

CARSHALTON BOYS SPORTS COLLEGE

Year 8 into Year 9 Pathways 2026

Frequently Asked Questions

Supporting parents and carers through the Pathways process

THE THREE-YEAR KEY STAGE 3 CHANGE

Q: Why is the school moving to a three-year Key Stage 3?

A: Recent government legislation and curriculum reforms now require all schools to deliver a three-year Key Stage 3. Carshalton Boys Sports College is embracing this change because we believe it offers significant benefits for our pupils. A three-year KS3 ensures breadth and balance by keeping a wider range of subjects for longer, provides depth and stretch by giving more time to master complex skills before GCSE pressure begins, and improves retention by reducing the gap between learning content and sitting exams.

Q: Does this mean my son won't start GCSEs until Year 10?

A: That's correct. Under the new structure, your son will follow the full National Curriculum through to the end of Year 9. His Level 2 and GCSE qualifications will begin in September of Year 10 (2027) and run through to the end of Year 11 (2029). Year 9 acts as a "Bridge" year, combining the National Curriculum with two taster option subjects to prepare him for the transition.

Q: Is two years (Year 10 and Year 11) enough time to complete a GCSE course?

A: Yes, absolutely. GCSE and Level 2 vocational courses are specifically designed to be delivered over two years. The Department for Education sets Guided Learning Hours (GLH) for each qualification, and two years provides more than sufficient time to cover all required content, complete coursework or controlled assessments, and prepare thoroughly for examinations. In fact, many schools nationally already deliver GCSEs over two years.

Q: Will my son be disadvantaged compared to students at other schools who start GCSEs in Year 9?

A: Not at all. Schools that previously started GCSEs in Year 9 were often delivering three years of content that is designed for two. This sometimes led to content being forgotten before exams, or time being spent on unnecessary repetition. Our approach ensures your son builds a stronger academic foundation in Year 9 and then studies GCSE content in a focused, concentrated way over Years 10 and 11. This is fully in line with the government's direction of travel for all schools.

YEAR 9 CURRICULUM AND BRIDGE OPTIONS

Q: What subjects will my son study in Year 9?

A: All pupils will continue to study the full National Curriculum in Year 9. This includes: Core subjects (English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, and PE); Foundation subjects (History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Citizenship, Computing, Religious Education, and Personal Development); Creative and Tech subjects (Art and Design, Music, and Design and Technology); and Academic Enrichment (study skills and Work Outside the Classroom). In addition, your son will choose two "Bridge" option subjects from a list of available choices.

Q: What are the "Bridge" option subjects available for Year 9?

A: All pupils can choose from the following: Construction, Creative i-Media (IT), Drama, Engineering, Enterprise and Marketing (Business), Hospitality and Catering, Media Studies, and Photography. A selected number of pupils may also be offered: Classical Civilisation, Higher Project Qualification, and Oracy and Public Speaking.

Q: How were the “Bridge” option subjects selected? Why aren’t subjects like History or Geography included?

A: The Bridge options are subjects that are not already part of the compulsory National Curriculum in Year 9. Subjects like History, Geography, and Modern Foreign Languages are already studied by all pupils as part of the foundation curriculum, so there is no need to choose them as a taster — your son will already be studying them. The Bridge options allow pupils to explore subjects they would not otherwise encounter until Year 10.

Q: Does my son have to continue his Bridge option subjects to GCSE?

A: No, there is no obligation to continue a Bridge option subject to GCSE. The Year 9 taster is designed to give pupils a flavour of the subject so they can make a more informed choice when the full GCSE options process takes place in the Spring term of Year 9 (2027).

Q: What if my son wants to take a subject at GCSE that is on the Bridge options list but he didn’t choose it in Year 9?

A: This is a crucial point: if your son thinks he might want to study a subject from the Bridge options list at GCSE or vocational level in Year 10 and 11, he MUST select it as one of his two Year 9 taster choices. He will not be able to pick it up for the first time in Year 10 if he has not studied it in Year 9.

Q: Can my son swap a Bridge option after choosing it?

A: We strongly try to avoid swaps once choices have been made. Changing a Bridge option mid-year would result in a loss of learning and significant disruption to your son’s progress. There are also practical considerations around class capacity — groups may already be full, so we cannot guarantee that a swap would be possible even if requested. This is exactly why it is so important to make careful, well-informed choices from the start. We encourage you to attend the Parents’ Evening on 26th March, talk to subject teachers, and use tools like Unifrog to help your son make the right decision before submitting.

