

Sixth Form Prospectus 2016/17



St Mary's
Catholic School



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St Mary's

Sixth Form Prospectus 2016/2017

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Welcome

We are delighted that you are considering joining St Mary's Sixth Form as a place to continue your studies. We recognise that this stage in your life is crucial in establishing the key skills and



preparation for life beyond school, whether that be at university, further education or in the work place. Whether you're moving up from our school or joining us from elsewhere, our Sixth Form offers a highly distinctive experience. Being the only mixed, Catholic Sixth Form in the city, our Sixth Form is a vibrant and energetic place to study. Sixth Form life involves much more than simply academic study. At St Mary's, we are proud of the provision we offer, which allows students to develop a wide range of skills and knowledge, as well as providing many opportunities for students to develop as individuals in a more social, moral and spiritual sense. Our Sixth Form is characterized by its strong sense of community, its wide-ranging curriculum and its broad offer of extra-curricular activities. We have an outstanding Sixth Form Centre, a highly dedicated team of teachers and leaders – and a highly talented and industrious student body characterized by its enthusiasm, talent and intelligence.

Ethos

As a Sixth Form that is proud of its Catholic tradition, our ethos is very important. We are a very caring and supportive community where every student is valued and where every student's talents and interests are nurtured and encouraged. With around 180 students in our Sixth Form, every individual is known extremely well by the leadership team and form tutors, making our Sixth Form an extremely supportive place to study. Students are given many opportunities to explore and develop in faith, whether that is through contributing to form assemblies, leading prayer or the opportunities to develop faith through masses, pilgrimage and the John Paul II Award. Our Faith in Action is seen through much of the work we do. Students regularly make contributions to charity, by organizing events such as cake sales, car washes and other events, and Sixth Form students make a significant contribution to the care and support offered in the main school. Students in our Sixth Form are trained Peer Mentors and reading coaches, who help support students who are vulnerable or require support.

Achievement

At St Mary's, we are proud of the excellent exam results students achieve year on year. We achieved our best A-level results in 2015, with 100% of our

students achieving grades A*-E, with 32% achieving A*/A grades and 83% A*-C grades. Also, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Distinction and Distinction* grades awarded to students studying vocational subjects. Achieving such excellent results has meant that our students have taken up places at universities of their choice, with many taking up places at Russell Group universities.

Opportunities

There are many exciting opportunities for students to take up over the course of their time in our Sixth Form. We believe that it is important that students develop a broad set of social and leadership skills, as well as their academic skills, to prepare them for the next stage in their lives. In a competitive market, we seek to ensure that our students stand out from their peers. For example, students are offered opportunities to get involved with the Career Ready scheme, charity work throughout the city and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Life in the Sixth Form is busy and exciting. There is an atmosphere of focus and direction, but also a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. The support for sixth formers begins now, in Year 11, as we work with students and their families to ensure students are placed on appropriate courses that are suitable and that are linked to students' career aspirations.

From this prospectus you will get a strong sense of what is on offer at our distinctive Sixth Form. However, should you wish to discuss any aspect of the Sixth Form in more detail, you are more than welcome to contact us at the school.

We look forward to working with students in Year 11 and their families to ensure a smooth and enjoyable transition into the Sixth Form.

J Foster
Headteacher

D McKeating
Assistant Headteacher, Head of Sixth Form

Sixth Form Ethos

St Mary's Sixth Form is a unique place to study and has a distinctive ethos. It is the only mixed Catholic Sixth Form in the city and we take seriously our responsibility to nurture the Faith in our young people. Students from diverse cultures, faiths and ethnic backgrounds are welcomed equally and add to the richness of our community. We believe that it is our duty to offer a variety of experiences for our students, so that they can develop as dignified and fulfilled young people, who can leave our Sixth Form as well-rounded individuals ready to make a positive contribution to society.

Il Award. This award recognises the work young people undertake in their local, school and parish communities, where they have used their God-given talents in order to serve others.

We believe firmly in putting our faith into action, and students do this in a variety of ways. In recent years, students have worked closely with a range of charity organisations to raise awareness of the troubles women face in Kenya, the crisis in the Congo, as well as supporting charities such as CAFOD and Macmillan by



Every day, students have the opportunity to join their Form Tutor and peers in Morning Prayer. There are regular opportunities for collective worship throughout the year in the form of voluntary Masses and special Liturgies at important times in the Church's year, such as Advent and Lent. Sixth Form students have the opportunity for an annual Retreat at the Diocesan Youth Village and are also invited to attend the Diocesan Schools Summer Festival, which is always popular. Students are given the opportunity to take part in pilgrimage and this year, we launched the Pope John Paul

organising fund-raising events. Not only that, but taking on supportive roles in school, to help students who are vulnerable, are also ways in which our students can demonstrate their faith.

Our Sixth Form has a supportive atmosphere and, although we are a distinctively Catholic Sixth Form, we welcome and celebrate other faiths in our community too. Our students have high aspirations and so there is a strong focus on achievement and diligence. For example, during study periods, our students stay on site to continue their studies.



"I felt at ease immediately at St Mary's, like I always belonged here. The staff were really welcoming as were the students. Choosing to come here was the best choice I have ever made as St Mary's has helped me develop my character and given me a chance to succeed."

Tamara, a student in Year 13 who joined us from another school

Personal Support

The transition into Sixth Form can sometimes seem daunting. Specialising in certain subjects, as well as being expected to be able to work autonomously and prioritising tasks, can be difficult for some. To support this transition, students have daily contact with their Form Tutor, who will be experienced in supporting students and helping them to achieve their absolute best.

The relationship between the Form Tutor and student is essential to success in the Sixth Form, as they will monitor and support students throughout the two years of their studies. They will work with their tutees, getting to know them well as individuals, helping to nurture their talents and interests as well as supporting them academically. Form tutors will have the holistic

overview of how our students are progressing in the Sixth Form and they will be the first point of contact, if parents or students have any concerns or problems.

As well as a form tutor, students are supported by a Head of Year. As key leaders in the school, Heads of Year work with students and their families to ensure their needs are met. Heads of Year will monitor very carefully the pastoral and academic progress students are making, along with the Head of Sixth Form.

We work hard with parents and carers to ensure all of our students' needs are met. We are happy to discuss with parents any aspect of your child's needs and developments at any point throughout the course of the year.

Financial Support

16-19 Bursary

Students at St Mary's have the opportunity to apply for financial support to help them continue with their Sixth Form studies. The 16-19 Bursary was introduced by the government and payment should be used to help students fund such things as:

- Travel to and from school
- Stationery
- Travelling to university open days
- Books and revision guides

Bursaries are available to those students in the following categories:

- students from a household where the total income is below £20,817 before tax and National Insurance
- students in care
- students who have left care having been in care for a minimum of 3 months since the age of 14; or
- students whose parents are receiving income support
- students whose parents are receiving both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

Application forms are available in July 2016 and should be submitted, usually, by the end of October. More information on this can be found at

www.newcastle.gov.uk



“The quality of the pastoral care is excellent and results in outstanding personal development and well-being.” Ofsted



Nurturing High Ambition

St Mary's Sixth Form prides itself on creating a learning culture of high expectation, where all students are actively encouraged to maximise their potential. In doing so, we believe our students leave us as confident, articulate and caring people who are well equipped with the academic skills to succeed and flourish in higher education or the work place. At St Mary's, students attend lessons that are stimulating and challenging and, as an inclusive school, we endeavour to ensure that the needs of our talented and ambitious students are met in a variety of ways.

As well as ensuring our students are catered for through excellent teaching in lessons, our talented and ambitious students have recently been involved in a variety of opportunities.

- The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), to deepen and strengthen study skills in an area of the student's own choosing. This takes the form of a 5,000 word project that develops study skills, researching and appraising critical sources to shape students' work. Guided by a mentor, students have to work autonomously to complete this original piece of work and, as such, an EPQ is highly regarded by universities.
- Working through the Career Ready scheme (formerly Careers Academy UK) to secure placements in a variety of sectors including law and banking, as well as working with leading business mentors to work on developing skills to be successful in the workplace.
- Attending subject specific lectures and workshops at local universities.
- Reece Scholarships that are awarded to students who show an aptitude and talent for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects and who have an interest in pursuing Engineering at university. This prestigious award gives students the opportunity to work with companies on 'live' engineering tasks. Students have to work collaboratively and present their work to leading engineering firms. Students are awarded £1,000 throughout their time in Year 12 and Year 13.
- A thorough programme to prepare a high quality Oxbridge and Russell Group university application including residential visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities and mock interviews.
- Successful summer school placements at various leading universities including the Durham Progression Scheme and UNIQ, the summer school at Oxford University.



We are extremely proud of the academic achievement of our students. St Mary's Sixth Form has a track record for high achievement by the most able who consistently achieve A*/A grades in their chosen subjects at GCSE. Students mostly achieve A*- B grades in the most demanding subjects.

The examples above, however, only touch upon the many opportunities that are offered to all of our students to help them achieve everything to which they aspire.

Progression

At St Mary's, we take very seriously the responsibility that we have to ensure students are well prepared for whatever they plan to do after school. Whether that is university, an apprenticeship or a job, we want our students to use the skills they develop during their time with us.

We have an excellent record for students securing places at their first choice university and we are pleased that our students have high aspirations and ambitions. We have successfully supported students in their applications to leading universities and around 80% of students in 2015 received offers from leading Russell Group universities.

For those who decide that university is not for them, we have an employability group who meet tutors and Heads of Year regularly to discuss interview techniques and CV writing. Students are supported as they attempt to secure apprenticeships, internships and employment.

Curriculum 2016-2017

National changes to curriculum and assessment

Nationally, there are some significant changes that came into force from September 2015, regarding the way certain subjects are assessed at A-level. Previously, all A-level subjects have been modular, with units taken in Year 12 that are then carried forward and included in the overall A-level. However, some subjects from 2015 became linear, so that the AS qualification will not count towards the final A-level grade and more subjects will follow this assessment structure from September 2016. Information on which subjects are linear and which will remain modular can be found in the subject booklet with this prospectus. It is important that students understand the assessment regime in selecting their courses.

Subjects offered

The subjects we currently offer at A-level are: English Language, English Literature, Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, 3D Design, Philosophy and Ethics, Spanish, French, Russian, Art & Design, Textiles, Geography, History, Drama, Film Studies, Sports Studies, Business Studies, ICT, Psychology, Economics.

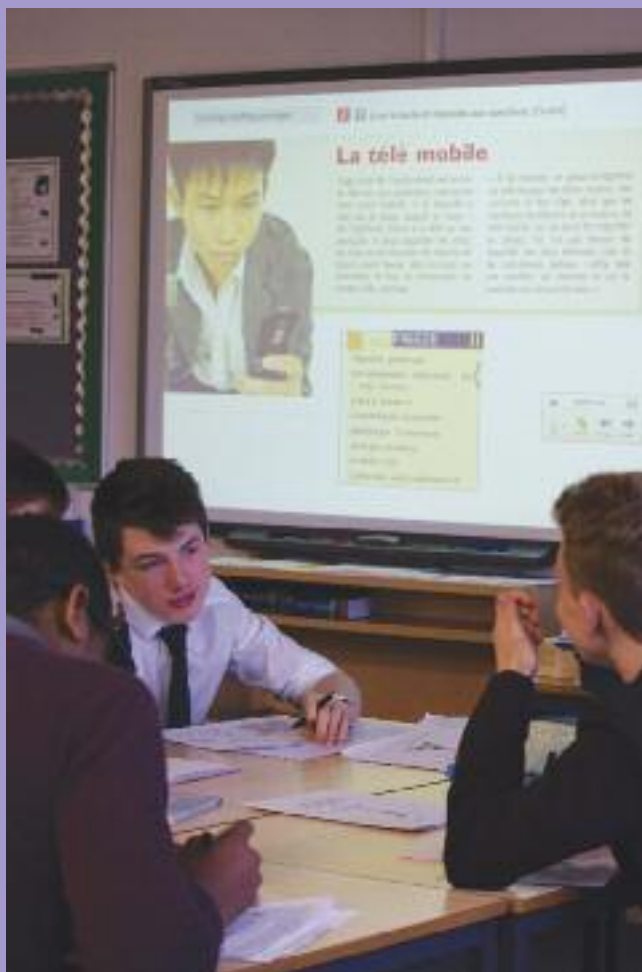
The vocational subjects that we offer are: BTEC Health and Social Care, BTEC Creative Media Production, Business Studies, Science and ICT. Our curriculum is reviewed regularly. For further information on subjects, please refer to the booklet included in this prospectus.

A-level pathway

Students pick 4 subjects based on their GCSE performance and their average GCSE grade. Students studying 4 A/AS-level subjects will, generally, have achieved 7-10 A*-B grades. In exceptional circumstances, students may study 3 subjects. The vast majority of students studying A-levels will have secured their GCSE English and Maths at grade A*-C.

We work closely with all students to give them individual guidance on their subject choices. It is very important that students start with an appropriate programme of study. We guide students to think very carefully about the combination of A-level subjects

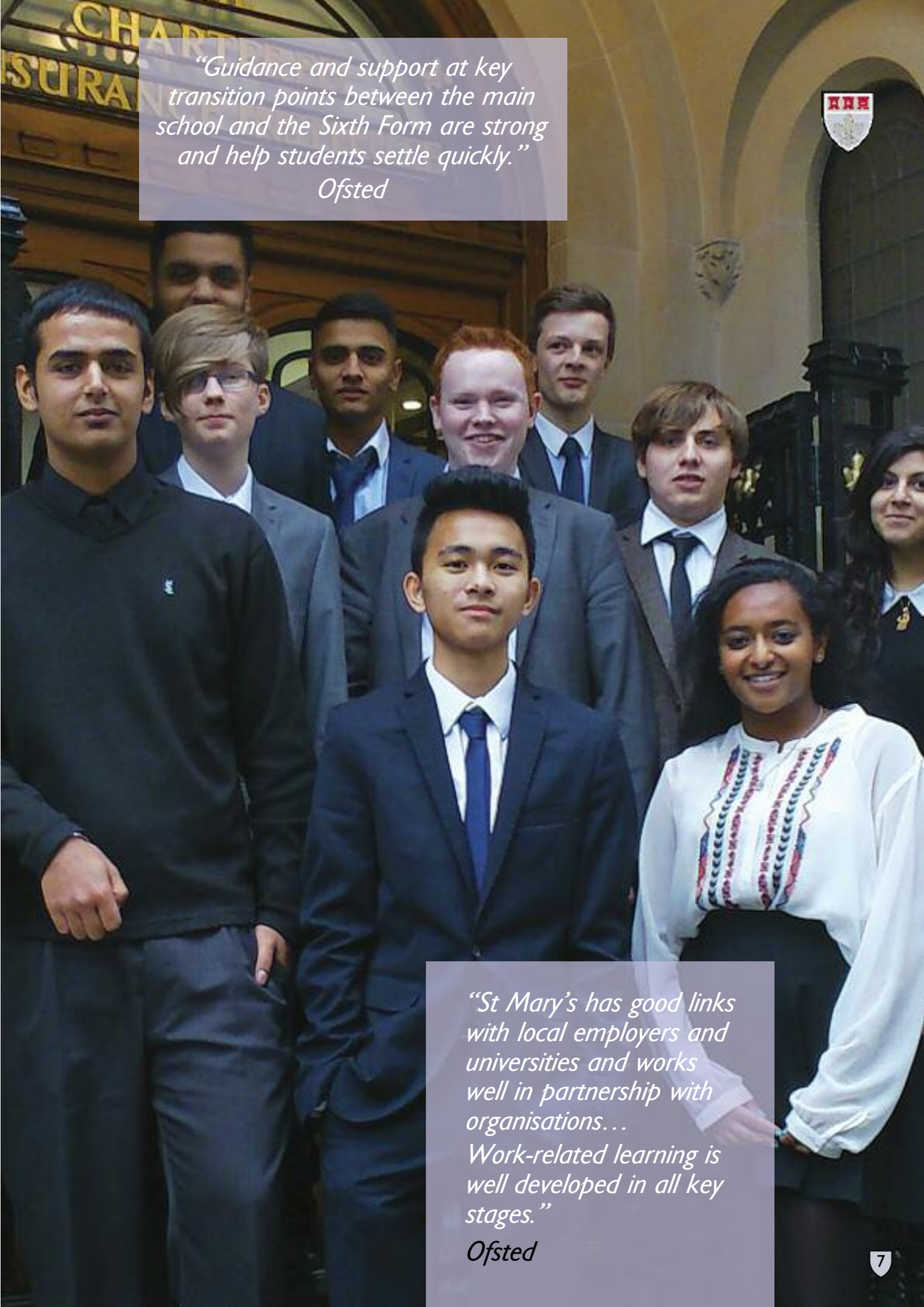
they opt for and, to secure the best outcomes, it is important that students consider this guidance very carefully.



Vocational pathways

Students who achieve mainly B and C grades at GCSE should consider the vocational pathway. Also, students who have successfully studied vocational subjects at KS4 are encouraged to consider this pathway. Vocational subjects are practical based subjects that are heavily weighted towards coursework. As accredited qualifications, our vocational subjects will prepare students well for university courses and are highly regarded by universities.

Some students may wish to take a mix of both vocational and academic subjects. This can be discussed with staff during the transition process.



“Guidance and support at key transition points between the main school and the Sixth Form are strong and help students settle quickly.”

Ofsted

“St Mary’s has good links with local employers and universities and works well in partnership with organisations...”

Work-related learning is well developed in all key stages.”

Ofsted

Core Curriculum

Our Core Curriculum is part of what makes our Sixth Form distinctive, as all students are offered the opportunity to study Religious Education, Sport, and the Pastoral Programme. Students are encouraged to take part in a wide and varied Enrichment Programme. This curriculum provides excellent foundations for studying in the Sixth Form and allows the students the opportunity to develop a variety of skills that will enhance their overall Sixth Form experience.

their ability or interest. In doing so, they are able to develop self-confidence, learn the importance of teamwork and explore their own strengths.

All students are encouraged to engage in a wide variety of sports and physical education opportunities throughout the year. Students will be provided with an opportunity once a week to participate in a variety of recreational sporting activities.



Religious Education

All students in the Sixth Form continue to study Religious Education. As part of a Catholic Sixth Form, students are encouraged to study and reflect upon ethical and philosophical issues. Studying RE provides students with an opportunity to explore the pressing and relevant issues of a modern society, as well as share and develop their own understanding of living by the Gospel values in a modern world.

Sport

Keeping fit is central to a healthy life so we encourage all students to keep fit and take part in sport, whatever

Pastoral Programme

Our varied and exciting Pastoral Programme offers students the opportunity to develop skills that will help them in their studies and in their preparations for life after Sixth Form. Students are offered impartial advice and guidance from speakers from a variety of backgrounds, sectors and professions as well as the opportunity to develop their skills in self-sufficiency, money management, travel and cooking. The important UCAS process and applications for employment and apprenticeships also form an important part of this programme.

Choosing Your Subjects



Picking subjects to study in the Sixth Form can be a difficult task and requires careful consideration. Here, we offer some advice and key questions to ask when thinking about which subjects you might want to choose.

Which subjects do you enjoy the most?

The amount of time you will have to spend studying your subjects in Sixth Form means you should pick subjects you enjoy. You should then look to ensure these are subjects that you will be able to cope with at a higher level and that you meet the entry requirements for the course.

Which subjects are you expecting to do well in?

Your predicted performance in your GCSE subjects will be a real indicator as to what you want to study at A-level. The work you do at GCSE will lay the foundations for the work in the Sixth Form. Talk to your teachers to discuss whether they think it would be suitable for you to study their subject in the Sixth Form.



Do you have a career/university course in mind? Do you require specific subjects?

Some degree courses specify subjects that should be taken in the Sixth Form. For example, to study Medicine you will need to secure a high grade in Chemistry. Think carefully about what you might want to do after Sixth Form and then look to see if you are required to have certain subjects. If you don't yet know what you want to



do after Sixth Form, then opting for a range of types of subjects will help keep your options open. You will, of course, have to ensure you meet the entry requirements for these courses.

What subjects will be most useful and will give you the best chance at success? As mentioned above, it might be that you want to keep your options open for when you make decisions about life after Sixth Form. Think carefully about the combinations of subjects you are studying too. Russell Group universities have published a guide of what they call 'facilitating subjects', which are subjects they think will help prepare students for the demands of an undergraduate course. These subjects include: English Literature, History, Modern Foreign Languages, Geography, Maths, Further Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. However, you can secure a place at leading universities having not studied these subjects. It is important to get a balance between the subjects you enjoy, have the best chance to succeed in and that will be relevant to you for the next stage of your life.

Who can you talk to about your options?

You will have the opportunity to discuss your options with a member of the St Mary's Leadership Team or the Sixth Form team. They will guide you and discuss with you the most appropriate options and pathways. Remember, discussing your options with teachers will also help you get a good idea of what is involved in a subject in the Sixth Form and your suitability for it.

Extra - Curriculum



Sixth Form Sport

There are many opportunities to develop sporting interests at St Mary's. We currently have a very successful basketball team as well as netball and football teams. Sixth Form students have been very keen, in the past couple of years, to organise a range of charitable sporting fixtures.

Not only do we offer a range of team sports, but students also have access to a modern, state-of-the-art gym. Students who have a keen interest in sport and fitness are encouraged to share their expertise by taking on a Sports Leader role. With this responsibility, students help other students as well as staff to use the gym.

Students who are talented in sport and who compete at a high level are supported by the school.

Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award



We are pleased to be able to offer students the opportunity to pursue the Duke of Edinburgh Award. This well recognised and highly valued award offers students the chance to develop a variety of life skills. They will take part in voluntary work, sport and expeditions.

Drama and Music

Sixth Formers enjoy taking part in drama productions. Several of the principal roles in this year's production of *The Lion King* will be taken by Sixth Form students. We have many talented musicians in our student body and there are also various opportunities to take part in the orchestra and the school choir.



International Links



Our Catholic ethos welcomes students from all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds and, in order to further the international dimension of our school, we have developed many exciting and successful links abroad. Sixth Form students have visited destinations such as Namibia, Peru and India, where they have helped local communities by working on charity projects, made possible through tremendous fund-raising efforts.

Our Sixth Form students have benefited hugely from these visits, gaining an array of life-changing experiences as well as enhancing their CVs in readiness for their applications to university. They have also been provided with an invaluable insight into the lives of people who are far less fortunate than themselves.



During the summer of 2014, a group of Sixth Form students embarked on a visit to India. The major component of the expedition was construction work, with the students assisting in putting an additional floor on to a building. This was at a centre for deaf children, run by the Church of Southern India, with the extra space created being earmarked for office and residential use. The accommodation in India was at a school, also run by the Church of Southern India, and our students were able to form many constructive relationships with the school children who lived there. In July 2016, a group of students will travel to the Philippines to work on similar projects and they are currently raising funds for this expedition.



Transition to Sixth Form



External Applicants

We warmly invite students who have studied their GCSEs at other schools to apply to our Sixth Form. The process is straightforward. Complete an application form, available from the school website, and submit it to the school by 12 February 2016. You will then be invited into school to meet the Head of Sixth Form to discuss aspects of your application and to discuss your options. Any offer of a place at St Mary's will be subject to entry requirements being met for specific courses and references from your current school.





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