

DARLAND HIGH SCHOOL

OPTIONS BOOKLET



YEAR 9 OPTIONS – 2026-2028

Foreword

Choosing your Key Stage 4 options is an exciting milestone and marks the beginning of a new and important chapter in your learning journey. For our Year 9 students, this is a genuine opportunity to take greater ownership of your education by selecting three subjects that reflect your interests, strengths and future aspirations. The choices you make now will shape the experiences, skills and qualifications you gain over the next two years, opening doors to further study, training and careers beyond school.

Each course offers something different, whether you enjoy creativity, problem-solving, performance, practical learning or academic challenge. We strongly encourage you to read the booklet thoroughly, listen carefully to the options presentation on 8th January, and speak to subject teachers to gain a clear understanding of what each course involves.

To parents and carers, please be reassured that this is a fully supported and guided process. Take time to absorb the information in this booklet and join us on 15th January at our Year 9 Parents' Evening, when you will have the opportunity to speak directly with subject staff and ask any questions you may have. Together, we can help every student make informed, confident choices for a successful future.

We are here to support you each step of the way.

Kind regards,

Joanne Lee

Headteacher

The Options Process

You have now arrived at the point in your school career when you can make some choices about the courses you want to study at Key Stage 4. This booklet has been designed, not only to help you to make your option choices, but also to outline the courses you will be required to study as part of the core curriculum. We believe it is vital that you follow a broad and balanced curriculum that builds on what you have already learned, and which provides maximum opportunity for your future studies and career.

We provide a range of courses, which prepare you for the next stage of your learning at college or sixth form, at university and in the world of work. Our Key Stage 4 core curriculum is made up of the following subjects:

Core Cymraeg (1 GCSE)

English Literature and English Language (2 GCSEs)

Mathematics and Numeracy (2 GCSEs)

Science (2 GCSEs)

Skills Challenge Certificate (GCSE equivalent)

Core PE (non-examined)

PSHE (non-examined)

This leaves you with three further choices to make, and it is very important that you consider the options carefully.

Most GCSE and Level 1 or 2 courses will lead directly on to A-Levels/Level 3 courses and this is an important consideration, which you should discuss with your teachers, as some A-Level or Level 3 subjects cannot be studied if you did not follow them at GCSE/Level 2. You will find details of all the courses we offer in this booklet - read it carefully and listen to the advice of your parents and teachers.

The deadline for return of options choices is **6pm on Thursday 5th February**, via Microsoft Forms – this will be shared on Class Charts.

You can ask a range of people in school for advice, including your Form Tutors, subject teachers and Pastoral Manager. Your Form Tutor will discuss your choices with you and will be able to answer any questions that you might have. You will also receive guidance from Mrs Smith and Mrs Grice on how to make your choices.

How to Make Your Options Choices

You should:

- research information about options choices (for example, on the internet)
- discuss your ideas with your parents, subject teachers, Form Tutor, Pastoral Manager or Mrs Smith
- choose subjects that you enjoy and meet any future career pathway requirements
- consider your current performance in a subject and how it might affect your future progress
- find out what you will study, how lessons are taught and how the subject is assessed
- choose subjects that give you the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects. In doing so we hope that you will develop a wide range of skills. Most students will change their minds about a career a number of times before leaving school, so avoiding too much specialisation at this stage is advised.

You should not:

- choose subjects because a friend has chosen them
- make a choice based on your like or dislike of a particular teacher as there are often many changes of teacher between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

This booklet, together with advice from your teachers, will help to answer these questions and many more. Use it and ask questions so that you can be sure to make the right choices.

Kind regards,

Mrs K. Smith

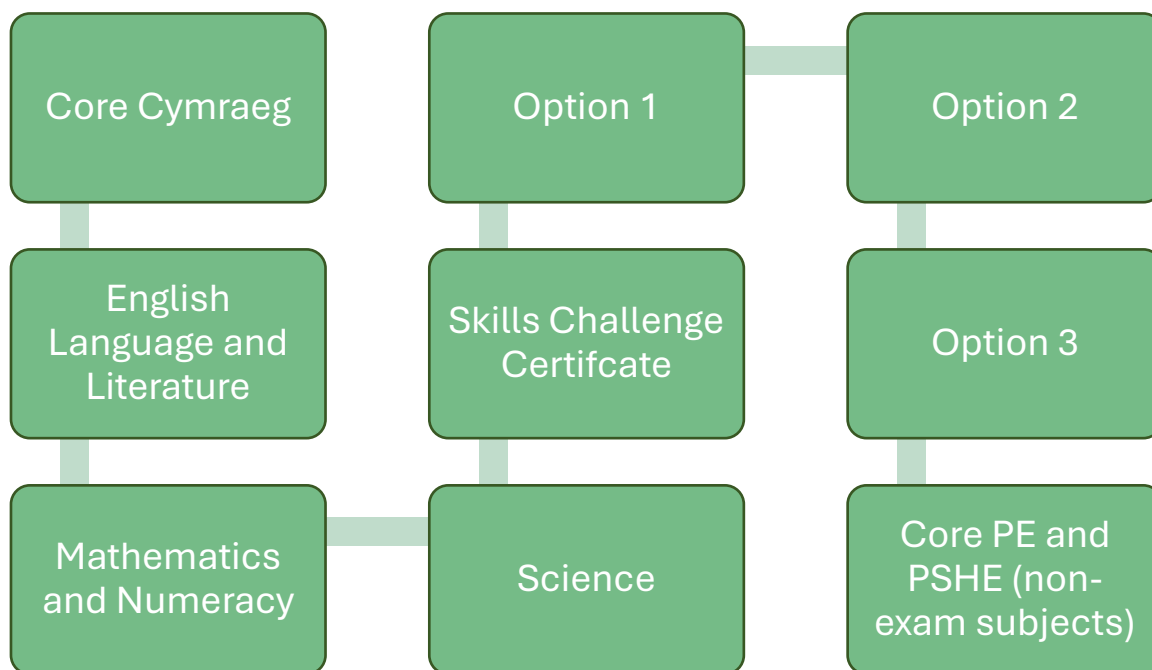
Assistant Headteacher – Curriculum Experiences and Future Preparedness

Key Stage 4 Core Curriculum

All learners study the following core subjects at KS4:

- Core Cymraeg (1 GCSE)
- English Language and Literature (2 GCSEs)
- Mathematics and Numeracy (2 GCSEs)
- Science (Double Award – Separate Sciences is available as an option) (2 GCSEs)
- Skills Challenge Certificate (GCSE equivalent)

These subjects comprise around 70% of the curriculum time at KS4 and will provide a total of 8 GCSE or GCSE equivalent qualifications at the end of Year 11.



