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FACULTIES
Subject Departments are organised into the following faculties:

ENGLISH
MATHS
SCIENCE
HUMANITIES
LANGUAGES
CREATIVE, TECHNICAL & PERFORMING
ARTS
GAMES & SPORT
If your son comes to St Albans School, in the First Form he will have three 50 minute English lessons a week together with two 20 minute homework sessions. From the Second Form to the Fifth form, there are three to five periods a week and increasing (though never unreasonable) amounts of homework.

AIMS AND ETHOS

The English Department at St Albans School aims to foster articulacy, confidence and distinction across the range of activities and skills traditionally identified with the disciplines of English and English Literature. We aim not only to make a decisive contribution to the academic success of our students, but also to promote their personal development as reflective and independent individuals.

English teachers are free to construct their own teaching plans in accordance with Departmental programmes of study, but in essence we shadow (though move well beyond) the National Curriculum. Teachers set out to stimulate enjoyment of the subject; to develop style, accuracy, imagination, and clear presentation in writing and speech.

READING AND CREATIVITY

Creative writing is also strongly encouraged. The annual First Form creative writing workshop, involving every boy in the year, and featuring a range of published authors, produces an in-house anthology of poetry and stories. Recent visitors have included Alan Gibbons, William Nicholson, Robert Muchamore, Caroline Lawrence, Jonathan Stroud and Anthony Horowitz. Noted poet Jonty Driver also came to discuss his work – and twentieth-century poetry in general – with the Sixth Form.

The Department supplies lists of recommended reading, and you may find it useful to have an indication of the range of books to which we draw attention. Reading is encouraged by liberal use of the well-stocked Junior Library, by whole-class study of particular books, or by work on books supplied to individuals according to their taste and rate of progress. In addition, the First and Second Forms spend one supervised period a week in the Library. We believe good quality fiction, drama and poetry to be at the very heart of English.

Theatre and literary trips are arranged throughout the School. In the last year students have travelled to Stratford, the Welsh borders, and the ballet in Covent Garden.

EXAM SUCCESS

The Department has an enviable level of exam success. In 2018, over 60% of students achieved an 8-9 grade in English Literature IGCSE (against a national average of 9.5%). In the Sixth Form, English Literature is a popular course; most recently, 53% of students achieved an A*-A grade at A Level. This is a reflection of the experience and expertise of the Department; the current staff include two teachers with Doctorates, several Oxbridge graduates, the Principal Moderator for A Level coursework, and a former GCSE examiner and coursework moderator.
MATHEMATICS

The Mathematics Department is one of the largest and most successful in the School. All of the staff are well-qualified teachers who bring their experience and enthusiasm to the classroom every day. Between them they have expert knowledge over a wide range of fields, such as Pure Mathematics, Statistics, Engineering and Computing.

Teaching is not restricted to the syllabus and students are encouraged to develop their thinking skills, problem-solving ability and to become independent learners. In addition to time spent in the classroom, students are entered into national competitions, both individual and team events. They also have the opportunity to join various clubs including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), Bridge, Chess, Coding and Junior Maths. Visiting speakers are invited to entertain and inform on a wide variety of topics, such as Bio-Mechanics, The Large Hadron Collider and the Mathematics of Juggling. Lower Sixth Further Maths students attend a day of lectures in London, gaining insight into some of the many ways that Mathematics is used in the ‘real world’; and a small group of Third Form students attends a series of Royal Institution Mathematics Masterclasses at the University of Hertfordshire. Other opportunities are a trip to the Big Bang Fair, the NASA Space Centre and a Second Form visit to Bletchley Park as part of a coding investigation.

LOWER SCHOOL

In order to allow the new pupils time to settle down, they are initially taught in their forms. Towards the end of the first term there will be an assessment test and the results of this, together with progress made over the term, will determine any necessary re-arrangement of the teaching groups. There is always flexibility with all sets covering the same syllabus, using the same materials and sitting any tests and exams at the same time. Students will be set two short homework tasks each week.

MIDDLE SCHOOL – IGCSE

With the arrival of the prep school students, the Third Form (Year 9) start on the IGCSE course, studying numbers, algebra, data-handling, probability and shape and space. The boys work in sets with those of similar ability and where the teaching style is suitable for their needs. Currently all pupils sit the examination in January of the Fifth Form (Year 11).

Old Albanian the late Professor Stephen Hawking CH, CBE, FRS, FRSA
FIFTH FORM AND POST-IGCSE

Alongside preparation for the IGCSE examinations, the Additional Mathematics course is studied. This free-standing Mathematics Qualification introduces the students to A Level concepts and the more open style of questions; it is good preparation for studying A Level Mathematics and must be completed successfully by any student intending to study Mathematics in the Sixth Form.

IN THE SIXTH FORM

Mathematics is a very popular A Level choice. The students study the OCR B (MEI) syllabus, all of which is examined at the end of the Upper Sixth Form.

MATHEMATICS A LEVEL


FURTHER MATHEMATICS A LEVEL

This is a completely separate A Level which is taught alongside the single A Level. There is a certain amount of choice here, allowing students to focus on Mechanics, Statistics or Extra Pure Mathematics. Those planning to study subjects such as Mathematics, Engineering, Economics, Computer Science or Physics may need to have studied the two A Levels in order to apply to certain universities.

USEFUL WEBSITES

There are countless places to find mathematics puzzles, problems and interesting items. The two websites suggested below have links to many others.

www.ukmt.org.uk
www.nrich.maths.org

Both of these sites have material aimed at different age groups.

Special extension classes are provided for those needing to take STEP papers or MAT (for Oxford) in order to satisfy the conditions of their offer.
KEY STAGE 3

(FIRST & SECOND FORM)
The Key Stage 3 Science course is taught as a single subject over two years in the First and Second Form.

In the First Form the emphasis is on fun activities and practical work, establishing a firm foundation of practical skills and knowledge for the years ahead. Science is taught for four periods a week (over three hours a week) in its own dedicated laboratories.

The Second Form builds on this basis to deepen students’ understanding of key concepts and emphasise the links between the different sciences. By the end of the Second Form, students will have covered the KS3 curriculum and be at a level equivalent to those joining the School through the Common Entrance examination.

GCSE

(THIRD TO FIFTH FORM)
Boys study Biology, Chemistry and Physics as separate subjects over these three years, sitting three separate IGCSEs at the end of the Fifth Form.