Q: My son isn’t sure what he wants to do — how should he choose?

A: Encourage your son to think about what he genuinely enjoys and is curious about, rather than choosing based on what friends are doing or because he likes a particular teacher (teachers can change between year groups). The Unifrog platform is an excellent tool for exploring how subjects link to future careers and interests. We also recommend speaking to subject teachers at the Parents’ Evening on 26th March for personal guidance.

Q: What are the “additional options” for selected pupils (Classical Civilisation, HPQ, Oracy)?

A: These three options are available to a selected number of pupils based on suitability and capacity. If your son is eligible, he will be informed by the school. These subjects offer enrichment and academic stretch and can complement a pupil’s broader programme of study.

YEAR 10 AND 11 OPTIONS (LOOKING AHEAD)

Q: What happens with options in Year 10 and 11?

A: In the Spring term of Year 9 (2027), there will be a second, final options process. Your son will choose four additional GCSE or vocational subjects to study alongside his compulsory core. At least two of these four must come from two different categories: Category A (Geography, History, Religious Studies), Category B (Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Design and Technology), and Category C (French, Spanish, or another Modern Foreign Language). The remaining two choices can come from any category or from the Bridge option subjects studied in Year 9.

Q: Will my son still study English, Maths, and Science in Year 10 and 11?

A: Yes. English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science, and Core PE remain compulsory throughout Years 10 and 11. Your son will also continue with Personal Development (including PSHE, Citizenship, Computing, and Financial Literacy) and Academic Enrichment.

Q: Does my son have to take a language or a humanities subject at GCSE?

A: Following recent government announcements, pupils must choose at least two of their four option subjects from two different categories. These categories include humanities (Category A), creative and technical subjects (Category B), and languages (Category C). Your son does not have to take a subject from every category, but he must pick from at least two of the three. We will provide full details during the Year 9 options process in Spring 2027.

SUBJECTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

Q: What subjects will be available as GCSE and vocational options from Year 10 (September 2027)?

A: Following queries, we would like to confirm that our intent is for the following subjects to be offered as options for the start of study in September 2027 (these will be selected when the pupils are in Year 9):

Art; Citizenship; Classical Civilisations; Computer Science; Construction; Creative i-Media (IT); Drama; Engineering; Enterprise & Marketing (Business Studies); French; Geography; History; Hospitality & Catering; Media Studies; Music; PE BTEC; PE GCSE; Photography; Product Design; Religious Education; Separate Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics); Spanish.

The Higher Project Qualification and Oracy are to be offered as enrichment options in Year 10 (during Academic Enrichment lessons) outside of any other qualifications.

Q: I can't see PE GCSE or PE BTEC on the Year 9 Bridge options list — can my son still take PE as a qualification?

A: Yes. PE GCSE and PE BTEC will both be available as option choices for Year 10 and 11 (from September 2027). They do not appear on the Year 9 Bridge options list because the foundational theory content for these qualifications will be taught to all pupils as part of their National Curriculum PE lessons in Year 9. This means every pupil will receive the grounding they need during Year 9, and PE GCSE or PE BTEC will then be offered as an option during the Year 9 options process for study starting in Year 10.

Q: Will this be Triple Science or Combined Science — and if it is Combined Science, does it still count as two GCSEs?

A: All pupils will undertake at least Combined Science. This equates to **two GCSE qualifications**. However, pupils will have the option of studying Separate Science, which will mean qualifications in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics as separate GCSEs — therefore **three GCSE qualifications**.

Separate Science qualifications will be part of the options process in Year 9, to start studying in Year 10. Year 9 will be a foundation year for all science pupils, and then they will undertake their chosen science qualifications in Year 10 and Year 11.

Q: How many GCSEs will my son take in total?

A: All pupils will take GCSEs in the following compulsory subjects:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Mathematics
- Science — this will either be the Combined Science GCSE (which counts as two GCSE qualifications even though pupils study the three disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics) or Triple Science, which means three Separate Science GCSE qualifications: one in Biology, one in Chemistry, and one in Physics.

In addition, pupils will choose **4 additional option subjects**, unless they have opted for Separate Sciences, in which case it would be **3 additional options** (as Separate Science takes one of the option slots).