GCSE CORE CYMRAEG

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The Cymraeg course helps you become a confident and effective Welsh speaker in everyday situations. You will develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, learning how to use Welsh naturally at school, at work and in social settings. The course focuses on real-life topics and practical communication, helping you build vocabulary, improve grammar and understand spoken and written Welsh more clearly. You will practise expressing opinions, giving information and responding to others, both orally and in writing. GCSE Cymraeg supports bilingual life in Wales and builds valuable language skills for further study, employment and daily life.

How is it assessed?

Unit 1: Speaking and Listening (NEA – 25%)

You will work in pairs or small groups to discuss a visual stimulus such as a photo or poster. After guided preparation, you take part in a recorded discussion in Welsh. This unit assesses how clearly and confidently you communicate ideas, interact with others, and use accurate pronunciation and fluency. Work is marked by your teacher and moderated by WJEC.

Unit 2: Speaking and Listening (NEA – 25%)

You again work in pairs or small groups, responding to short sources such as images, brief texts, charts or facts. With limited preparation time, you take part in a recorded discussion. This unit focuses on spontaneous responses, understanding sources, expressing viewpoints and supporting ideas clearly. It is teacher-assessed and externally moderated, building confidence in real-life spoken Welsh.

Unit 3: Reading and Writing (Exam – 25%)

This unit is an external written exam set and marked by WJEC. You complete reading comprehension tasks based on everyday Welsh texts and writing tasks linked to practical contexts such as work, plans or ambitions. Assessment focuses on understanding key information, writing clearly for purpose and audience, and using accurate vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure.

Unit 4: Reading and Writing (Exam – 25%)

Unit 4 is an external written exam focusing on Welsh literature and creative writing. You answer reading questions on texts such as poems or short stories and complete an extended or imaginative writing task. This unit assesses your understanding of literary texts, personal responses to ideas and themes, and your ability to write accurately and creatively in Welsh.

What skills will I develop?

This course helps you become more confident using Welsh in real-life situations. You will improve your speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, learning how to share ideas clearly and understand others. You'll build your vocabulary and accuracy, work with others in discussions, and explore Welsh culture and identity. These skills are useful for further study, future jobs and everyday bilingual life in Wales.

What are my future study and career pathways?

GCSE Core Cymraeg opens doors to many careers in Wales where being bilingual is a real advantage. These include public services, healthcare, education, customer service, tourism, media and creative industries, as well as apprenticeships. You'll also develop strong communication, teamwork and confidence skills valued by all employers. Studying Welsh increases job opportunities, supports Welsh culture, and helps you use the language confidently in everyday life and future work.

Contact for more information: Mrs Wood

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (DOUBLE AWARD)

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The GCSE English Language and Literature Double Award enables you to appreciate how language connects you to the world around you, to engage with a rich range of texts from different periods and by diverse writers, and to develop and apply your own use of language, through written and verbal communication.

How is the course assessed?

- Unit 1 CONTEXT AND MEANING – in Unit 1, you will study a range of poetry from the WJEC anthology, engaging with the concept of Context and Meaning.
- Unit 2 BELONGING – in Unit 2, you will study a prose text, engaging with the concept of Belonging and themes of community, cynefin and citizenship.
- Unit 3 INFLUENCE AND POWER – in Unit 3, you will study a range of non-fiction texts, engaging with the Influence and Power of writers, and how writers and speakers exert power and attempt to influence others.
- Unit 4b MOTIVATIONS – in Unit 4b, you will have a choice to study a play or a prose text, engaging with the concept of Motivations of writers and characters, exploring reasons for attitudes, behaviours and beliefs.
- Unit 5 CONTINUITY AND CHANGE – in Unit 5, you will study a Shakespeare play and pre-20th Century poetry. You will consider the concept of Continuity and Change, and how attitudes, ideas and language have changed over time.
- Unit 6 CONNECTIONS – in Unit 6, you will study nonfiction texts, focusing on the concept of Connections. You will explore links between different texts, relating texts to time, place, language, and relationships.

Units 1, 4b and 6 are examined units, together worth 60% of your qualification. Each exam lasts 90 minutes and will consist of low-tariff extract-based questions, an extended essay response and a piece of creative fiction or non-fiction writing. Units 2, 3 and 5 are non-examined assessments, together worth 40% of your qualification. Each unit will consist of two tasks, one that will assess your written response to the relevant text(s) and one that will assess your oracy skills.

What skills will I develop?

GCSE English Language and Literature is a core subject and as such helps to develop a wide range of skills for your future:

- Communication Skills – expressing yourself through clear and creative use of language
- Reading Skills – reading, listening to and researching a range of texts, analysing meaning and scrutinising reliability
- Contextual Analysis Skills – engaging with the significance of purpose, audience, and contexts of speaking, reading and writing
- Literacy Skills – developing and applying an understanding of grammar and uses of vocabulary

What are my future study and career pathways?

GCSE English Language and Literature is designed to equip you with a rich variety of skills for your future in education and the workplace. It is a widely valued qualification that provides a strong foundation for further study of literature, language, and a wide range of other academic subjects at A level and beyond. It can open the door to an array of career paths such as law, journalism, media production, advertising, marketing, teaching, politics, public relations, and publishing.

Contact for more information: Mrs Young

GCSE MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY (DOUBLE AWARD)

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The course teaches traditional aspects of mathematics and seeks to show how they can be applied in a variety of real and almost real-world situations, as well as in purely mathematical contexts. It is split across four strands: number; algebra; geometry and measures; and statistics and probability.

To help your child, please encourage them to learn and know their multiplication tables forwards and backwards, and give them opportunities to apply them, for example, in working out percentages and percentage changes. Good knowledge and understanding of these things, along with fractions, ratios and scaling will help to provide a real, solid foundation.

How is the course assessed?

