?
Go to the Merchant Taylors' website and look through the booklet at home to plan what you might try Clubs & Societies - Merchant Taylors' School - aim for at least three!

How do I sign up for a Club?
Just turn up! If it's not for you, don't go back. Be brave and give lots of Clubs a try. The only fixed commitment is a Music ensemble.

Do I need a mobile phone?
Mobile phones are not allowed to be used in School. You will not need a smart phone. If your parents would prefer you to have a phone for safety reasons, we recommend a basic or 'dumb' phone. Any phone or smart technology brought onto the School site will need to be stored in a Yondr Pouch, which will be given to you by your Head of House at the beginning of term.

What sports kit do I actually need in the first week of term?
For rugby trials in the first term it is gumshield, boots, playing shirt, shorts and socks. PE kit is black polo, shorts and a mid-layer.



MERCHANT TAYLORS'
School

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