So, in total, your son will achieve **9 GCSE qualifications**. If he opts for Separate Sciences, this still amounts to 9 qualifications in total, as Separate Science uses one of the four option slots (giving him 3 remaining free options plus 3 science GCSEs, rather than 4 free options plus Combined Science counting as 2).

THE BROMCOM / MCAS SELECTION PROCESS

Q: How do I submit my son's option choices?

A: The process is entirely digital. You will use the My Child at School (MCAS) web portal at www.mychildatschool.com to access the Pathways options module. Log in using your existing MCAS credentials. You can also access it through the MCAS App, though the web portal is recommended for the best experience as the smartphone display can be limited.

Q: When does the selection portal open?

A: The Pathways selection portal opens on Friday 27th March 2026, the morning after the Year 8 Parents' Evening on Thursday 26th March. The deadline for submitting your son's choices is Wednesday 22nd April 2026.

Q: Where do I find the Options module on MCAS?

A: Once logged into MCAS, you can find the Options module either in the left-hand menu or in the category section on your dashboard. Look for "Options" in the navigation list or scroll down on the dashboard to find the Options widget, which will show a setup named "Pathway" with an "Editable" status.

Q: How do I make and submit the choices on MCAS?

A: Once you open the Options module, you will see a stepped process (Steps 1 through 4). At each step, use the drop-down menus to select your son's preferred subject and a reserve choice. You can use the "Save for later" button if you need more time to decide. When you are happy with all choices, click "Submit" on the final screen. Please note: once submitted, the form cannot be changed through the portal.

Q: Can I change my son's choices after submitting?

A: No — once the form is submitted via MCAS, it is locked and cannot be edited through the portal. If you need to make changes after submission, please email Allie Insch directly at aansch@carshaltonboys.org with the details of the changes you wish to make.

Q: What if I'm having technical issues with MCAS or the app?

A: A full User Guide will be provided to help you navigate the process. If you experience any technical issues, please contact the school's admin team for support. We recommend using the web portal (www.mychildatschool.com) on a laptop or desktop computer rather than the smartphone app, as the app display can be limited and harder to navigate for this process.

Q: Why do I need to select reserve choices?

A: Reserve choices are vital. If a course is oversubscribed or cannot run for financial or staffing reasons, the reserve choice ensures your son is allocated a subject he is still interested in. Without a reserve, the school would have to assign a subject on his behalf, which may not reflect his preferences.

Q: Can I use the MCAS app on my phone to submit choices?

A: You can access the Options module through the MCAS App, but we recommend using the full web portal on a computer or tablet. The smartphone display can be limited and it may be difficult to navigate the drop-down menus and review your selections properly on a small screen.

GENERAL QUERIES

Q: What are the key dates I need to remember?

A: Thursday 12th March 2026: Y8 into Y9 Pathways Meeting at 5pm in the Sports Hall. Thursday 26th March 2026: Y8 Parents' Evening (face-to-face). Friday 27th March 2026: Pathways Selection Portal opens on MCAS. 30th March – 10th April 2026: Easter Break (a good time to discuss choices as a family). Wednesday 22nd April 2026: Deadline for submitting Y8 into Y9 choices. June 2026: Final confirmation of Year 9 Bridge subjects sent home.

Q: What is Unifrog and how can it help?

A: Unifrog is a universal destinations platform available to all pupils at Carshalton Boys. It helps students explore careers, subjects, and future pathways to make more informed decisions about their options. Features include interest and personality profiles, a careers library, and a subjects library. If your son has forgotten his login details, he should speak to his tutor or contact hbishop@carshaltonboys.org.

Q: Who should I contact if I have further questions?

A: For general year group queries: Mr Matt Marrs, Head of Year 8 — mmarrs@carshaltonboys.org. For questions about the options process structure and policy: Mr Matt Robinson, Deputy Principal — mrobinson@carshaltonboys.org. You can also submit queries through contact@carshaltonboys.org

Q: I missed the Pathways Evening — can I still get the information?

A: Yes. A media clip covering the full Pathways presentation is available for you to watch. This covers all the key information about the three-year Key Stage 3, the Year 9 Bridge options, and the selection process. If you still have questions after watching, please do not hesitate to contact the school using the details above.

Q: What happens if a course doesn't run?

A: Occasionally, a course may not run due to low uptake or staffing and resourcing constraints. This is why we ask for reserve choices during the selection process. If your son's first-choice subject cannot be offered, his reserve choice will be used instead. The school will communicate any changes to you before the start of the academic year in September.