GCSE mathematics and numeracy is a double award course, meaning that it is equivalent to two GCSEs in terms of volume and demand. Pupils will receive two (identical) grades, ranging from A*A* to GG. There are two tiers of entry: higher (A*A* to DD) and foundation (CC to GG). Pupils who do not meet the minimum standard for the grading system will be graded UU.

There is no coursework; pupils will accrue marks over three unequally weighted written exams which are likely (but not certain) to be taken as follows.

- Unit 1 (Financial Mathematics and Other Applications of Numeracy): 30% – **May of Year 10**
- Unit 2 (Non-calculator) 30% – **November of Year 11**
- Unit 3 (Calculator-allowed) 40% – **June of Year 11**

The raw marks from each examined unit will be converted into a UMS (uniform marks scale) score, giving a total mark out of 400. This mark will be converted to the double grade that each pupil receives.

The first unit is likely to contain more graphs, tables and words. The better and more patient the pupils are with reading, the more easily they will handle the demands of unit 1. To help your child, consider encouraging them to read more (e.g. novels, magazine articles, BBC news website, ...).

What skills will I develop?

The course seeks to enable pupils to learn to reason logically, to develop problem-solving strategies, and to communicate mathematical concepts fluently and symbolically. This is in addition to looking to enable pupils to be able to apply key mathematical skills and concepts to genuinely real situations.

To help your child, consider the maths you use in regular life (e.g. utility bills, budgeting, savings, ISAs, investing, loans, PCPs, payslips, tax, mortgages, new carpets, new wall tiles, new fencing, discounts and special offers, ...) and get them involved in the calculations.

What are my future study and career pathways?

As a core GCSE subject, a good grade (e.g. C or better) in mathematics and numeracy is often a prerequisite for many post-16 courses, apprenticeships and other employment opportunities.

Additional information:

For the strongest mathematicians, the possibility to complete the course before the end of Year 11 may exist. Furthermore, the opportunity to study the additional maths course may be available for some of the strongest pupils. This could be particularly useful for pupils who intend to study maths at A level.

Contact for more information: Dr Edwards

GCSE SCIENCE (DOUBLE AWARD)

Exam board: WJEC (New for 2026)

What does the course involve?

Science is a core subject and, just like Maths and English, all students at Darland School will complete a GCSE Science course. They will study Science 5 hours per week.

The majority of students will follow GCSE The Sciences (Double Award) course, which is new for 2026. This course combines Biology, Chemistry and Physics and leads to two GCSE qualifications.

How is the course assessed?

- There are two tiers of entry for this qualification: Higher Tier: Grades A*–D and Foundation Tier: Grades C–G
- 3 written papers are completed each year
- Units 1 Basis of Life, 2 Chemical Substances and 3 Force Motion and the Universe are taught and examined in year 10. This counts for 45% of the qualification.
- Units 4 Continuity of Life, 5 Bonding and Reactions and 6 Waves, electricity and energy are taught and examined in year 11. They count for 45% of the qualification
- Unit 7 is the practical exam that takes place in January of year 11. It is assessed externally and worth 10% of the grade

What skills will I develop?

Scientific enquiry and investigative skills

Data analysis and interpretation

Problem-solving and logical thinking

Practical laboratory skills and safe working practices

Application of scientific knowledge to real-world contexts

Collaboration and communication

What are my future study and career pathways?

The GCSE The Science (Double Award) course supports progression to further study in science-related Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, and a wide range of careers in healthcare, engineering, environmental science and technical fields.

Additional information:

Science is a core subject and provides an essential foundation for many future pathways.

Contact for more information: Science Department

SKILLS CHALLENGE CERTIFICATE

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

Students complete **three challenges:** Enterprise & Employability, Global Citizenship, and a 1,000–2,000-word **Individual Project**. The first two projects (Enterprise & Employability and Global Citizenship) are conducted in Year 10 and each is worth 25% of the overall grade. The Individual Project is completed in Year 11 and is worth 50% of the overall grade.

How is the course assessed?

It's internally assessed, externally moderated, with UMS grade boundaries determining Foundation (Pass) or National (A*-C) level. The aim is applied learning that boosts workplace readiness, civic responsibility, and progression in post-16 education or employment.

What skills will I develop?

Assessment measures transferable skills: literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, planning, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and personal effectiveness.

What are my future study and career pathways?

The **Skills Challenge Certificate** helps with future study and careers in several ways:

- 1. Develops Core Skills**
It focuses on transferable skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, planning, digital literacy, and communication - skills valued in higher education and the workplace.
- 2. Encourages Independent Learning**
The Individual Project builds research, analysis, and presentation abilities, which are essential for college or vocational courses.
- 3. Promotes Employability**
The Enterprise & Employability Challenge introduces real-world business scenarios, teamwork, and project management - key for job readiness.

Additional information:

Running the Christmas Fayre and pitching a stall idea to the Dragons' Lair will be an exciting, hands-on experience that combines creativity, teamwork, and real-world business skills. Students will get the thrill of planning and decorating their stall, attracting customers, and managing sales during a festive, lively event. The Dragons' Lair pitch adds an extra buzz: standing in front of a panel, presenting ideas confidently, and answering questions like real entrepreneurs. It's a chance to showcase innovation, problem-solving, and persuasive communication, all while having fun and feeling the energy of a competitive, festive atmosphere.

Contact for more information: Mark Mackie – Skills Challenge Certificate Co-ordinator

Key Stage 4 Option Subjects

All learners have the opportunity to choose three further subjects at KS4 from:

- Art and Design
- Digital Media and Film
- Drama
- French
- Geography
- History
- Music
- Physical Education and Health
- Product Design
- Religious Studies (RVE)
- Separate Sciences
- Textiles
- 14-16 College option:
 - Level 1/2 Business Studies
 - GCSE Computer Science
 - Level 1/2 Construction
 - Level 1/2 Engineering
 - Level 2 Hair and Beauty
 - GCSE Health and Social Care
 - Level 1/2 Hospitality and Catering
 - Level 2 Performing Arts
 - Level 2 Public Services
 - GCSE Sports Coaching

There is also the option for all students to take GCSE Spanish as an additional GCSE subject, studied as a Twilight course at Coleg Cambria. This runs from 4.30-6.30 once a week, on the same day as the College entitlement (Wednesdays).

