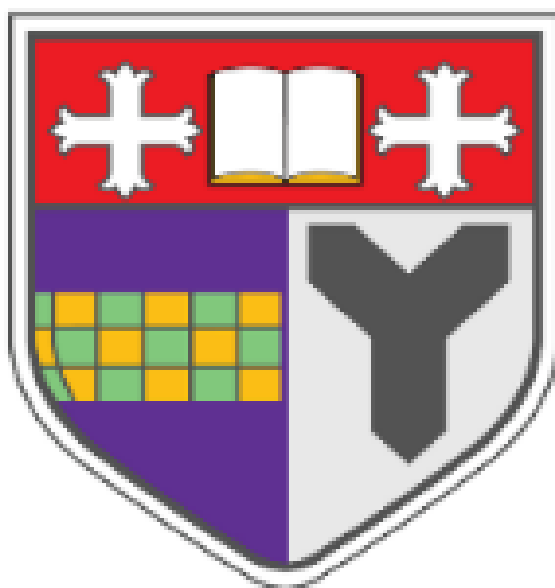


Senior Phase

S3 into S4

Personalisation and Choice

A Guide for Pupils, Parents and Carers



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St. Joseph's Academy

January 2026

Dear Pupil,

In the coming weeks, you will take part in a programme to help you make informed choices about your learning in S4.

Through this programme you will have an opportunity to reflect on the following:

- your own strengths and interests
- the importance of keeping an open mind about possible career choices
- how to find and use career resources

We will share links to a variety of support files and presentations via Glow.

After attending the information evening and/or viewing the presentations online, we expect you to access the My World of Work website with your parent/carer. During January, every pupil in S3 will take part in an interview with a member of the Pastoral Care or Senior Leadership Team, during which your options will be finalised (barring any minor changes after reports are issued).

Yours sincerely

Mrs Buchanan
Acting Head Teacher

Senior Phase

S4 marks the beginning of what is known as the Senior Phase. In S4, you are usually presented at one of three levels.

National 3

This qualification continues at the level of content covered at third level in the Broad General Education. There are no final exams, and all of your work is marked in school. You will either pass or fail a National 3 course.

National 4

There is no exam in a National 4 course. Your work is assessed in school, and you can either pass or fail a course. If you pass a National 4 course in S4 then you may progress to the National 5 course in that subject during S5. In some cases, progression to National 5 in the same subject may not be the best course of action. Sometimes supplementary National 4 qualifications or alternative SCQF5 awards may be better suited to your needs. Each case can be examined and discussed with pastoral care and principal teachers on a pupil-by-pupil basis.

National 5

National 5 courses are on offer in all subjects. In nearly every subject you will sit an exam at the end of S4. The marks you gain in this exam will be added to coursework tasks to determine your final grade. The course is graded using the letters A, B, C, D and F. Progression from an 'A' or 'B' at National 5 will usually allow pupils to undertake Highers in S5.

How many subjects will I study in S4?

In total, you will study seven examinable subjects plus core RE, PE and PSE. All pupils are obliged to study Maths and English until the end of S4. This means that you will **select five subjects** during the options process.

Personalisation and Choice

There are three conditions when selecting subjects:

- You cannot select a subject that you did not study in S3
- You cannot select all three traditional Science subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
- You cannot select both PE (Team Sports) and PE (Aesthetics – Dance) as they are assessed against the same National 5 PE curriculum, but branch based on personal interest. If you wish to study PE, you select one or the other

Science Combinations

It is not possible to select three Science subjects at the end of S3. Very few, if any, University level courses state the need for three Sciences as an entry requirement. The overwhelming majority of courses seeking a Science qualification from school leavers will state Chemistry as a necessary Science.

In general, pupils wishing to study engineering would select Physics alongside Chemistry, and those wishing to study Medicine, Dentistry etc. would take Biology alongside Chemistry.

ESOL

Some pupils speak English as an additional language. Those pupils are eligible to sit ESOL – (English for Speakers of Other Languages). During the session, Mrs Hoy and Mrs Lloyd will work with you and your English teacher to decide whether you will sit ESOL, English or both ESOL and English. This only applies where English is not your first language.

Is there any advice that I should follow when choosing my subjects?