Practical work is an important part of Science and students can expect to spend a substantial portion of their time carrying out experiments, making measurements and observing as well as covering theory and solving problems.

The IGCSE is universally recognised as equivalent to GCSE by universities and employers and we believe it provides a level of challenge and stimulation more appropriate for our students, many of whom continue to study sciences in the Sixth Form. It is a linear course with all exams sat in the summer of the Fifth Form and no coursework element.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
Transferable skills are emphasised throughout the Science course.

These include problem-solving, analysis of data, critical appraisal of methodologies and the use of ICT and automation. In this way, students gain experience of working practices in the real world.

A LEVEL
Physics, Chemistry and Biology are very popular A Level subjects in the School.

In recent years, the sciences have consistently accounted for around a quarter of all A Level subjects taken. We work hard to make the transition from GCSE to A Level study as smooth as possible, both for our existing students and those joining the School for the first time. Many of our students go on to study science-related disciplines at university.

CO-CURRICULAR SCIENCE
We offer many opportunities for students to get involved in Science outside the classroom.

Science and STEM clubs look at different aspects of Science and allow open-ended investigation of topics of interest, possibly leading to CREST awards. The Stephen Hawking Society organises lectures by visiting speakers from academia, industry and the media to broaden students’ perspectives. Trips include visits to The Big Bang Fair, CERN, Thorpe Park and the GCSE Science Live event, amongst others.
MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The Modern Languages Department consists of nine teachers and three language assistants. We all share the view that languages are an essential skill and that they can enrich our lives in many ways, as well as being great fun to learn.

The languages that we offer as part of the curriculum are French, German and Spanish and these subjects are offered at IGCSE and A Level. Mandarin has now also been introduced to the School, and is available for First and Second Formers to choose. Beginners’ courses in Mandarin and Japanese are offered as part of the Enrichment programme in the Sixth Form.

As part of the whole school curriculum, at least one modern language (French, German, Spanish or Mandarin) is compulsory up to IGCSE.

TEACHING FACILITIES

The Department is equipped with all of the technology needed to enthuse students and to teach effectively. All of our classrooms have interactive smart boards and we have three language laboratories. Our language assistants each have their own office where conversation lessons are held.

TRIPS AND EXCHANGES

Our commitment to developing oral skills is reinforced by our programme of visits and exchanges which take place each year. Recent trips have included exchange trips to Usingen in Germany and Chambéry in France as well as a study trip to Barcelona. We also offer a trip to Paris to Lower School pupils and a trip to the Christmas markets in Germany for pupils in the Second Form.

ACCELERATED FRENCH PROGRAMME

A small class of the most able linguists will start studying the IGCSE course in French at the start of the Third Form, as part of the Accelerated French programme. Although pupils in the accelerated French set will take the Edexcel IGCSE French examination at the same time as the other French classes, at the end of the Fifth Form, they will be working at an accelerated pace on a specially constructed programme, which will comprehensively cover the IGCSE curriculum as well as introducing more advanced linguistic and cultural elements. Pupils in the accelerated set will be stretched beyond the demands of the exam to further their linguistic and cultural knowledge and be thoroughly prepared for A Level studies in French, if desired.
CLASSICS

There is a strong tradition of Classics teaching at St Albans School and pupils learn in dedicated Classics classrooms, taught by four dedicated teachers. We strongly believe that by delving into the Ancient World, we can gain not only linguistic knowledge but also benefit from studying the history, literature, philosophy and social interactions of the Greeks and Romans.

CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

Classical Civilisation is also available as an A Level option, enabling pupils to study literature in translation and study the history and culture of the ancient world through a variety of different sources, both written and visual, and by a range of authors.

Students study the following modules: Greek Theatre, including the social and religious origins of drama supported by reading Greek Tragedies and Comedies; the World of the Hero, exploring the epic poems of Virgil and Homer; Love and Relationships, examining the ethical, moral and social aspects of relationships as written about by Seneca, Sappho and Plato.

TRIPS AND VISITS

The department runs a number of trips:

The First Form visit Cambridge to see the Cast Gallery and The Fitzwilliam Museum.

The Second Form visit Verulamium Museum and the Roman theatre.

All Key Stage 3 pupils have a visit from Roman soldiers.

Each term sees a theatre trip as well as visiting speakers coming into school, sometimes shared with nearby schools.

There is also a bi-annual trip to Rome and Pompeii and occasionally a trip to Greece when numbers permit.

HYLOCOMIAN SOCIETY

This is the School’s senior Classics society which hosts lectures given by university academics and seminars, provided by staff and pupils. Regular theatre trips and visits to the British Museum are also offered and made available for pupils in the Third Form and above.

There is also a Classics publication, vox populi, produced by students, containing articles by staff and pupils, celebrating the resonance of Classics.

LOWER SCHOOL

All pupils study Latin in the First Form using the Cambridge Latin Course. In addition to learning about the language, they learn about life in Pompeii in the days leading up to the eruption of Vesuvius. At the end of the year, all boys can choose to continue with their Latin studies and there is also an option to take Ancient Greek at GCSE.

The Second Form focuses on life in Roman Britain and the Roman province of Alexandria. Again, pupils can choose to continue their Classical studies in the Third Form, where they are joined by an influx of new pupils and all boys take an introduction to Ancient Greek, as preparation for their GCSE choices.

GCSE

Both Latin and Greek are offered as separate GCSE options and follow the OCR courses. The boys complete the language section of the syllabus and learn to translate complex Latin passages, put simple English sentences into Latin and gain a strong knowledge of Latin accidence and syntax. There are two literature papers, one verse and one prose and the boys are able to tackle a range of authors including Ovid, Virgil, Tacitus, Pliny, Homer, Euripides and Herodotus.

A LEVEL

In the Sixth Form, Latin and Greek are available at A Level and pupils will continue to study literature and language. The students cement their linguistic knowledge and again study a range of classical authors, balancing their translation skills with literary analysis and scansion. They look at literary influences and compare their texts with a range of other texts, both ancient and modern and, recognise the impact of political and social events on their prescription.
HISTORY

OUR AIMS

Located in special rooms of considerable historical interest in the School’s fourteenth-century Abbey Gateway, we give pupils the opportunity to develop an awareness of how the world we live in today was created and the influence of the past on the present. We want our pupils to think for themselves and so we expose them to a wide range of documents, historical sources and opinions. We are keen to emphasise that historical conclusions are liable to reassessment in the light of new or re-interpreted evidence.