Option blocks

Option X	Option Y	Option Z
One subject from: French History Religious Studies (RVE) PE Textiles	One subject from: College Art Product Design Drama Religious Studies (RVE)	One subject from: Separate Sciences Product Design History Digital Media and Film Music Geography

When making your choices you will be invited to make a first and second choice for blocks X, Y and Z. It is important that each of these choices are subjects that you would enjoy studying, as we cannot guarantee that you will be offered the first choice in each block.

Key dates and events

Year 9 Options Information assembly – Thursday 8th January

Year 9 Parents' Evening – Thursday 15th January

Coleg Cambria Open Evening – Tuesday 20th and Wednesday 21st January

Options form submission (via Microsoft Forms) – opens at 6pm on Thursday 22nd January and will close at 6.15pm on Thursday 5th February.

GCSE ART AND DESIGN

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The WJEC GCSE in Art and Design is designed to provide engaging, challenging, coherent and meaningful learning experiences through a flexible structure that supports the development of creative practice. The programme of study broadens experience, develops imagination and technical skills, fosters creativity and promotes personal and social development. The focus of the GCSE is to nurture an enthusiasm for Art, Craft and Design and, through a broad introductory programme, to develop critical, practical and theoretical skills that enable students to gain an understanding of a range of practices and contexts in the visual arts, crafts and design fields.

How is the course assessed?

The WJEC GCSE Art and Design is a two-year linear qualification.

It consists of two units: Unit 1, the Portfolio (60%, internally assessed, externally moderated) and Unit 2, the Externally Set Assignment (40%, internally assessed, externally moderated).

What skills will I develop?

The Art GCSE curriculum is a rich and diverse educational journey, designed not merely to teach you how to draw or paint, but to transform you into well-rounded, critical, and independent creative thinkers. It goes beyond simple technical skills, delving into analysis, problem-solving, and self-expression, providing a foundation for a vast array of future careers and life skills. You will learn a comprehensive range of competencies across practical creation, critical analysis, and personal development.

Looking at the formal elements of art, you will develop drawing and painting skills that will enable you to learn through practical experience and demonstrate understanding of sources that inform your creative intentions. As part of this development, you will expand your use of terminology to communicate personal ideas, meanings and responses. You will, over time, be able to reflect critically upon your creative journey in relation to personal intentions and produce outcomes in media of your choice.

What are my future study and career pathways?

GCSE Art and Design develops creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking skills valued across many careers. It provides strong progression routes into A Levels (Art, Photography, Graphic Communication, Textiles), vocational courses such as BTEC and T Levels, and the popular Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, which helps students build a high-quality portfolio. These pathways can lead to university degrees in Fine Art, Graphic Design, Fashion, Animation, Architecture, Art History or Art Therapy. Students may also progress into creative apprenticeships, combining paid industry experience with further qualifications in the growing creative industries.

Additional information:

An Art GCSE can lead to a wide range of creative, technical and professional careers. These include roles such as graphic designer, animator, photographer, illustrator, fashion or product designer, and interior designer. It also provides foundations for specialist pathways including architecture, make-up artistry, concept art, art therapy, medical illustration, teaching, curating and advertising. Art skills are highly transferable and valued across the growing creative industries.

Student and staff testimonials:

“Taking the Art GCSE has been one of the best decisions I’ve made in school. The course gives you the freedom to express yourself and explore your own creativity while also helping you build strong artistic skills. It’s about growing in confidence, learning to think creatively and expressing yourself in ways you never thought you could.”

Contact for more information: Mrs T E Crompton

GCSE DIGITAL MEDIA AND FILM

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

GCSE Digital Media and Film develops students' understanding of how digital media and film products are created, distributed and consumed.

Students explore a range of digital media forms, including film, television, online video and social media, analysing how meaning is created through visual, audio and narrative techniques. Learners also develop practical skills by planning and creating their own digital media and film products.

How is the course assessed?

- **Unit 1 Exploring key concepts and issues:** on-screen examination, composed of short and extended questions on set films and unseen media products. 60 marks/30%
- **Unit 2 Distribution and exhibition strategies of digital media and film industry in Wales:** NEA assessment in which learners investigate how a digital media and/or film production company in Wales produces, distributes and exhibits their products. Learners will create on distribution strategy and one exhibition strategy for a new digital media or film production company. 72 marks/30%
- **Unit 3 Creating digital media and film content:** NEA assessment in which learners will choose one brief from a choice of three, and create a marketing campaign for a new film, videogame or series for a streaming site. 96 marks/40%

What skills will I develop?

GCSE Digital Media and Film allows you to develop a range of transferrable skills, including:

- Analytical skills
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Media literacy
- Planning and organisation
- Research
- Technical skills

What are my future study and career pathways?

This course provides a strong foundation for further study in Media Studies, Film Studies, Digital Media, Creative and Performing Arts, and related vocational courses.

Career pathways include film and television, digital marketing, content creation, journalism, advertising, games, animation and the wider creative industries.

Additional information:

We have close links with Careers Wales, and Media Studies students are often offered the opportunity to participate in workshops and visits from guest speakers to enrich their learning. Visitors over the last few years include Calon FM, Screen Alliance Wales and Into Film.

Student and staff testimonials:

"Studying Media Studies makes me view films and TV programmes completely differently. Every time I watch something now, I find myself analysing the camerawork or sound effects!" Year 11 Media Studies student.

"I feel like the analysis in Media Studies has helped me with my skills in English, too." Year 10 Media Studies student.

"I think it's more important than ever to be able to think about who has produced a media text, and what the agenda behind it is." Year 11 Media Studies student.

Contact for more information: Mrs Tate

GCSE DRAMA

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

GCSE Drama is a creative subject where you explore ideas, emotions and real-world issues through performance and design. The course includes two practical units and one digital written exam. You can specialise in acting or design roles such as costume, lighting or sound. Students explore different theatre styles, take part in workshops and trips, and study a set play and performance clips for the exam. It is highly creative, giving you the opportunity to voice your opinion, explore emotions, characters, social, historical, and political topics, and create pieces of drama using a variety of skills.

There are five different skills that you can choose to complete the practical units, and you can either choose to use the same skill for both units or two different skills for each unit. The skills are: 1. Acting, including the options of movement and stage combat 2. Costume, hair, and make-up design 3. Set, scenery, and props design 4. Lighting design 5. Sound design, including music and sound effects

How is the course assessed?

You will complete two practical units and one digital written exam.

1. **Unit 1 – Devising Theatre, 40% of the GCSE grade, Practical non-exam assessment (coursework)**, assessed by Mrs Hughes, verified by WJEC. One devised piece in response to a chosen stimulus, performed in a group of between two and five actors, and up to four designers (one of each design skill).
2. **Unit 2 – Performance from a Text, 30% of the GCSE grade, Practical non-exam assessment**, assessed by a visiting examiner from WJEC. A performance of one extract from a text of your choice. Performed in a group of between two and four actors, and up to two designers (of different design skills).
3. **Unit 3 – Interpreting Theatre, 30% of the GCSE grade, On-screen examination (2 hours)**. The exam is broken into two sections; Section A will relate to a set text you have studied in lessons. Section B will relate to an excerpt of a live theatre production from one of four set genres.

What skills will I develop?

Exploring, responding and reflecting and creating: you will explore theatre styles from Wales and around the world and use these ideas to create your own performances. You'll reflect on feedback to improve your work and analyse others' performances. In Unit 1 you devise original theatre from a stimulus, and in Unit 2 you perform from a script, choosing your own style.

What are my future study and career pathways?

GCSE Drama supports further study in Drama and Expressive Arts while developing confidence, creativity and communication. It can lead to careers in performance and design, and also supports pathways into media, teaching, therapy, law, medicine, events, marketing and many people-focused professions.

Additional information:

- Most lessons are practical, with some written work, as 70% of the course is assessed through practical tasks
- You will have opportunities to go on theatre trips to see live performances as well as recordings of live performances
- **There will be a VIP area in the music suite, only available to Drama & Music GCSE pupils**

Student and staff testimonials:

"Drama makes life easier to manage. I understand why other people do the things they do now." "It's just fun. Imagine getting to do a GCSE in something that you enjoy all aspects of; that's Drama! You literally play with your ideas." "I genuinely think choosing Drama has been one of the most valuable decisions I have ever, and will ever make – I don't think any other subject can rival the breadth and wealth of knowledge and skills it will give you."

Contact for more information: Mrs Hughes

GCSE FRENCH

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The new specification is more focussed on being able to communicate in French-speaking countries and having an awareness of their culture. The three overall topic areas are: language for leisure and wellbeing, language for travel, language for study and work.

How is the course assessed?

All exams are taken in Year 11 and there are no higher or foundation tiers. Half of the course is listening and speaking, and the other half is reading and writing:

- Unit 1: Speaking and Listening – you do three tasks with your class teacher (read aloud and role play, a short presentation and a conversation) around April/May = 30%
- Unit 2: Reading and Writing – 200-word classroom assessment based on a short story, graphic novel or film script that we have studied, taken in March of Year 11 = 15%
- Unit 3: Listening – multiple choice and comprehension questions, answered in English only = 20%
- Unit 4: Reading and Writing – a selection of tasks answered in English about French texts plus a short 5-sentence translation into English. Then you choose to answer a question from 3 options by writing up to 120 words in French = 35%

What skills will I develop?

Learning a language is important for developing problem-solving skills and shows that you are an effective communicator. It can help you develop confidence and can also improve your English language skills.

What are my future study and career pathways?

Languages can link to many future study areas and can be combined with another subject at college or university. As for careers, any job that involves travel (such as sport, fashion, journalism) or international business (such as PR and marketing, engineering, law) will benefit from additional language skills. A lot of employers are much more likely to hire and/or promote you if you have a language qualification eg. Army, Airbus, Ubisoft, BP.

Additional information:

Lessons

- We have 5 lessons a fortnight
- Just like in KS3, the tasks are challenging but achievable
- The activities mirror exam questions so we practise exam technique in Yr 10 and 11

Homework

- Learning homework is set once a week
- 10-20 words or phrases a week, set with a Quizlet link

There are no tiers making this GCSE suitable for all students. Everyone is welcome so please don't assume that you need to be in top set to take French GCSE!

Contact for more information: Mrs Wood

GCSE GEOGRAPHY

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

Geography helps you understand the world you live in. You'll learn about rivers, coasts, weather, climate change, cities, migration, and why different places and people live such different lives.

You'll investigate real places, use maps and digital tools, and carry out fieldwork outside the classroom. You'll explore big questions such as:

- Why do floods happen? How are coastlines changing? Why do people move between countries?
- How is our climate changing? What makes some places richer than others?

If you are curious about people, places and the environment, you will really enjoy this course.

How is the course assessed?

You will complete two exams and two projects. Everyone sits the same exams. There are no tiers.

- Unit 1 – Our Physical & Human World - Written exam (1 hr 30) – 30%
- Unit 2 – Fieldwork Skills - A project based on fieldwork you complete outside school – 25%
- Unit 3 – Our Dynamic & Diverse World - Written exam (1 hr 30) – 30%
- Unit 4 – Sustainable Solutions - A decision-making activity where you choose the best solution to a real problem – 15%

What skills will I develop?

You will learn how to:

- Collect data outdoors and carry out fieldwork, use maps, graphs, digital tools and GIS
- Understand people, places and global issues
- Make decisions and justify your choices
- Work with statistics and information
- Think critically and solve problems
- Communicate clearly in writing and through diagrams and maps

These are skills used in science, maths, business, computing and humanities.

What are my future study and career pathways?

Geography keeps your options open. It connects well with many Sixth Form subjects, including: Geography, Geology, Environmental Sciences and Biology, History, Politics, Economics or Sociology

Geography links to a huge range of careers, such as: Environmental work and conservation, town planning and architecture, meteorology and climate science, engineering and hydrology, GIS and data analysis, international development, tourism, transport and logistics, teaching and public services.

Employers and universities value Geography because it shows you can think, problem-solve and understand the modern world.

Additional information:

- You will take part in at least one fieldwork day in an outdoor location.
- Some lessons use digital maps, satellite images and real-world data.
- Geography helps you become a more informed, ethical and global citizen.
- It's a great mix of classroom learning, practical skills and real-world case studies.

Student and staff testimonials:

"I loved the fieldwork and learning outside. It made everything make sense."

"Geography explains the world and helps you understand people and places."