Yes, this is an important time of your school life, and you should speak to your teachers, family and our careers adviser about your thoughts and ideas. In general, it is important to consider the following when making your choices.

Your skills, talents, and interests

You should think carefully about your own God-given skills and talents. Some of us are very creative, others very sporty, some enjoy problem solving, others reflective writing or number processing. Think about what you are naturally good at. It is also important to think about subjects that capture your attention or interest outwith school.

Your family

Your family know you best and always have your best interests at heart. The advice that you receive from your family plays an important role in the subject choices that you make. Take time to talk to your family about your choices. Ask those at home to help you decide. Your family will also have an idea of your progress based upon your homework and school reports. Often the advice that your family can provide is crucial at this time of your life.

There are some great resources available to families as they help their sons/daughters make subject choices.

Parentzone

[Parentzone Scotland | Education Scotland](#)

This website has been designed by Education Scotland to support parents and carers as they strive to understand the new curriculum and qualifications.

My World of Work

[Making option choices | My World of Work](#)

My World of Work is a Skills Development Scotland service that provides a unique mix of resources, features and job information to help people discover more about themselves and the future world of work. You can also access My World of Work from Glow. We strongly encourage parents/carers to use this site with pupils.

National Parent Forum for Scotland

<https://www.npfs.org.uk/downloads>

The National Parent Forum for Scotland website contains a series titled 'Nationals in a Nutshell'. The online guides can be used to find out more about National 4 and National 5 qualifications. The site contains various guides that can be downloaded as necessary.

Your friends

Friends are important people in your lives, and you will often share similar interests. However, it is important to remember that your friends may have skills and talents that are different to yours. We always advise you to make choices that provide you with the opportunity to study subjects that you enjoy.

Sometimes this means that you will not choose to take the same subjects as your friends. Even if you pick the same subject as your friends, there is no guarantee that you would end up in the same class. Be careful that you do not pick a subject just because your friend has taken a subject. You could end up studying a course that does not make best use of your talents and skills.

Your teachers

Your teachers are highly professional and strive to offer you a first-class education. Naturally, you may have teachers that you get on with very well or who bring subject content to life and inspire you. In a similar way to the influence of your friends, this is an important part of school life. However, you do not know if your teacher will be able to take your class in S4. The relationship that you have with your teacher is very important, but it should not be the only factor that you consider when taking a subject on.

Your future

Some pupils will have a clear idea about what they want to do when they leave school. Other pupils will not yet have thought about the future or have not decided on a pathway. In either case, it is important to speak to your Pastoral

Care teacher and Miss Faulds (SDS careers adviser) to discuss your plans and thoughts.

Will I get to study my first-choice subjects?







We always aim to ensure that all pupils get to study their preferred subjects in S4. However, sometimes courses do not run because of low uptake or due to timetabling constraints. Generally, a course needs at least ten pupils to run. If a course is oversubscribed, we may also have to look at your intended career path before coming to a decision about whether we should allocate a space to you. If this were the case, we would work closely with you and your parents/carers to find a solution.

Progression to S5 and S6

Remember that the choices you make now will have an influence on what you can study in S5 and S6. At this stage, you will simply select subject preferences. Your working levels will not be set until courses begin, but information shared via your S3 report later this month will provide an insight into your current and projected working levels.

Consider the future

The progression pathways are shown below.

S4	S5	S6
National 3 	National 4 	National 5
National 4 	National 5 	Higher
National 5 	Higher 	Additional Highers or Advanced Higher

Sometimes pupils do not progress from one level to the next. This table is illustrative of the desired progression route for pupils. Each pupil is different and sometimes progression takes the form of adding supplementary qualifications at the same level of study but in a different subject area. However, it is always our view that you should aim to attain qualifications in a

progressive manner (i.e., attain at a level in S4 and progress to choices in S5 that will allow you to attain at the next level).

For subject or career specific pathways, please speak to our Careers adviser, your pastoral care teacher, or a member of the Senior Leadership team.

College Provision - Can I take college courses in S4?