WHAT WE TEACH

In the First and Second Forms, we explore medieval history and early modern history, situating England alongside wider European and world events. Content covered in the classroom is underpinned by visits to Dover Castle and the Museum of London. In the Third Form, we undertake a thematic study of revolutions and an in-depth study of World War Two. To complement pupils’ study of the Holocaust, we run a cross-curricular study day in conjunction with the RS and PSHEE departments.

At Key Stage Four, a significant number of Fourth Form pupils opt to continue the study of History. We follow the Cambridge IGCSE History syllabus and the pathway we have chosen through this course enables students to embark on a comprehensive study of the twentieth century, starting with the origins of the Great War and concluding with the end of the Cold War. The topics studied address the impact of the Peace Treaties 1919-23, the success of the League of Nations to 1936, the reasons for the outbreak of World War Two, responsibility for the Cold War and the effectiveness of Containment. With the centenary of the Great War in mind, our in-depth study option is the First World War and the final part of the assessment is a coursework assignment which focuses on the role of America in the War. Our Fourth Form pupils have the opportunity to explore the First World War Battlefields in Belgium and Northern France.

At A Level, pupils embark on a study of nineteenth-century European history, focusing on British social and political history for Paper 1, alongside the Italian Risorgimento for Paper 2. Thereafter, pupils are offered a choice for Paper 3, with some choosing to continue their exploration of modern history through the study of German history between 1871 and 1990, and others opting to delve into the medieval world through the study of the Wars of the Roses. Pupils also complete a coursework assignment which is drawn from their Paper 3 choice. The department aims to encourage independent learning and critical thinking, and pupils are encouraged to read widely around the course.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The History and Politics Society welcomes a number of eminent speakers each year to the School, to consider a variety of historical themes and issues. Recent speakers have included James Walvin OBE and Professors Edward Royle, Anne Curry and Gary Sheffield. The Department has its own magazine, The Gateway Chronicle; published annually, it is researched, written and edited by a dedicated team of pupils. The Department offers all prospective undergraduates advice and guidance on the application process and a significant number of our pupils move on to study History at leading universities, including Oxbridge. All students are encouraged to attend the weekly History Clinic, should they need extra support and guidance.
RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

The twenty-first century is an exciting and challenging time in which to live. A greater awareness of different cultures, together with advances in science and technology, raises questions of identity (who we are), theology (what we can believe) and ethics (how we should behave). Religious Studies provides the opportunity to explore these questions from a range of perspectives and encourages students to learn skills of academic rigour: listening attentively to the opinions of others, assessing those arguments critically, and expressing their own ideas confidently.

LOWER SCHOOL

In the Lower School, students examine six major world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism) one faith at a time, and have the opportunity to visit a variety of places of worship. Students in the Third Form are introduced to the study of Philosophy through religion and morality. We cover topics such as arguments for and against God’s existence and seek to answer questions such as ‘what makes an action right?’ or ‘is killing ever justified?’

GCSE

At GCSE, students follow the Edexcel specification B course, which combines both philosophical and theological study (from a Christian and Muslim perspective). The first year consists of studying the ‘Christianity and Ethics’ unit, and the second year, the ‘Islam, Peace and Justice’s Unit’.

A LEVEL

At A Level, students engage with the philosophers and theologians who have shaped our world, from Plato to Dawkins and Augustine to Kant. The issues examined range from ‘what does it mean to say something is good?’ to ‘is freedom just an illusion?’ We follow the Edexcel specification, which involves a critical study of Philosophy of Religion, Religious Ethics and textual analysis.
GEOGRAPHY

Geography is compulsory in the First, Second and Third Forms. After this, the subject becomes an option for GCSE in the Fourth and Fifth Forms. Here we study the IGCSE, and a significant proportion of pupils choose to continue the subject, achieving consistently outstanding results (100% A*-B and 87% A*-A in 2018). At A Level, results are also excellent, with 90% of candidates achieving A*-A in 2018. The department consists of five graduate geographers, covering a range of specialisms in Geography with an array of individual interests. Teachers are on hand by appointment to support students outside lessons, and clinics for examination classes run during the week.

AIMS AND ETHOS

Geography deals with concepts that are vital to an understanding of today’s fast-changing world. The Geography Department aims to foster in our pupils an intellectual curiosity in the peoples and cultures, physical structures and atmospheric circulations of the world we inhabit. Pupils achieve this through exploring the relationship between people and their environment, helping them to make sense of our interconnected and interdependent world.

GEOGRAPHICAL ENQUIRY

We aim to empower our students as independent thinkers, with an empathetic appreciation of differing attitudes, values and cultural identities, as well as an appreciation of the environment. We use the concept of geographical enquiry to provide our students with a sense of place, as well as the thinking skills to make informed and reasoned decisions, whilst maintaining an awareness about the impacts of these choices. The emphasis is on equipping pupils with the skills to understand the human and physical environments in which they live, whilst applying a critical eye to a range of social, political, economic and environmental issues.

The course in the First and Second Form covers a range of places and themes, explored at local, regional and international scales. Modern themes such as geopolitics and climate change are at the centre of learning, although more established topics of coasts and tectonic hazards are also covered. Traditional skills such as the use of maps and atlases remain an important part of the skill set of the modern geographer. Work in the Third Form begins with the topic of globalisation, as well as an evaluation of the rise of China, before we start the IGCSE topics of migration and population.

We make extensive use of ICT in our teaching, helping pupils to develop their digital literacy alongside their geographical understanding. We take advantage of the computer suite that adjoins the departmental area, and ICT is encouraged for homework and project work; the use of ICT is integrated into various units throughout the curriculum. Further, having invested in a Global Positioning System and associated mapping software, the Department continues to incorporate Geographical Information Systems (GIS) into all levels of teaching, in order that pupils develop the competence to use a wide range of mapping and processing tools in GIS software.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is an integral part of Geography. Working outside the classroom enables students to challenge the suppositions of the text book, measuring the real world and analysing these findings with respect to theoretical concepts. Fieldwork is a compulsory part of the course in both the Fourth and Fifth Forms, when we visit the Olympic Park and a local river to conduct preparatory work for the IGCSE fieldwork paper. Field trips also play an increasingly important role in Key Stage 3.