Contact for more information: Mrs Garratt or Mr Mackie

GCSE HISTORY

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

Due to changes made to curriculum requirements, the GCSE History has seen a massive overhaul. As a result, we will be teaching 4 new units. We are now going to be covering a broader chronological spread of topics, with a broader geographical spread as well.

We will now study a medieval option on Owain Glyndwr, an early modern option which will investigate the Aztecs, and a modern option which will look at the USA between 1880 and 1980.

The content of the fourth unit, which will be a Non-Examined Assessment, is not known to us at this stage, but it is likely to be a modern topic.

How is the course assessed?

There will be 2 x 1 hour exams, which will equate to 30% each, total 60%. There will also be 2 Non-Examined Assessment elements: 1 of which is worth 20% and will be completed online over a three hour period and the other, also worth 20%, will involve researching a specific element of history and enquiring into various aspects of the given issue/factor.

What skills will I develop?

GCSE History is the perfect subject to develop a wide range of transferable skills for employment or further study, including but not limited to:

- Problem solving and making connections
- Independent study, research and writing skills
- Analytical and evaluative skills
- Critically reflecting on their own and others' beliefs, values and attitudes
- Reviewing evidence, forming hypotheses and justifying decisions
- Planning and developing responses

What are my future study and career pathways?

The History course is still a challenging, academic course, which will require a lot of work to develop knowledge of a broad set of subject matter. Its academic rigour will prepare pupils very well for going on to do A levels and then degrees, if that is their aim. Many other professions favour students of History due to its emphasis on critical thinking, investigation, research and the ability to form an evidence-based opinion. The list below is not exhaustive and, there will jobs out there for this cohort that don't exist currently.

Journalism, Law, Newspapers, The Media, Politics, Web content, Management, Editorial jobs, Researchers
Archaeologists, Archivist, Librarians, Civil service, Museums, Galleries, Conservation.

Additional information:

The history department has taken trips to Berlin, Munich and Sicily in the past. Also visits to various castles, Wrexham's Museum collections, The Mines Rescue Centre, Shrewsbury and Ruthin Gaols.

Annually, we have a Holocaust survivor event, who speaks to the pupils about their experience of the Death Camps and Nazi persecution of the Jews.

Student and staff testimonials:

This will be the first cohort to go through with the new curriculum, so there are no pupil testimonials. However, having discussed it with my current year 11s, many of them said, "Aww, why can't we do that?" and "that's not fair, I would have loved that!". Personally, I think there are some really interesting elements that are going to be brilliant to teach and will be of real interest to the pupils.

Contact for more information: Mr D Jones

GCSE MUSIC

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

It is highly creative, giving you the opportunity to explore a wide range of music genres and styles, as well as exploring diversity, identity, culture, social, historical, and political aspects. It will enable you to develop performance, creative, and compositional skills, how to communicate musically, explore music created by others, to help develop your own talents, and reflect on, evaluate and refine your work. You will study and apply the elements of music that you have been studying since Year 7.

How is the course assessed?

You will complete two practical units and one digital/listening appraising exam.

- 1. Unit 1 – Performing Non-Exam assessment (marked by Mrs Hughes, verified by WJEC) 32.5% of qualification. Minimum 2 pieces, 4-6 minutes Solo and/or ensemble**
You will select any pieces that you wish to perform, individually or as part of an ensemble.
- 2. Unit 2 – Composing Assessment Type: Non-Exam assessment, 32.5% of qualification, 2 compositions, 3-6 minutes total.** You will compose 2 pieces of original music; one to a set brief and one to your own brief. You choose the style/genre for both pieces. You will also submit an assessed reflective log.
- 3. Unit 3 – Appraising Assessment Type: Digital exam (1h 30m) 35% of qualification**
You will study 2 set works in detail and answer questions on them in the exam. Other questions will be based on musical extracts: you will be expected to understand and explain the use of musical elements in them.

What skills will I develop?

Exploring, responding, reflecting and creating: you will explore different musical styles from Wales and around the world, use these ideas to create your own music, and experiment through improvisation. You will reflect on feedback to improve your work and compose original pieces in styles you choose or to a set brief.

What are my future study and career pathways?

Music GCSE provides a suitable foundation for the study of Music, or other related Expressive Arts subject at A-level. It will also provide a satisfying and worthwhile course of study for you if you choose not to progress to study further. Creativity is one of the most important skills for future jobs. Studying Music helps you solve problems, work with others, communicate confidently and build self-belief. These transferable skills support many careers, from performing, composing and sound engineering to media, teaching, therapy, business and the wider creative industries.

Additional information:

- Lessons focus mainly on practical music-making, supported by analytical work
- Students may take part in musical trips and visits
- A wide range of music is listened to, analysed and performed, with homework set on Google Classroom
- Homework includes performance preparation, composition development and reflection work
- **There will be a VIP area in the music suite, only available to Drama & Music GCSE pupils**
- **GCSE Music students receive FREE musical instrument tuition!**

Student and staff testimonials:

"Where words fail, music speaks."

"Music was the only lesson I ever looked forward to. When I was struggling, music always lifted me back up and made me feel like I could achieve something, that I could be someone."

"Music has the power to fill stadiums full of people, to bring humanity across the world together, to make us feel good."

Contact for more information: Mrs Hughes

GCSE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

The GCSE Physical Education and Health course will enable you to engage in a practical course, designed to encourage you to be inspired, motivated and challenged by the subject and allow you to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career pathways. You will acquire the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to develop and maintain your performance in sports or physical activities and understand the benefits to health, fitness and well-being.

The specification in Physical Education and Health will enable you to make connections between theory and practice so that you are able to apply your understanding of the factors that underpin health and wellbeing, sports and physical activity and use this knowledge to improve performance.

UNIT 1: PRINCIPLES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH (40%)

1. Digital examination: 1 hour 30 minutes
2. Marked by WJEC
3. 80 marks = 40% of qualification
4. Questions requiring objective responses and quick responses.

UNIT 2: PERFORMANCE AND PERSONAL TRAINING (60%)

1. Non-examination assessment: assessed by your teacher and moderated by a WJEC visiting moderator. 120 marks = 60% of the qualification
3. Practical non-examination assessment:
4. Perform in one sport or physical activity from the approved list
5. Perform in a second sport or physical activity or provide coaching in a sport or physical activity from the approved list
6. Plan, implement and evaluate a personal training activity over 8-10 weeks for a sport or physical activity from the approved list.