Yes, for some pupils, college courses mixed with in-school courses are the correct pathway in S4. It is important to consider the level of study. Normally, S4 pupils will only be considered for SCQF Level 4 & 5 courses. For SCQF4 and SCQF5 courses, you would attend College on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Even if you wish to apply for a school/college course, you must **still select seven school subjects**. Selecting a school/college course is an additional 8th subject. This to guard against not being accepted onto the chosen college course. They have their own selection process, which can include application form/personal statement, interviews and skills/aptitude tests. If successful, pupils then have the option to take up their college place, however this will be instead of the school course which is timetabled for Tuesday and Thursday Periods 6 & 7. Staff from Ayrshire College will visit school in the coming weeks to assist with the application process.

Courses on offer next session are as follows:-

- NPA Software Development (SCQF4)
- Introduction to the Construction Industry (SCQF4)
- Early Education and Childcare (SCQF4)
- SVQ1 Performing Engineering Operations (SCQF4)
- Automotive Skills (SCQF4)
- Skills for Work Uniformed Services (SCQF4)
- Hair and Beauty (SCQF4)
- NPA Professional Cookery (SCQF4)
- Early Education and Childcare (SCQF5)
- SVQ 2 Performing Engineering Operations - General Engineering (SCQF5)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing (SCQF5)
- NPA Hospitality (SCQF5)
- NPA Sport and Fitness – Football (SCQF5)
- NPA Software Development (SCQF6)
- NPA Psychology (SCQF6)
- HNC Sports Coaching and Development Infill (SCQF7)
- HNC Applied Sciences (SCQF7)

Pupils sign out of school during lunch and walk to Kilmarnock College for a 2pm start. College finishes at 4pm, therefore this may cause transport issues for any pupils who use school buses.

Labour Market Intelligence and Regional Skills Assessments

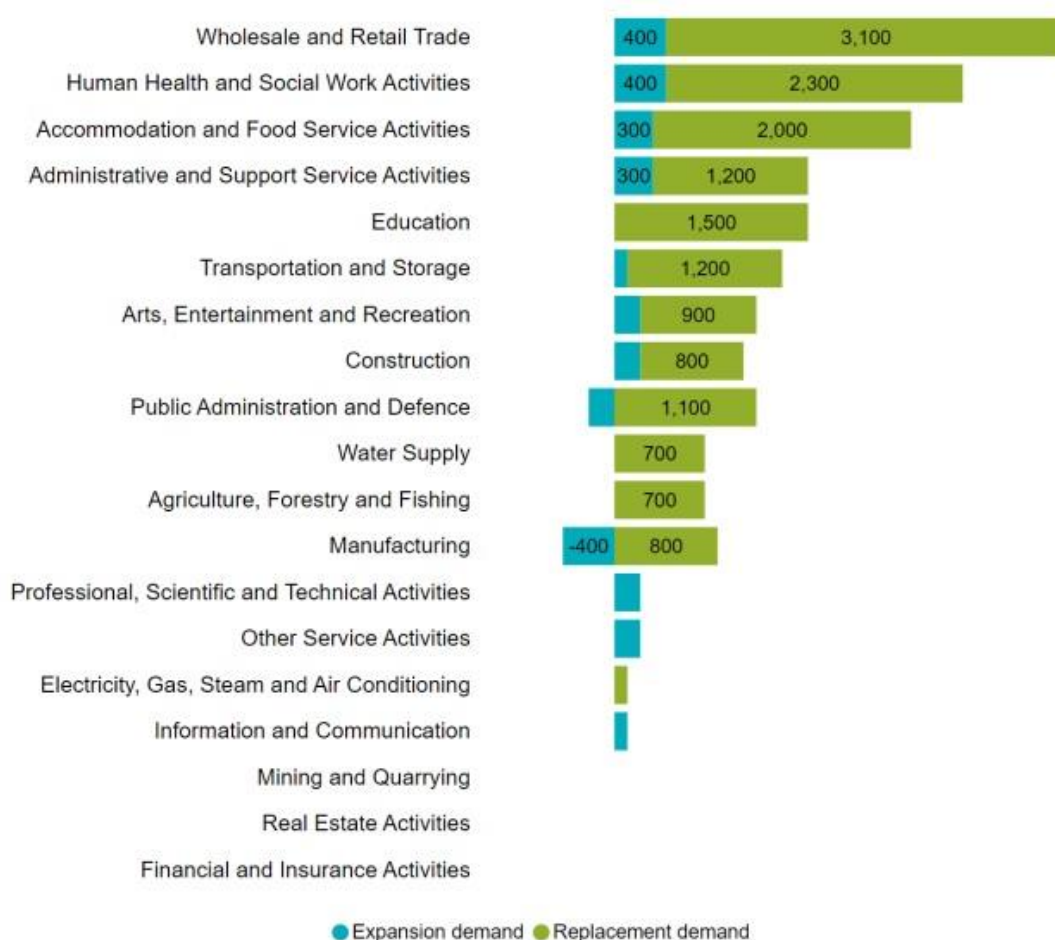
Skills Development Scotland release data every year which identifies trends in the 'labour market'. This means that they look at employment opportunities in a geographical area and provide advice about where there may be opportunities for work.

