

Year 9 Options: Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the difference between a GCSE and a Vocational/BTEC course?

The grades awarded are 9- to 1 for GCSE and Distinction* to Pass for a vocational/BTEC courses.

GCSE courses are normally 100% exam. Although some of these exams are practical exams done under strict supervision (controlled assessment). Written GCSE exams are taken at the end of the course and there are no re-sit options during Year 11.

BTEC/Vocational courses are more assignment based and grades submitted throughout the two-year course and can be improved upon. There is a short examination for all of these courses that can take place in either Year 10 or Year 11, often the pupil can resit this.

BTEC grades are roughly equivalent to the following GCSE Grades:

- Level 2 Distinction* = Grade 8/9
- Level 2 Distinction = Grade 7
- Level 2 Merit = Grade 5/6
- Level 2 Pass = Grade 4
- Level 1 Distinction= Grade 3
- Level 1 Merit= Grade 2
- Level 1 Pass= Grade 1

Why are all pupils taking a language?

Learning a language is a skill that pupils will carry with them for life- It is something that many adults wish they had kept up. Languages have always been highly regarded by universities and employers. The UK's lack of language skills costs the economy billions every year.

We have chosen to prioritise pupils taking a language at GCSE to keep their future options open and enable them to develop a skill which is highly valued that they will take with them beyond Barr Beacon.

At Barr Beacon School, we have been gradually increasing the number of pupils that take a language at GCSE during the last three years. The Department for Education (DfE) has stated that 90% of pupils should study a language at GCSE by 2025.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/761031/DfE_EBacc_Leaflet.pdf

Why is Triple Science now an option subject?

Previously, the school has selected the pupils who can study Triple Science and we have used attainment data to inform these decisions. However, with the change to options available to pupils, some pupils decided that they wanted to use their choices for different subjects.

Triple Science allows you to specialise in the three areas of Science and would be useful if you are considering taking a Science at A-Level. Please note that currently there is a pre-requisite of grade 6s in two Sciences to study Sciences at post-16. This is also achievable on the Combined Science route.

You will need to have a proven track record of attainment in your end of term assessments and transition tasks to select Triple Science. You may be asked to complete an additional assessment if you choose Triple Science as an option to inform your suitability.

What is the difference between GCSE PE and BTEC Sport, Activity and Fitness?

Whilst the scientific content of GCSE PE and BTEC Sport Exercise and Fitness is similar, there are differences between the two courses, which are important to note if you are considering taking a sport based subject.

The assessment of practical sports for GCSE PE requires significantly higher skill than that of the BTEC course, which means that the GCSE PE course is more suited to pupils who compete outside of school at high level in at least one sport and, compete at school level in a second and third sport.

Both the GCSE PE and BTEC Sport, Exercise and Fitness route have practical elements. Therefore, you should not base your choice on how much practical activity you will undertake– both courses have the same number of practical lessons.

The PE team will assess a pupil's suitability for GCSE PE based upon the three sports in which they participate. Some pupils may be directed to BTEC Sport, Exercise and Fitness based upon their practical ability in three sports.

Both courses are a useful pre-requisite to studying Level 3 Sports Science courses.