EXTENDING LEARNING

Increasing numbers of pupils go on to pursue their geographical studies at top universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. The Department aims to facilitate this by extending learning beyond the limitations of the curricula. The Geographical Association for Inquisitive Albanians (GAIA) meets regularly, with a range of speakers addressing pupils about an array of geographical issues. Recent topics have included Facebook and Instagram style algorithms to help predict landslides; the impacts of Polish migration to the UK and the geography of happiness. Overseas ‘awe and wonder’ trips are also on offer, with an optional fieldtrip to Iceland having travelled biennially in recent years.
ART

The Art Department seeks to foster a spirit of creativity by encouraging pupils to be adventurous, thoughtful, respectful of tradition and artistically curious.

The Department is arranged over two floors in a self-contained block in Aquis Court. On the ground floor, there are two general purpose studios and a dedicated ceramics studio. On the first floor there is one large studio, which also contains printing presses for a variety of fine art techniques. In addition, there is a suite of computers and a well-stocked art library.

LOWER SCHOOL

All pupils study Art in the First and Second Forms and many opt to continue in the Third Form. Pupils have the opportunity to work in a variety of media, including painting and drawing, printmaking, ceramics and sculpture. Drawing is seen as an important discipline and pupils are encouraged to explore the world around them through observational drawing. The work of other artists is also studied and pupils are introduced to the famous “Isms” of art movements, such as Expressionism and Cubism.

Art Clubs are held on two evenings per week after school and pupils can attend these sessions to explore the subject further.

GCSE

The exam syllabus comprises a coursework element along with a timed exam. Pupils are encouraged to take creative risks, develop a range of techniques and work in a variety of media.

A LEVEL

At this level pupils are expected to work independently on individual projects. Candidates receive guidance on ways they can develop their ideas and instruction is given on a range of advanced techniques. Guidance is also given on portfolio selection for those intending to study Art, Architecture or Design at university.

EXHIBITIONS

Art work produced by pupils is exhibited around the School, in corridors and classrooms, with changing exhibitions in the space outside the School Library. Every summer we hold a Summer Exhibition of selected GCSE and A Level examination work. The School was recently invited to stage a week-long exhibition of examination art work in the Gallery Rouge in St Albans city centre.

GALLERY VISITS

The Art Department arranges a variety of trips to galleries in London and nearby locations. There are also regular trips abroad to European art centres such as Paris, Amsterdam and Madrid.
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Design and Technology prepares students to participate in tomorrow's rapidly changing technological world. The subject develops students' skills enabling them to become autonomous and creative problem solvers, working as individuals and members of teams, examining the needs and opportunities for design and responding to them by developing a range of ideas and making products and systems. The combination of practical skills with an understanding of aesthetics, social and environmental issues and function and industrial practices allows them to evaluate past and present design and technology along with its uses and effects. Through design and technology, all students can become innovators and discriminating and informed consumers or users of products.

THE D&T CURRICULUM

FIRST & SECOND FORMS
During the first two years, students will have one lesson a week throughout the year to experience a wide range of processes, materials and strategies, establishing a foundation of skills which they can apply to all areas of problem-solving. Through short and longer term tasks, the course will develop their communication skills, design awareness, CAD/CAM and manufacturing skills. They will also explore computer control and simple robotics. The subject links many of the other subjects studied across the curriculum and to be successful, students must incorporate knowledge and understanding from areas such as Mathematics and Science as well as Art and the Humanities.

THIRD FORM
At this stage, the subject becomes optional, with those who choose to continue their study of D&T visiting the Department twice a week throughout the year. These students will complete a number of modules of work closely related to the GCSE courses undertaken at the next stage.

FOURTH & FIFTH FORMS
Those who have studied D&T in the Third Form may opt to take on the GCSE course in Product Design. They will study for three periods a week covering the theory aspect, along with the completion of coursework which accounts for a substantial percentage of their final grade.

LOWER & UPPER SIXTH
Product Design extends through to A Level. The course is linear, with the Lower Sixth year being used to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subjects. Students will also have the time to build confidence in design and practical skills, enabling them to tackle the extended coursework task throughout the Upper Sixth. At this stage, projects are individually selected, enabling students to incorporate their personal interests and possible future career directions. These tasks are expected to take on a commercial flavour and make use of a client and user group. There is also a close link to Maths and Science, with a considerable emphasis on the practical application of related questions in the final examination.

FACILITIES
The Department has comprehensive design and workshop facilities. Students have access to an electronics lab, design studios with good ICT and CAD facilities and multimedia workshops where most materials can be cut, shaped, formed and joined. We still make use of our traditional facilities such as lathes, mills, casting and heat treatment areas but have also invested in Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) systems. Students have access to a CNC router, laser cutter and a number of 3D printers.
STAFFING

There are three Design and Technology teachers within the Department, each with differing specialist knowledge and backgrounds and all contribute to the curriculum at the various levels.

We also have the benefit of an experienced, well qualified, full-time technician who supports the teaching and learning within the Department at all levels.

D&T AT UNIVERSITY

Many students move on to study Engineering, in its many different forms, along with Architecture and Product Design at university. The subject sits well alongside Science and Maths, with students being able put the theoretical elements of these subjects into practice. However, it is also a good complement to many other subjects, as universities recognise the importance of the diverse skills students develop within the subject area. These skills of independent problem-solving, creativity, decision-making, organisation and evaluation are valued across many disciplines and complement many degree courses.

As Design and Technology features in all we do, it is important that our students are empowered to make informed judgements and decisions, whether as designers or as consumers, as we all need to interact with the ever-developing world in which we live.

BEYOND THE CURRICULUM

In addition to successful examination results at GCSE and A Level, our students have the opportunity to take part in many varied co-curricular technological activities. Recently, these have ranged from robotics clubs to drone flying and guitar-making.

We have also had much success in local and national technology competitions.

We are an Arkwright Scholarship School and have a number of students who have been successful in gaining scholarships, being supported through their A Level studies by the Foundation.
MUSIC

The Music Department blends high-achieving curricular work with a busy co-curricular programme.

With an enviable number of quality musicians in the School, this thriving department performs at a variety of functions within the School and in the wider community, with upwards of forty performances every year. There are currently thirty-five Music Award Holders in the School.

The Music Department moved into a brand new Music School in June 2018, which includes a new classroom, a Chamber Music performing space complete with a Steinway Grand piano, a state-of-the-art recording studio, nine practice rooms and a large ensemble rehearsal room.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The School’s Music Department has a wealth of co-curricular activities for pupils to take part in:

- School Choir – singing twice each week in St Albans Cathedral for our school services and other special events. Our Carol Service congregation fills the Abbey twice over.
- Chamber Choir – singing complex pieces ranging from Thomas Tallis to Eric Whitacre, taking part in major public events.
- Concert Choir – singing secular works in a popular style in our School Concerts.

The School boasts a further twenty ensembles, with smaller chamber ensembles which are usually coached by visiting tutors. All of these groups perform regularly in a wide range of concerts, both formal and informal, which are part of the busy musical life of the School.

The Joint Schools’ Choral Society meets each Spring Term to perform choral works in the Cathedral. This group combines our own pupils and pupils from St Albans High School for Girls, with many friends and parents of both schools getting involved. Each school provides the conductor in alternate years. The group has performed Karl Jenkins’ The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace, Vivaldi’s Gloria, Whitacre’s Cloudburst, Walton’s Coronation Te Deum, Fauré’s Requiem, Rutter’s Gloria, Chilcott’s Canticles of Light and Stravinsky’s Symphony of Psalms in recent years.

Performances at the School take place in St Albans Cathedral, the School Hall, the Library and the Chamber Music performance space; the latter three venues are equipped with superb Steinway grand pianos. One of the most notable improvements is the School becoming an All-Steinway School, ensuring that our piano pupils have the opportunity to rehearse and perform on the finest instruments available. Our annual Steinway Piano Concert is a wonderful showcase for our many exceptional piano players.

In recent St Albans Young Musician Competitions, the St Albans School Barbershop won best vocal ensemble, the Jazz Band triumphed in the best instrumental ensemble category, whilst our young soloists were winners in the Brass, Voice and Strings sections. Our success in this competition has continued with several soloists and our Chamber Choir winning awards in the last two events. One of the School’s percussionists recently won Young Drummer of the Year 2018.

The School’s music embraces a wide range of styles. There is a large amount of popular music taking place at the School, with several rock bands meeting and rehearsing throughout the week; our new recording studio allows these pupils to make the most of their talents, producing their own CDs with our industry-standard recording equipment.

The Summer Term culminates in a Cabaret sung by members of the Sixth Form, and these have featured Songs from Shows and Hits of the Seventies in recent years.
LOWER SCHOOL
Our Lower School classes are placed in sets according to ability and musical experience, and with class sizes no larger than thirteen, we fully enable pupils to develop at their own pace. Boys are given the opportunity to sing, play percussion instruments and keyboards, whilst learning valuable musical skills such as notation and sequencing, with a strong focus on enjoyment and quality of performance. They also learn to use Logic in the iMac Suite, learning to produce sequenced music and develop their Music Technology Skills.

THIRD FORM
Music is a popular option at Third Form, with a curriculum which stretches the most able, while also accommodating a range of abilities below that. Taught across two lessons a week, pupils get the opportunity to develop performance skills (individually and as a class), aural skills and theory, and study a range of aspects of Music History. They also undertake composition and Music Technology projects.

MIDDLE SCHOOL – IGCSE
Pupils in the Fourth and Fifth Form can opt to study a two-year IGCSE music course. At present, there are twenty-four pupils undertaking a well-rounded and diverse course split into three categories of performing, composing and historical study. 2018’s IGCSE results were 60% A* and 100% A*-A.

SIXTH FORM
Our Sixth Form pupils can opt to study A Level Music, for which we follow the Edexcel board of examinations. This is an engaging course with a 30% focus on performing skills, 20% free composition, 10% harmony and 40% Set Works. Pupils are given regular performing opportunities, and write regularly for the School’s Composers Ensemble. They also study eighteen Set Works, which range from Bach to the Beatles.
Drama

“Drama is life with the dull parts left out.” Alfred Hitchcock

The Drama Department is based in New Place, a building 50 metres from the main school site, named after Shakespeare’s final place of residence in Stratford-upon-Avon. The whole building is dedicated to Drama with purpose-designed classrooms, a costume and props store, a theatre library, and a black box studio which is a professional and flexible performance space. The studio is well equipped with a full lighting rig and sound capabilities and we have a full-time Drama Technician who oversees all shows and works with technical students. The Drama Department also has the use of an outdoor Amphitheatre and New Hall. Looking to the future, we will utilise the Performing Arts Centre when completed. Members of the Drama Department are all active practitioners and have personal experience regarding professional acting, drama school and theatre at university.

We aim to encourage and promote students’ communication and performance skills, confidence and talent, as well as nurture their ability to evaluate and reflect. At Key Stage 3, we facilitate a safe and relaxed environment for students to experience the 5 Cs of Drama: confidence, creativity, communication, concentration and co-operation. Students also learn about different styles and genres of theatre, from Commedia dell’Arte to performing extracts from Out of Their Heads, as well as gaining a wealth of important, transferable skills such as public speaking and presentation skills. The AQA GCSE Drama course includes devised and scripted work which is publicly performed, and at A Level, students get the opportunity to study theatre practitioners and cover a vast range of playtexts. Students who show an interest in the technical side of the subject can study lighting, sound or stage design at Key Stage 4 and 5. There are numerous opportunities to attend trips to the theatre throughout the year, and Lower Sixth pupils have the option of taking a show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The co-curricular side of the Drama Department is rich with opportunities for students of all ages to get involved in Drama outside of lessons:

Main School Production

A large-scale production rehearses and performs in the Autumn Term. All senior students can audition and there are opportunities for students interested in the technical side of theatre to become involved as well. Typically staged in the New Hall with full set and costume, this is the pièce de résistance of the Drama calendar. Recent productions include Wendy and Peter, Les Misérables, Into the Woods and The Erpingham Camp.

Lower School Drama Club

This is a weekly club that is open to all students in the First and Second Form, with a number of performance opportunities during the year, including a Lower School Christmas show at the end of the Autumn Term and the main Lower School Summer Show at the end of the year. Recent productions have included The Birds, Ho! Ho! Ho! The Santa Clause Chronicles, Bad Day at Blackfrog Creek, Dr Who’s Christmas Carol, The Tempest, and Journey’s End.

House Drama

Junior House Drama: a devising competition run by the Lower School Drama Club and led by Sixth Form volunteers in the Spring Term; also open to interested Third Form students.

Senior House Drama: in the second half of the Summer Term students from the Lower Sixth and below work in their Houses to present a ‘play in a day.’ The four performances are judged by an external theatre professional, in an evening showcase open to parents and pupils.

There are also several events that take place throughout the year. “An Evening with…” is a Q&A evening which hosts a range of theatre professionals and is attended by parents and pupils. Previous guest speakers include Glyn Maxwell (Writer, Director and Poet - Liberty and Drinks With Dead Poets). OAs Mike Newell (Film Director – Harry Potter, Four Weddings and a Funeral) and Steve Thompson (Playwright and Screen Writer – Spooks, Sherlock). The Drama Department also takes part in local festivals when possible, enabling students to perform in professional venues outside of school.
Computing is the study of how computers and computer systems work, how they are designed and programmed, how to apply computational thinking and how to make best use of information technology.

Our curriculum takes a rigorous and academic approach, which aims to give all pupils a strong foundation from which they can progress to an IGCSE and A Level in Computer Science, should they choose. For the Lower School, our curriculum has been designed to be accessible to all pupils, regardless of their previous experience of Computing.

First Form pupils cover a combination of digital literacy and Computer Science topics, including data modelling and programming. In the Second Form, pupils study topics such as security, flowcharting and computer hardware. Pupils who choose to continue their study of Computing into the Third Form further develop their understanding with topics such as web development, programming and cybersecurity.

**STUDY UNITS INCLUDE:**

- Algorithms
- Programming
- Computer architecture
- Cybersecurity
- Robotics
- Web design and development
- Computer networks

**CROSS-CURRICULAR CLUBS:**

- Upper School enrichment sessions offer programming and web development support
- Code Club supports the National Cipher Challenge through programming (Mathematics Department)
- Raspberry Pi Development Club (Computing Department)
- Robot Revolution (Design and Technology Department)
CROSS CURRICULAR LEARNING

A rich programme of Enrichment at St Albans School helps all students develop skills for study and the world of work. Project work at three different stages – in the Lower School, at GCSE and A Level – is supported by a programme of guided learning, that aims to inspire intellectual curiosity; a critical, reflective approach to topical and historical issues; a rigorous written style; and a logical and analytical appreciation of the impact of art and science on our society.

Students are challenged to make links between taught subjects and their interests outside school, and to develop transferable skills in preparation for university and the world of work.

CRITICAL THINKING

A practical, skills-based discipline, Critical Thinking fosters the thinking skills that are so much in demand in today's world, prepares students for project work, and has the immediate practical benefit of helping prepare students for university admissions tests. Students learn how to recognise, interpret and criticise reasoned argument in its context; evaluate evidence and information; consider the credibility of different sources and authors; recognise bad thinking and counter it with a cogent response, and construct their own reasoned argument supported by evidence.

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EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Building on Lower Sixth Enrichment courses or on prior knowledge, students embark on an individual research project in the Lower Sixth in which they research the 'story' behind a question, and, wherever possible, explore historical, ethical and philosophical aspects of that question in depth. The EPQ may involve a dissertation, a performance or lecture, an investigation or the creation of an artefact. The project results in an A Level qualification and is recognised as excellent preparation for higher education, with many universities reducing entrance requirements for students offering an EPQ.

ENRICHMENT

Lower Sixth students choose a short course in applied ethics or the creative arts, many of which are designed to act as a source of ideas that might develop into an EPQ. Further Enrichment courses are offered in the Upper Sixth, covering Mandarin, Japanese, Computing and Problem Solving.

Weekly Enrichment Lectures from external speakers expose Upper Sixth students to a broad range of topical issues, ranging from art history to current ethical and scientific debates, and prepare them for the lecture format of university. Recent contributors have included a former UK ambassador, a judge, rugby internationals, charity fundraisers and a former cabinet minister.

Students are offered the opportunity to sit an AS Level qualification in Thinking Skills in the summer of the Upper Sixth.

LOWER SCHOOL PROJECT

All pupils in the Second Form investigate a subject of their own choice in depth, via a research project and dissertation. Lesson time each week is dedicated to learning the skills of rigorous research, time-management and independent learning skills.

GCSE HIGHER PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Following a similar pattern, HPQ is an opportunity for pupils in the Fourth and Fifth Form to research and write in more depth. They are assessed on their ability to plan, manage and review their project, and are assessed via an oral presentation and an externally-moderated dissertation, resulting in a GCSE-level qualification.
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO

This famous aphorism aptly expresses the importance attributed to Physical Education in the life of a pupil in the School. The role of the PE Department is to nurture the physical and mental development of each pupil as defined in the following aims:

1. The development, in every pupil, of an interest in, an enjoyment of, and an enthusiasm for, physical activity, education and sport together with an awareness of its role in promoting physical and mental well-being and its importance for recreation and leisure.

2. The development, in every pupil, of an appreciation of physical activity’s importance in their state of mind and fitness, health and well-being socially, emotionally, physical and mentally.

3. The provision of opportunities for every pupil, both to maximise his or her potential, and to develop acceptable social and sporting attitudes.

4. Enhancement and development of the physical literacy of all students at the School through a focused and varied PE and Games curriculum.

5. The provision of GCSE and AS/A2 Level Physical Education courses.

6. To offer a wide range of sporting and learning opportunities and to provide support and encouragement for pupils to develop these interests to their full potential.

7. The development of an approach with students and staff that measures success and progress by performance outcome, not solely by results, that rewards endeavour and commitment and that allows failing safely, in an environment where every situation is understood to be an opportunity to grow and learn. This supports the ethos of pursuing excellence and promotion of team success.

8. The enhancement of the sporting reputation of the School at all levels.

9. The development of wide-based cultural, social and educational experiences through the promotion of sporting trips, tours and exchanges.

PE CURRICULUM

The Physical Education programme is facilitated by a single timetabled PE lesson (50 minutes) once a week in the Sports Centre for each form from First Form to Fifth Form.

The programme introduces a wide range of physical activities that is designed to be both progressive and challenging to pupils. It is hoped that this broad and balanced PE programme will enable pupils to:

- Develop their physical abilities
- Develop an overall physical understanding
- Have a significant beneficial impact on their education and fitness for life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PE PROGRAMME OF STUDY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUTUMN TERM (13)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Literacy testing + introduction to Physical Literacy (RAMP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAS functional movement Swimming – Strokes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Literacy testing + introduction to Physical Literacy (RAMP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAS functional movement Swimming – Strokes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength &amp; Conditioning (S &amp; C Programme)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gym/Olympic Lifting Sports Hall Games Water Polo</td>
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<td>Group 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climb Sports Hall Games Weightlifting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics Softball UF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym Swim Tech Volleyball Table Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climb Sports Hall Games Weightlifting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
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<td>S &amp; C Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S &amp; C Programme</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The PE Schemes of Work are designed to be flexible, enabling the individual teacher to work at the differing speed of the class, and each pupil to establish their own pace within it. Pupils are encouraged to establish an understanding of their own current level and to challenge their own skill acquisition role. Lessons are regularly ‘team taught’ by two teachers allowing greater individual feedback, refinement and attention for each pupil.

There is a tremendous commitment to Physical Education at St Albans School, with excellent opportunities for boys and girls of all abilities.

**ACADEMIC PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

A Level Physical Education at St Albans School was introduced in September 2000 with conspicuous success. GCSE was introduced in 2006 as a core-curricular GCSE option for Fourth and Fifth Formers.

**GCSE (AQA)**

It is delivered in three timetabled lessons per week. The course is 60% theory and 40% practical, with each candidate being assessed in three sports, at least one individual sport and the other team sports, from an approved list.

**A LEVEL (AQA)**

This course is suitable for the diverse range of candidates who wish to develop their interest in Sport and Physical Education, fostering its value in lifelong learning. It aims to:

- Develop knowledge, skills and understanding of the factors that influence the quality of performance
- Apply this knowledge, skills and understanding to a range of sporting activities and contexts
- Evaluate performance and plan for the improvement of it

It is assessed in two written papers at the end of the Upper Sixth year (which make up 70% of the marks) and by a non-examined assessment of their practical skills and a written analysis and evaluation of their practical performance (30% of final marks).
GAMES & SPORT

GAMES AT ST ALBANS SCHOOL
Every student experiences a Games Afternoon each week encompassing a range of sports and physical activities. As students progress through the School, the element of ‘preference’ and breadth of options increases, with the aim that all students will engage in at least two hours of physical activity per week and will find an activity or sport that they wish to pursue as a ‘lifelong’ pursuit or interest.

The major games of the terms are:
- Autumn: Rugby, Cross Country, Lacrosse, Netball
- Spring: Hockey, Cross Country, Lacrosse, Football
- Summer: Cricket, Tennis, Athletics, Girls Football

SPORTS FIXTURES
Beginning with matches in the First Form, the School enjoys an extensive programme of inter-school fixtures in a very wide and ever-expanding range of sports. The School has a large number of pupils who compete at County, National and International levels in a number of sports.

Inter-school fixtures are normally organised on a year group basis and in the major sports we will often field up to four teams in an age group. The School has a thriving House System with four houses competing each year in all sports. Thus, all pupils have the opportunity to represent the School or House at their level at some stage in his or her career.

SPORTS FACILITIES

THE WOOLLAM PLAYING FIELDS
The School completed the development of its world-class playing fields in September 2002.

This sporting provision, which is the largest single development in Europe, includes 6 rugby pitches, 6 football pitches, 2 five-a-side pitches, 8 cricket squares, a floodlit artificial turf pitch, lacrosse pitch, netball and tennis courts. Each laser-levelled surface, combined with the superb underground drainage, offers exceptional playing conditions in almost any weather and allows skill development of the highest standards.

VERULAMIUM PARK
Several activities utilise the park adjacent to the School and our outstanding cross country teams use the park for their training and for House and School Runs. Westminster Lodge Athletics Stadium hosts some of our summer PE lessons, Sports Day as well as County and District team matches and the Abbey View golf course hosts a Games activity on Wednesdays for senior pupils. The Abbey Orchard is utilised for Fitness Training, Ultimate Frisbee and Softball in PE lessons in the Summer Term.

SPORTS CENTRE
The School completed this state-of-the-art facility in September 2012 to bring its on-site facilities in line with the excellent Woollam Playing Fields. A 25 metre pool, with adjacent endless pool and camera technology provides a first class teaching environment for water-based activities. A 35 metre sports hall with 5 permanent camera positions for capturing footage of lessons for instant or retrospective review provides a multi-sport teaching facility. The well-equipped fitness suite provides a centre for building on the strong fitness and training culture that exists in the School. The studio provides a versatile space for teaching dance, fitness classes, martial arts and land-based swimming training, expanding the opportunities available to pupils even further.
SPORTS TOURS

THE SPORT TOURS FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

The committee, comprising parents and staff, was formed in 1993.

It has been an outstanding success and has raised in excess of £800,000 and has sent hundreds of pupils of all ages and abilities on Tours throughout Britain, Europe and the World.

Recent tours have included: Senior Rugby to Australia (July 2013), Senior & U15 Rugby to South America (July 2017), U16 Rugby to France (October 2012), U16 Rugby to Italy (August 2014), Cricket to Sri Lanka (July 2011, July 2015), Cross Country to USA (October 2012, 2014, 2017), Senior Football to Italy (February 2017), Football to Portugal (February 2014), Netball to Northern Ireland (October 2012), Lacrosse to Germany (April 2014), Golf to Spain (October 2011).

Future tours are planned for: U13 Rugby to Birmingham (October 2018), Netball to Jersey (October 2019), Senior & U15 Cricket to South Africa (October 2019).
The aim of the Library is to provide a pleasant, supervised environment for study - with resources for Lower School, GCSE and A Level Courses. We aim to encourage students to read beyond the prescribed curriculum; to become familiar with techniques for Library Research and to read for pleasure.

The Library is open from 8am to 6pm each school day without restriction and is staffed by a full-time Librarian, an Assistant Librarian and a Library Assistant. The Library is resourced to field general bibliographic enquiries and to issue and return books. A pupil can borrow up to four books for two weeks – and in the Sixth Form this increases to six. We do fine for overdue books. The Library provides for up to eighty-four readers at any one time, fifty-two in the Main Library, twenty-four in the Junior Library and eight in the computer room CR4.

