MAKING Choices

in year 8-9

PRIESTLEY COLLEGE WARRINGTON

CONTENTS

3 INTRODUCTION

4 - 5 WHAT SUBJECTS TO TAKE

6 - 7 WHAT TYPE OF COURSE WILL SUIT YOU BEST

8 HOW MANY SUBJECTS / TAKING EXAMS EARLY

9 - 10 HOW TO DECIDE / WHO CAN HELP YOU

11 CHECKLIST

INTRODUCTION

At the end of year 8 or 9 you have some exciting and important decisions to make about what you study in the last two years of your school life.

The subjects you decide to take could have a big impact on your options for future study and employment, but this is not something to worry about; you will have lots of help and support to make your choices. This booklet aims to help you start to think through these decisions.

WHAT SUBJECTS TO TAKE

COMPULSORY SUBJECTS

These are some compulsory subjects that everyone has to study:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science or Computer Science

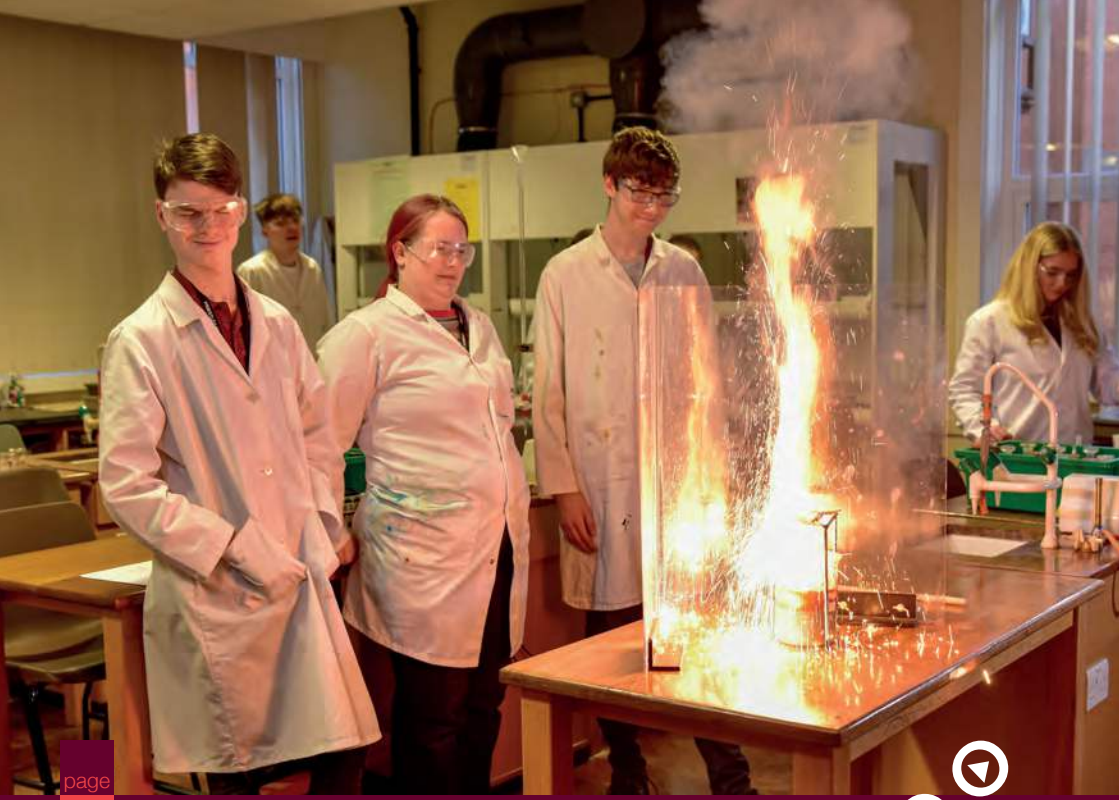
These subjects are usually studied at GCSE, or as part of another course like a vocational qualification.

Your school may offer other subjects or courses that you will need to study in Years 10 and 11, but you may not need to take exams. These include:

- Careers Education
- Citizenship
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Physical Education (PE)
- Religious Studies
- Sex and Relationships Education
- Work-related Learning

In addition some schools may make other subjects compulsory. You will need to check this with your teachers.

page 4



OPTIONAL SUBJECTS

As well as the compulsory subjects, there is a wide range of optional subjects and different courses that may be available at your school. Optional subjects might include:

- Art, Music and Drama
- Design and Technology
- History and Geography
- Business Studies
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Vocational or Work-related Subjects

Schools will offer different optional subjects and courses, so you will need to check what is available at your school.

WHAT TYPE OF COURSE WILL SUIT YOU BEST

DO YOU ENJOY LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON TASKS?

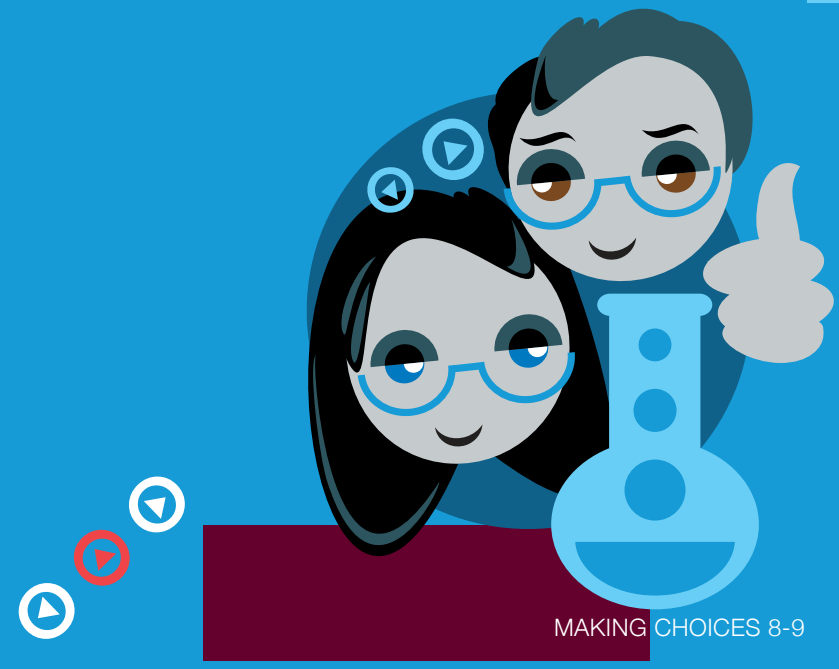
Courses such as NVQs and Vocational Awards offer you a chance to learn work-related skills through practical projects and work experience. These are sometimes called vocational courses.

DO YOU PREFER WRITTEN COURSEWORK AND EXAMS?

Courses like GCSEs cover general education subjects such as music, art, languages, geography and history. Some subjects will combine coursework with exams while others will just have exams. These are sometimes called academic courses.

As well as choosing what subjects you want to take, you will need to think about the way you prefer to study and learn.

page 6



WOULD YOU LIKE TO COMBINE BOTH WAYS OF LEARNING?

Some courses, such as BTEC Diplomas and OCR Nationals, combine classroom study with hands-on, practical learning. You may also be able to take a mixture of academic and vocational courses. For example, you may be able to take GCSEs alongside a Vocational Award, Certificate or Diploma.

DO YOU NEED TO BUILD UP YOUR CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS?

Foundation Learning is a learning programme that can help you to gain qualifications, skills and confidence. It is made up of lots of short courses, chosen to suit your interests and abilities.

HOW MANY SUBJECTS

A full programme of GCSEs is usually 8 different subjects, but you may be able to do more than this, or combine fewer GCSEs with another course.

If you prefer to focus some of your studies on coursework, you may be able to take vocational qualifications that will reduce the number of GCSEs you sit.

Courses such as BTECs, OCR Nationals or vocational qualifications are considered to be equivalent in size to one or more GCSEs.

Not all schools will offer the same courses so you'll need to check what is available at your school.

TAKING EXAMS EARLY

In some schools pupils are given the opportunity to take examinations a year early (in year 10) so they can take another subject in year 11. However, you need to think very carefully if you are asked to consider this option as many competitive courses at university will only look at the grade you achieve in a subject the first time you take it, and many of these courses now require a grade 5 or better.

In addition, to continue with some A-Level subjects, many colleges now require grade 4 or 5, and if you have a gap between taking a GCSE and an A-Level you may find it hard to start the subject again.

HOW TO DECIDE

Where you have choices to make, it is important for you to choose subjects that you want to do and are happy studying, as well as ones which will help you with any longer term ambitions about jobs, careers or further study. This will give you a much greater chance of success than choosing a subject that you struggle with or are not interested in, just because you think it is vital for your career ideas.

The more information you have about subjects and how they relate to future study and eventually a career, the better decisions you will make. You need to be sure the information you find out about jobs and careers is up to date and accurate. The best place for this is the National Careers Service 'Job Profiles' which you will find at: **nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk**

Start thinking about the kind of person you are. What interests you? What do you want to do in the future? For example, are you creative, technically minded or a good support for other people?

You may wish to visit www.priestley.ac.uk for advice and guidance.

WHO CAN HELP YOU

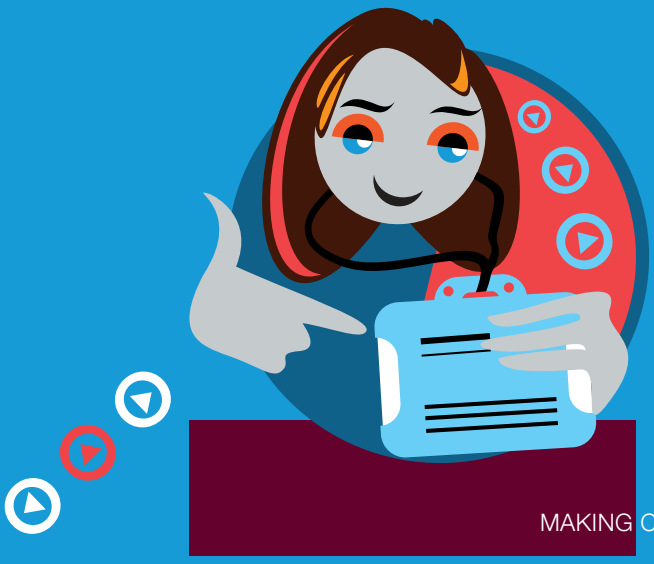
It can help to discuss your ideas and get some other opinions, but remember your final choice should be the one that's right for you.

Your subject teachers and personal/form tutor can help you to decide what subjects you might be good at, and which type of course would suit you best.

Your careers teacher or careers co-ordinator can give you information on what different course might involve, as well as how your school is offering careers guidance.

Your parents or carers, family and friends know you better than anyone, they know what you are good at, what you like and dislike and what kind of person you are. If you have family or friends who do the kind of job you are interested in, you could ask them about their work.

As a pupil at one of our partner schools you can also email a question to our qualified Careers Advisors at careers@priestley.ac.uk



CHECKLIST

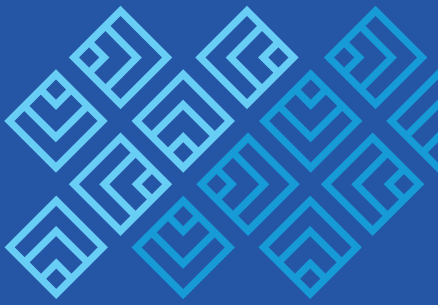
Before you make your final decisions about your choice of courses for years 9, 10 and 11, you can use this checklist to make sure you have done all the research and planning you need to do.

I have visited my school options evening and read my options booklet (if your school provides one)	
I have found out which compulsory subjects I have to take at my school	
I have found out which optional subjects and courses are on offer at my school	
I know which subjects and courses I will enjoy	
I know what type of course I would prefer - vocational, academic, a combination of both or a Foundation Learning programme	
I have found lots of information about the careers I am interested in	
I have spoken with other people about my career ideas and my options; for example teachers, parents or carers, a careers adviser	

Remember exams and qualifications continue to change, so the most important message is to do the very best in your GCSEs and you will have more options for study or employment after school.

Loushers Lane | Warrington | WA4 6RD
01925 415415

www.priestley.ac.uk



www.facebook.com/priestleycollege

@priestleysfc

*Information correct at time of going to print