This intelligence is a critical part of the decision-making process when you begin to think about your future. Take time to sit with your parents or carers to look at this information. Parents/Carers may find the Ayrshire Regional Skills Assessment of particular interest. It can be found via the link shown below.

[Regional Skills Assessment – Ayrshire \(October 2024\)](#)

The graph shown below highlights the fact that in Ayrshire, the Scottish Government predict that employment opportunities up to 2027 will grow in industries such as Wholesale and Retail, Human Health and Social Work, Accommodation and Food Services and Administrative and Support Services.

Forecast Total Requirement by Industry (2024-2027), Ayrshire



The data above focuses on industry level trends. In terms of specific occupations, the anticipated trend to 2027 is shown below. By occupation, Clerical and Services (including catering), Teaching/Research, Health professionals and Care sector employment are occupations where the greatest number of employees will be required.

Forecast Total Requirement by Occupation (2024-2027), Ayrshire



SCQF Courses

As well as SQA courses, schools are able to offer other courses of equivalent merit. These are often referred to as SCQF courses. In S4, the following SCQF course will be offered.

- Travel & Tourism
- Health Sector
- Sport & Recreation

You do not have to have studied the above courses in S3. A wider range of SCQF courses are accessible via S4 College provision and within the S5/6 options structure.

Who will help me make my choices?

- Subject teachers will clarify the different learning pathways open to you in each department
- The PSE Programme will include a visit from the Careers Adviser, Kate Faulds who will talk to you about planning for the future
- Your Year Head or Pastoral Care teacher will carry out personalisation and choice interviews to talk to you about the decisions that you have made and will enter your options on our electronic system

What happens after you make your choices?

- Those selecting College courses may need to complete a separate application later in the term. The school cannot control who does or does not receive a place on College courses
- We need to factor in options choices across the entire school, after which we will be able to confirm whether or not you have secured a place in the courses of your choice. This process often runs into early April
- Where there is need for re-interview due to College rejection, lack of viability or other clashes across your choices, we will communicate this to you and to your parents/carers as soon as possible between now and early April



S3 into S4 – Personalisation and Choice

Pupil Name:

Career Aspiration:

Completed during one-to-one interview with Pastoral Care staff.

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All pupils will study: Maths

English/ESOL

Core PE

Core PSE

Core RE

You should then **select five** subjects to study in S4. There are three conditions:

- You cannot select a subject that you did not study during S3 unless it is an NPA, College or SCQF course
- You cannot select three Science subjects (maximum of two from Biology, Chemistry, Health Sector and Physics)
- You cannot select both PE (Teams Sports) and PE (Aesthetics – Dance)

Please circle the five subjects you wish to take next year.

History

PE Games Performance Pathway

PE Movement Performance Pathway

Computing Science

(Gymnastics, Dance, Cheer and Netball)

Administration & IT

Geography

Biology

French

College Course**

Art and Design

Modern Studies

Chemistry

Spanish

Travel and Tourism

Drama

Physics

Music Technology

Business Management

German

Music

Health Sector

Practical Electronics*

Practical Woodwork*

Graphic Communication*

National 5 Dance (JAM St. subject to audition)

Sport & Recreation

**subject to staffing*

***is in addition to seven school subjects*

If you wish to apply for a place on a College Course, please state the name of the course here:-

Pupil Signature:

Parent/Carer Signature:

Pastoral Signature: