

Year 9 Curriculum 2025/26

At Dunottar we want to add value to every pupil so that, no matter what a child's individual abilities are, they are challenged and supported to develop a love of learning and to be prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Our Warrior Learner concept encourages our pupils to embrace the behaviours of aspiration, tenacity, curiosity, creativity, collaboration, inclusivity and independence. Lessons are designed to allow pupils to display these behaviours and reporting at KS3 refers directly to these.

Lessons are well-paced, challenging and fun. Within the curriculum each pupil is encouraged to achieve his/her full potential. The curriculum aims to educate the whole person through creative thinking and creative learning and the curriculum at Dunottar School extends far beyond the classroom and is enriched by a wide range of co-curricular activities.

On the following pages you will find an overview of the topics covered in each subject during Year 9.

English

The aim of the final year of Key Stage 3 is to develop, extend and consolidate pupils' knowledge and skills in preparation for their GCSEs in English language and English literature.

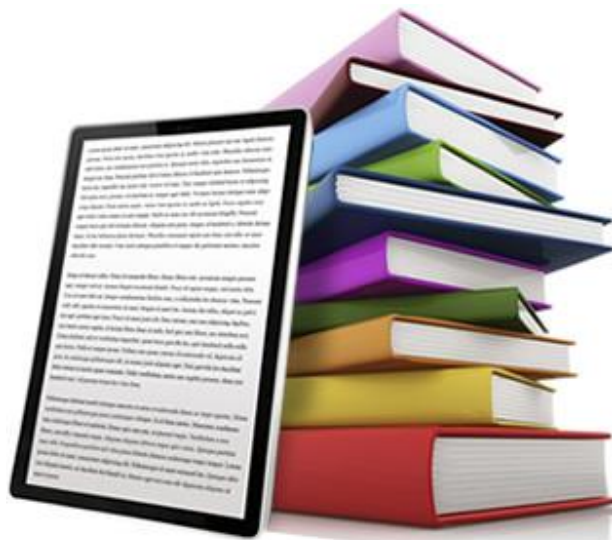
The GCSEs encourage pupils to read high quality, challenging literature as well as non-fiction texts from different genres. For this reason, Year 9 pupils sample a wide range of 19th-century fiction and nonfiction texts, building on their Year 8 knowledge of literature from this period. Pupils practise GCSE English language and literature skills, which we explicitly link to these texts.

Now that the pupils are more emotionally mature, we introduce them to war and conflict poetry, which forms an important part of our literary heritage. This also helps the pupils to appreciate a cross-curricular battlefields tour to Belgium and a cross-curricular WW1 day, organised by the history department.

Year 9 pupils study the following:

- War and conflict poetry through time
- A Shakespeare play
- A GCSE standard modern prose text
- 19th- to 21st-century fiction and nonfiction extracts
- Oracy: a public speaking competition

As wider reading helps to develop vocabulary and comprehension skills, we continue to encourage reading through Sparx Reader, an online reading platform designed to improve students' literacy skills and encourage a love for reading. We also recommend that pupils experiment with 19th-century classics.



Mathematics

In Year 9 pupils begin to study the Edexcel IGCSE Mathematics course, which can be sat at one of two levels, Foundation or Higher. As well as developing procedural fluency in mathematical techniques, pupils develop their problem solving skills, and learn to reason and communicate mathematically. All pupils study the content necessary to access both the Foundation and Higher level qualifications; most pupils sit the Higher level in Year 11. The decision as to whether a pupil is best suited to Foundation or Higher level is not made until Year 10. The IGCSE mathematics curriculum broadly falls into the following six strands. Aspects of each strand are taught in Year 9:

Number: Fractions, decimals, percentages, indices and surds

Algebra: Simplifying and solving expressions and equations

Ratio, proportion & rates of change

Geometry & measure: Angles, polygons, area, volume, Pythagoras and trigonometry

Probability

Statistics

Pupils are taught in ability sets and all sets follow the same flow of topics, meaning that pupils can easily move from one set to another to maximise their learning. In the spring term, a large number of pupils have the opportunity to compete in the Intermediate Maths Challenge, a national competition. A selected few pupils will also compete in the UKMT team challenge. Each pupil has access to Sparx, an online homework and independent learning platform. All homework will be set using this intuitive program with follow up support, or stretch and challenge tasks created from their homework responses.

Science

From the start of year 9 pupils begin the GCSE course, with every class following the separate science course. Pupils are set at this point and have three specialist teachers, one in each science. At the end of year 9 pupils in top set will continue with the separate science course and the rest of the cohort will proceed with Combined science.

Each pupil has three lessons in each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics per fortnight.

Biology Topics

- Cell Biology
- Ecology & Biodiversity

Chemistry Topics

- Atomic Structure & Periodic Table
- Bonding
- Atmosphere

Physics Topics

- Energy
- Electricity

Foreign Languages

In Year 9 pupils have a choice of continuing with either French or Spanish. For those with a real passion for languages, they have the option to continue as a dual linguist.

In year 9, Pupils consolidate and extend all prior learning and focus on developing the communication skills required for a strong start in GCSE. The topics in Year 9 are a lot more "grown up" and in line not only with GCSE specifications, but also with the interests of growing teenagers.

French and Spanish

Pupils will improve their knowledge of three time frames and extend their grasps of the language while focusing on topics such as family and relationships, home and region, festivals, celebrity culture, social media and free time. Role-plays, read alouds, photocards, dictations and general conversations are also used to develop speaking and listening skills.

Geography

The course opens with a spotlight on development, stereotypes and misconceptions where we try to answer the question 'How should we be measuring countries in the 21st century?'. Pupils will use a variety of GIS tools to investigate whether our traditional views of development are outdated through the use of gapminder, Dollar Street and ourworldindata.org amongst other sources.

Before Christmas we investigate urban areas and redevelopment including a fieldtrip to Battersea Power Station and a project based on applying sustainable, inclusive and accessible architecture and design to two sites in Redhill.

The new year leads us into an in-depth study of China as we consider 'Is China the world's next superpower?'. We pull all the geographical themes of the previous years together by considering its geography, population, environmental concerns, China's increasing global dominance economically along with its military strength and geopolitics. The One Child Policy is studied with its implications for China both now and in the future and pupils are increasingly exposed to a wide range of data presentation techniques and supported to interpret a range of data on which to form opinions. Environmental concerns in China and potential world-wide impact are covered, which leads into our climate change unit further on in the course.

In the summer term, pupils will be introduced to more enquiry questions through the study of climate change and challenged with deciding what course of action the Maldives should take against ever increasing sea level rises. Throughout all these units we continue to use and develop map skills, photo interpretation, data presentation and interpretation. An optional trip to Iceland is offered on rotation with other department's overseas trip.

History

The history curriculum in Year 9 builds on some of the topics covered in Year 8. Pupils will study a range of British and world history through the following enquiry questions:

Enquiry 1: Who was responsible for the abolition of the trade in enslaved Africans in the British Empire?

Enquiry 2: To what extent did the Emancipation of the enslaved Africans in the USA lead to equality?

Enquiry 3: How did 2 bullets in 1914 impact the lives of people in Britain and her Empire in the years 1914-1918?

Enquiry 4: How did World War One impact the politics of Europe up to 1939?

Enquiry 5: Why did the Second World War bear witness to the genocide of European Jews?

Enquiry 6: Race Relations in Britain in the twentieth century.

Religious Studies

Religious Studies in Year 9 is diverse and engaging. The curriculum explores important Theological, Moral and Philosophical Issues. The curriculum provides pupils the opportunity to think critically about the world around them and apply the knowledge that they gained in Years 7 and 8 to important questions.

Unit 1 - Truth and Reality: This philosophical unit examines the concepts of truth and reality. Pupils look at several philosophers and their views of truth and reality; Plato's analogy of the cave features heavily.

Unit 2 - What does the idea of suffering mean to Buddhists?: Pupils will gain an understanding of the life and teachings of the Buddha. In particular they will learn about his teachings toward suffering and apply these to their own lives.

Unit 3 - Is death the end?: Pupils unpack and analyse the question of what happens when we die from both religious and secular perspective. Pupils will look at and evaluate several pieces of evidence including Near Death Experiences and Reincarnation Stories.

Unit 4 – Ethics and Morality: This unit offers pupils the opportunity to examine Ethics. Pupils will assess wealth and sex inequality and study religious views on social inequality. They will also study and examine different ethical system and evaluate their use.

The Course will be expanded through a visit to a Buddhist temple and Horniman Museum and Gardens. Pupils will also complete an Extended Learning Opportunity project while studying the afterlife.

Outdoor Education

At Dunottar School, our Outdoor Education programme is a powerful extension of our academic curriculum, using practical bushcraft skills to forge the Warrior Learning Traits of Aspiration, Creativity, Curiosity, Tenacity, Independence, Collaboration and Inclusivity. It is through the focused discipline of bushcraft—the art of thriving in the natural world—that our students build tangible skills and personal resilience. By mastering hands-on challenges like building shelters, sourcing materials, and managing a fire, they develop profound tenacity and creativity. Their curiosity is awakened as they learn to read the landscape, identify flora and fauna, and discover solutions using what nature provides.

Every bushcraft activity is a lesson in character. Navigating woodland trails fosters independence and confidence, while essential team tasks like constructing a camp or cooking outdoors demand deep collaboration and inclusivity, teaching students to listen, lead, and support one another.

Outdoor Education at Dunottar, facilitated by authentic bushcraft experience, inspires Warrior Learners—equipped with practical capabilities, a reflective mindset, and the confidence to succeed not only in the classroom but for life.

Art & Design

In Year 9 pupils explore the uses of art as a form of narrative and the ways in which the visual guides today's modern world, with an emphasis on Portraiture and Street Art. They investigate a range of materials and processes and will develop their control of media and techniques through refinement of their work. They will continue to look at codes and conventions and how these are used to represent ideas, beliefs and values in works of art, craft and design. Pupils will continue to develop their ideas in their sketchbooks and consider alternative traditions in image making to enhance their knowledge and understanding of current practices in the creative fields.

Three-Dimensional Design

Three-Dimensional Design is on a half-yearly rotation with Food & Nutrition. In Year 9, pupils design a personalised logo using CorelDRAW and make an item of pewter-cast jewellery, using CAD/CAM (Computer Aided Design/ Manufacture) to produce a laser-cut mould and then hand-finish their cast item in the workshop. Additionally, they develop their design communication skills through a series of technical drawing exercises. Afterwards, the pupils are taught how to read an engineering drawing so they can manufacture a bottle opener from mild steel.

Food & Nutrition

In Year 9 pupils will have studied a range of commodities including:

- Fruit and Vegetables
- Grains and cereals
- Meat, fish and poultry
- Pulses, legumes and meat free alternatives
- Dairy products
- Fats, oils and sugars

They will be learning about the functional and nutritional properties of each commodity through a range of practical tasks which include making a variety of dishes, such as, fruit salad with sugar syrup, mini apple and blackberry tarts, Swiss roll, and creme brulée. The course also aims to develop a lifelong interest in food, we include two independent food preparation tasks, designed to encourage the development of new skills, creativity and independence.

Computing

In Year 9 pupils study cyber security and learn about threats to IT systems and what can be done to prevent them. They develop their programming skills in Python which prepares them for embarking on a GCSE if they wish to study Computing further. Artificial Intelligence is a growing and complex area of technology which has applications in a vast range of areas of modern life. We give an introduction into how neural networks work and how they are used in machine learning. Pupils gain an insight into current applications of AI and the ethical issues involved.

Drama

During Year 9, the curriculum closely mirrors the structure of the GCSE Drama course. Pupils study a range of styles and practitioners; looking at the work of Stanislavski and the theatre company Frantic Assembly. Pupils consider the stylistic differences, learning how to perform in the style of these practitioners, analysing and evaluating the impact different styles have on an audience. During the year, pupils will practically study the plays DNA by Dennis Kelly, The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime by Mark Haddon and Simon Stephens and Bouncers/Shakers by John Godber and Jane Thornton. This will help the pupils continue to develop the skills and knowledge needed for success during the practical assessments in the GCSE Drama course. They will study a range of rehearsal techniques to develop their performance, evaluating the impact these rehearsal techniques have on their performance in preparation for the GCSE written exam.



Music

Music pupils in Year 9 continue to study music until the end of the academic year. The importance of appraising, performing, and composing is littered throughout the curriculum and pupils are given regular opportunity to develop all these skills. Singing still holds an important focus within the curriculum and these skills will be developed throughout the year. Instrument skills are continued to be developed through the keyboard, ukulele or students bringing their own instruments in to lessons. Over the course of Year 9, pupils opt to take GCSE music into Year 10 and much of the content covered in Year 9 builds contextual understanding and musical awareness for the GCSE Eduqas specification.

In Year 9, pupils learn about:

Film Music: Pupils will have the opportunity to learn all about the evolution of film music. Pupils will get to grips with how to create the ultimate film soundtrack and explore what it takes to become a top film composer. Pupils will learn about the evolution of leitmotif and its use in film; the art of 'mickey-mousing' and creating mood in film music. Pupils will then have a go at composing an underscore using GarageBand software to a given film scene and watch their music come to life.

What Makes a Good Song: Pupils will learn about what it takes to create the ultimate song. Pupils will explore different genres such as pop, rock, musical theatre, blues and EDM (electronic dance music), learning how the structure of song works, developing chord sequences, creating their own melodic motifs and beats, as well as having a go at writing their own lyrics. Pupils will have the opportunity to create their songs on a mixture of acoustic instruments or electronically.

Development of Western Music: Pupils will learn about the history of music and look at specific features of Baroque music, Classical music, and Romantic music. This unit of work will teach them the historical context of each time period as well as musical features and key musical concepts that will support them if they decide to take GCSE music.

Physical Education

Physical Education During Key Stage 3 the pupils follow a programme which includes rugby, football and cricket for the boys and netball, football and cricket for the girls. Swimming is half-termly for all pupils in the Autumn and Spring term, whilst athletics is embedded into the Summer PE rotations in preparation for athletics events and sports day. Within weekly 'PE' lessons students will complete 6-week blocks of Physical Activity. We cover a broad range of activities throughout our 'PE' curriculum and within each activity we bed in GCSE PE terminology, so we are building a strong foundation and understanding of sport (tactical and technical) and physical activity from Year 7 through to Year 9 when students chose their GCSE options.

All of our 'PE' lessons are geared up to help students identify how to live a healthy and active lifestyle through the participation of sport and physical activity. Throughout the PE and Games lessons, students will experience different roles, such as coaching and officiating too, to develop their communication and leaderships skills. Co-curricular clubs run during both lunchtimes and after school for both competitive and recreational activities with fixtures taking place during the week and on Saturday mornings.

PSHEE/RSE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education and Relationships and Sex Education)

PSHEE is taught as a timetabled lesson by allocated members of staff with a number of the themes being followed up in Assemblies, with outside speakers and in form times. The pupils follow a progressive course which builds on topics over the years.

Topics covered in Year 9 include: Healthy Lifestyles, Respectful Relationships, Setting Goals, Employability, Options Choices, sexuality, norms and sexual content.

In the Autumn Term the pupils are given time to look at their GCSE options choices and to investigate the various subjects in depth whilst considering possible future careers. Staff specialise in an area of delivery with the result being an expertise amongst the staff in approaching sometimes challenging topics. We ensure full coverage of RSE and the statutory expectations of the government guidance. As part of the PSHEE programme, pupils also follow a varied Careers programme where they investigate changing trends in the world of work, discuss the role of various jobs in society and start to consider their rights and responsibilities in the world of work.

Subject	Lessons/fortnight	Subject	Lessons/fortnight
Maths	8	Games	4
English	8	General Science:	
Library	0	Biology	3
History	3	Chemistry	3
Geography	3	Physics	3
RE	3	PSHEE & RSE	2
French or	3	Drama	3
Spanish	3	Computing	3
Art	3	Music	3
Food/DT	3		
PE	2		