What skills will I develop?

1. Perform effectively in different sports and physical activities by developing skills and techniques and selecting and using tactics, strategies and/or compositional ideas
2. Analyse physical performance and select appropriate strategies and interventions for development and improvement
3. Think critically and reflectively about your own and others performance
4. Develop knowledge and understanding of health, wellbeing, sport and physical activity and the links between them
5. Understand the factors that impact on levels of activity and the relationship with physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing
6. Understand the socio-cultural influences on participation, and contemporary developments within sport and physical activity.

What are my future study and career pathways?

This qualification provides an excellent foundation for the study of WJEC AS and A Level Physical Education or WJEC Level 3 Sport. Importantly, studying GCSE Physical Education and Health will develop many transferable skills including communication, performance and presentation skills, teamwork, leadership, focus, refinement and self-confidence.

The career possibilities that come from studying Physical Education and Health are extensive, but a few are listed here: Fitness Instructor, Personal Trainer, PE Teacher, University Lecturer, Physiotherapist, Sports Massage Therapist, Leisure and Recreation Manager, Sports Business Manager, Sports Administrator, Sports Coach, Sports Development Officer, Sports Journalist, Sports Commentator, Sports Medicine, Professional Sports Performer, Sports Scientist, Sports Nutritionist, Professional Sports Official/ Referee, Event Coordinator.

Contact for more information: Mrs Gardner – Head of Physical Education

GCSE PRODUCT DESIGN

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

Product Design teaches you how and why everyday products are created. You'll learn how designers turn ideas into real objects—such as furniture, lighting, gadgets, packaging, and consumer products—using creative thinking, modelling, and practical making skills. You will explore materials (woods, metals, polymers, papers/boards, smart materials), design principles, sustainability, manufacturing methods, and how modern technology influences design.

You'll investigate real products, analyse how they work, and solve design problems for real users. You'll explore big questions such as: How do designers create products that are sustainable and user-friendly? Why do some designs succeed while others fail? How do different materials behave and why are they chosen? How does technology (like CAD/CAM) shape modern design?

How is the course assessed?

You will complete one exam and one major design project. There are no tiers – everyone sits the same exam:

Unit 1 – Written Examination (2 hours) – 50%

- Core technical principles (materials, processes, sustainability, energy, systems)
- In-depth product design knowledge, designing, making, analysing and evaluating products

Unit 2 – Non-Exam Assessment (NEA) – 50%

A design and make project where you respond to a brief provided by the exam board. You will:

- Research and analyse the needs of a user, develop ideas for your own product through sketches and CAD
- Make and test prototypes including a final product, then evaluate the product and your design process

What skills will I develop?

These skills link strongly to engineering, art & design, construction, computing, and business. You will learn how to:

- Design creative solutions to real problems, including using CAD software (e.g., TinkerCAD)
- Communicate ideas through sketches, modelling and digital design
- Use materials, tools, machinery and workshop equipment safely
- Use modern and traditional manufacturing methods
- Think critically about sustainability and the environmental impact of products
- Evaluate products clearly and professionally

What are my future study and career pathways?

Product Design opens many doors. It supports progression to:

Sixth Form / Further Study:

- A Level Design & Technology: Product Design, Engineering or Manufacturing courses, Art & Design (inc. 3D design, architecture, and industrial design), Construction, Graphics or Technology-based vocational

Future Career pathways include:

- Product, industrial, graphic, interior, furniture, automotive, packaging design and many more
- Architecture, Engineering (mechanical, civil, materials, manufacturing)
- Carpentry, joinery, fabrication and other skilled trades, CAD technician or modelmaker

Student and staff testimonials:

"I loved designing my own product from scratch. The workshop practicals were the best part."

"DT helped me understand how things are made and gave me confidence using CAD and tools."

Contact for more information: Mr S. Jones (DT)

GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

RVE lets you explore big ideas about life, purpose, and what people believe — whether religious or not. You'll discover how different worldviews shape the way we think, act, and make choices, and how they've influenced society and culture. It also helps you understand the diverse world around you, build empathy, and reflect on your own values as well as those of others. In short, RVE is about making sense of people, the world, and your place within it. The most exciting thing about RVE is that you are given time to think. Think and reflect of some of the questions that are the most intriguing and relevant to people of all faiths and backgrounds.

We will be considering all issues from the Christian, Buddhist, and non-religious perspectives.

What lies beyond this life?

Where is the evidence for the existence of God? Does evidence matter?

How can life be meaningful and spiritual without God?

What makes us human? Soul, mind, biology?

When does life begin? Who decides when life should end?

How should we treat animals? Should we eat them or experiment on them?

Is the death penalty ever the right answer? Borders or human lives – What matters more?

How is the course assessed?

You will complete two exams and two projects:

- Unit 1 – Religious and non-religious beliefs, teachings and practices. **Written Exam** 30%
- Unit 2 – Religion and relationships **Non examined assessment** completed in lesson time. 25%
- Unit 3 – Roles, rights and responsibilities- **Written exam** 30%
- Unit 4 – Religion and Human Rights – **Non examined assessment** completed in lesson time. 25%

Everyone sits the same exams. There are no tiers.

What skills will I develop?

You will learn how to:

- **Think critically** and question assumptions
- **Evaluate different viewpoints** and justify opinions
- **Communicate clearly** in speech and writing
- **Reflect on beliefs, values, and ethics**
- **Develop empathy and cultural awareness**
- **Make reasoned decisions** about complex issues

What are my future study and career pathways?

RVE keeps your options open. It connects well with many Sixth Form subjects, including: Ethics and Philosophy, History, English, (Language and literature) Law, Politics, Sociology, Psychology etc.

RVE is excellent preparation for a wide range of careers,

- **Law & Justice** — lawyer, mediator, human rights advocate
- **Medicine & Care** — doctor, nurse, counsellor
- **Politics & Diplomacy** — policy advisor, diplomat, civil servant
- **Media & Journalism** — reporter, presenter, content creator
- **Education & Youth** — teacher, youth worker, mentor
- **Business & HR** — manager, recruiter, diversity lead
- **Charity & Global Work** — aid worker, campaigner, NGO coordinator
- **Police & Public Service** — officer, investigator, restorative justice

Contact for more information: Mrs Ashford

GCSE SEPARATE SCIENCES (BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY & PHYSICS)

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

Students study GCSE Separate Science, gaining three GCSEs: Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The course is taught over Years 10 and 11, allowing greater depth of study than Double Award Science.

Unit 1 (Year 10) Examined in Year 10

Biology: Cells, Organs and Ecosystems

Chemistry: Chemical Substances, Reactions and Essential Resources

Physics: Electricity, Energy and Waves

Unit 2 (Year 11) Examined in Year 11

Biology: Variation, Homeostasis and Micro-organisms

Chemistry: Chemical Bonding, Chemical Reactions and Organic Chemistry

Physics: Forces, Space and Radioactivity

Unit 3: Controlled Practical Assessment (Year 11)

10% of each qualification

Practical-based assessment carried out in school

Externally marked by WJEC

Takes place in the first half of the spring term

Students study Separate Science for 15 hours per fortnight

How is the course assessed?

There are two tiers of entry:

Higher Tier: Grades A*–D

Foundation Tier: Grades C–G

Each year students sit three written examinations (Biology, Chemistry and Physics).

Each exam lasts 1 hour 45 minutes and is worth 45% of each qualification.

What skills will I develop?

Analytical and problem-solving skills

Practical laboratory skills and safe working practices

Ability to plan, carry out and evaluate investigations

Data handling and interpretation skills

Logical thinking and application of scientific knowledge

What are my future study and career pathways?

A-level Biology, Chemistry and Physics

Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science, Engineering and Physics-based careers, Biomedical and Medical Sciences, Environmental Science and Geoscience, Chemistry, Pharmacology and Materials Science.

Additional information:

Separate Science is a rigorous and academically challenging course, highly valued by colleges, sixth forms and universities.

Contact for more information: Science Department

GCSE TEXTILES

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

GCSE Textiles develops a wide range of creative and practical skills through the full design process, from initial ideas to high-quality outcomes. Students build technical confidence with materials and equipment, while developing transferable skills such as critical thinking, project management and independent learning. The course encourages creativity, risk-taking and personal style. Learners research artists and designers, generate and refine ideas through drawing and photography, and communicate design intentions clearly using visual, technical and digital methods.

How is the course assessed?

The WJEC GCSE Textile Design is a two-year linear qualification. It consists of two units: Unit 1, the Portfolio (60%, internally assessed, externally moderated) and Unit 2, the Externally Set Assignment (40%, internally assessed, externally moderated).

What skills will I develop?

GCSE Textiles develops strong practical, creative and technical skills through hands-on learning. Students gain knowledge of natural, synthetic and smart fabrics, learning how to select materials based on function, cost and performance. They become confident using tools and equipment safely, developing skills in hand and machine sewing, pattern cutting and garment construction. Learners explore fabric manipulation techniques such as appliqué, quilting, pleating and smocking, alongside fabric creation methods including weaving, knitting and felting. The course also develops decorative skills through dyeing, printing and surface embellishment, building precision, creativity and problem-solving skills applicable to further study and careers.

What are my future study and career pathways?

GCSE Textiles opens a wide range of creative, technical and academic pathways beyond traditional fashion design. Students can progress to A Levels or Level 3 qualifications in Art, Fashion or Textiles, vocational courses, foundation diplomas or apprenticeships. These routes can lead to university degrees in Fashion or Textile Design, Costume, Interior Design, Materials Science or related creative fields. Career opportunities include fashion designer, garment technologist, textile engineer, pattern cutter, print designer, interior designer, costume designer, curator or teacher. With growing innovation in sustainable and smart materials, GCSE Textiles offers diverse and future-focused career options.

Additional information:

GCSE Textiles offers a strong creative and technical foundation, leading to diverse, innovative careers across design, technology and business, enabling students to combine skills and interests to shape unique, fulfilling futures.

Student and staff testimonials:

“Choosing Textiles GCSE was one of the best decisions I made. The course allowed me to be creative while also developing real technical skills like hand stitching, pattern making, and using the sewing machine confidently. I loved seeing my ideas come to life through fabric, and the projects helped me build patience, problem-solving skills, and attention to detail. Textiles gave me a space to express myself, experiment, and take pride in what I created. It’s a subject where hard work truly shows, and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys design, creativity, and making things with their hands.”

Contact for more information: Mrs T E Crompton

14-16 COLLEGE OPTIONS

Exam board: WJEC

What does the course involve?

You'll attend college once a week for a full afternoon - for the 2026 cohort this will be a Wednesday afternoon. You'll leave Darland at lunchtime and be transported to either the Bersham Road or Yale Coleg Cambria sites, where you'll study until 1630 and make your own way home.

At the Yale and Bersham Road sites, you'll be able to study one of the following courses:

- Level 1/2 Business Studies
- GCSE Computer Science
- Level 1/2 Construction
- Level 1/2 Engineering
- Level 2 Hair and Beauty
- GCSE Health and Social Care
- Level 1/2 Hospitality and Catering
- Level 2 Performing Arts
- Level 2 Public Services
- GCSE Sports Coaching

and also:

- GCSE Spanish (taken as an additional Twilight course between 4.30-6.30pm – open to all students, not just those who attend college entitlement)

Specific course information is available from Coleg Cambria at this link: <https://www.cambria.ac.uk/school-services/school-links/>

What skills will I develop?

- Hands-on practical skills - learn by doing! You'll use real tools, equipment, and techniques in your chosen subject area, just like in the workplace.
- Problem-solving - tackle real-world challenges and find creative solutions to practical tasks.
- Teamwork and communication - work with others and improve your ability to share ideas clearly
- Organisation and time management - plan projects, meet deadlines, and manage your time effectively.
- Professional skills - understand what it's like to work in your chosen industry and develop confidence in a professional setting.
- Digital and technical know-how - use technology and digital tools relevant to your course, preparing you for modern workplaces.
- Independence and responsibility - take charge of your learning and show you can work on your own initiative

What are my future study and career pathways?

Depending on the course taken, there are vocational and apprenticeship opportunities, including further Level 2 or Level 3 courses at Coleg Cambria, or there are traditional academic subjects on offer at the college as well. The advantage of vocational qualifications is that you have an opportunity to learn in a more hands-on approach, while trying out the job sector that you are interested in.

Contact for more information: Mrs K Smith