The Central Desk serves as a focus for the Library. In addition to issuing and returning books, the staff help readers to make enquiries via the Library catalogue, assist with photocopying and scanning, give guidance for research and information about books and e-resources. Requests for purchase of new resources are sympathetically considered.

We organise visits from popular authors to read from their own work and advise pupils on their own writing. Recent authors have included Caroline Lawrence, Jonathan Stroud OA, Anthony Horowitz, Tom Palmer, Tim Bowler, Matt Whyman and Chris Bradford. Author Bali Rai will be visiting in November 2018.

The Library has twenty-four networked computers; ten in the Main Library for pupils using the Library for private study and fourteen in the Library Classroom (CR4) which can be booked for small teaching groups. The photocopier can be used for scanning on all computers and printing in colour, printing A4 and A3.

The Library has online subscriptions to The Dictionary of National Biography, The Oxford English Dictionary and JSTOR which are available to all pupils. We also subscribe to the archives of ten A Level Academic Magazines published by Hodder Education.

Initially, all First Form classes have an induction lesson on the best way to use Library resources. The Junior Library houses Fiction and Non-Fiction Areas designed for Lower School use. The First and Second Forms enjoy a popular reading lesson every week in this room. They are encouraged to read individually, and to write short reviews of what they have read to give a focus to this activity.

The Library has a Steinway piano which is used for evening concerts. Lunchtime concerts are also arranged in the Library for students and staff.

Book loan records are included in the School’s registration under the Data Protection Act.
The Educational Backgrounds of Leading Scientists and Scholars

Appendix 2: Schools that produced at least five Fellows of the British Academy and Royal Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>No. of Fellows</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eton College</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winchester College</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul's School</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christ's Hospital</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester Grammar School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Westminster School</td>
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<td>King Edward's School Bham</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rugby School</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charterhouse School</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Latymer Upper School</td>
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<tr>
<td>University College School</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dulwich College</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Watson's Boys' Coll</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Albans School</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Heriot's School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haberdashers' Aske's, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shrewsbury School</td>
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<td>Highgate School</td>
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<td>Oundle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellington College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitgift School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrow School</td>
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<tr>
<td>King's College School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leys School, Cambridge</td>
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<td>Marlborough College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bolton School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nottingham High School</td>
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<td>Norwich School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portsmouth Grammar School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Grammar Schi, Newcastle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sevenoaks School, Kent</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Edward's School, Oxford</td>
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<td>Stowe School</td>
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<td>Bedales School, Petersfield</td>
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<td>Birkenhead School, Cheshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryanston School, Dorset</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of London School</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clifton College, Bristol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Academy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emanuel School, London</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Paul's Girls' School</td>
<td>IND</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: IND- Independent school; DIR- Direct Grant school
ST ALBANS SCHOOL

St Albans School, St Albans is an independent school for boys aged from 11 to 19, co-ed sixth form.

Address:
Abbey Gateway
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 4HB

Tel: 01727 855521
Fax: 01727 843447
Email: hm@st-albans-school.org.uk
Web: www.st-albans.herts.sch.uk

Local Authority: Hertfordshire
Pupils: 860
Religion: Christian Inter-denominational
Fees: £18,600 pa
Open days: Several throughout the year. Contact school.
HEADMASTER

Since 2014, Jonathan Gillespie, previously head of Lancing College for eight years. Read modern and medieval languages and did a PGCE at Cambridge; taught at Highgate School and Fettes College before joining Lancing. Doesn't teach pupils on timetabled basis ('the demands of a head mean I couldn't give it my all'), but gets stuck into Oxbridge trial interviews, assemblies, giving out weekly commendations etc. A more consultative leader than his predecessor (brought in the first parental questionnaire the school has ever seen), but believes in 'evolution not revolution' in terms of making changes. Pupils describe him as 'approachable' and say that whilst no pupil dared to step out of line with his predecessor, 'the reason you don't stop out of line with Mr Gillespie is because you don't want to let him down.' We found him amiable, chatty and excitable, but also traditional and authoritative. Keen sports coach, especially hockey (he umpires at national level), and has been involved in CCF. Other interests include hill walking and golf, and he celebrates family's Scottish roots by playing the highland bagpipes. Married to Caroline, former civil servant, with whom they have two sons, one at university and one in school.

ACADEMIC MATTERS

In 2017, 84 per cent of GCSE grades A*-A/7-9, placing the school in upper echelons of league tables with no weaknesses at either GCSE or A level. Home grown sixth formers average points score equivalent to 10 A grades or nine A*s at GCSE. Top performing subjects are English, maths, history, music, design technology, sciences and classics. IGCSEs in maths, sciences, languages, history, music and English. In 2017, 69 per cent of A levels were graded A*/A. Maths popular and successful, with strong showings in sciences, art, classics, geography, drama, economics, DT, RS, history, ancient history and English. Languages less popular but interest increasing. French, German and Latin are on an equal footing in year 7; top sets take French in year 10 and international O level in year 11. Setting from second term in the first year in maths and from the start of year 9 in other core subjects, which pupils are comfortable with. 'A bottom set here is still well above average,' says head.

Many take an extended project qualification (EPQ) in the lower sixth, which facilitates independent study and research. 'We've rejigged it so that pupils crack on with it as quickly as possible, then use it as part of their university application,' says head. Typical titles include 'Is the creation of Chimeras ethical?' and 'Was Cicero as influential an orator as he thought?'

Traditional, didactic lessons, although plenty of room for interaction and work in small groups, as well as creative ways of learning, with proof of this adorning many of the school corridors (one exceptionally well presented science display was complete with flashing lights). 'My son comes home itching to research more about the subjects he's taught,' said one parent. Drop-in subject clinics at GCSE and A level for most subjects at least once a week. Teaching staff highly praised, with the latest inspection report noting that they are an 'inspirational force in and beyond the classroom.' ‘You can email them at any time and they get back to you promptly,’ said one parent. Homework taken seriously, with at least one hour a night in first form, moving up to two hours a day in sixth form. ‘It doesn’t feel like an add-on, though, but an integral part of everything they teach,’ said a parent.

Tablets (not iPads) used in some lessons, although by no means embedded into the curriculum. No room for complacency or coasting. 'There's a strong expectation that you do your best and nothing less,' one pupil told us. 'Average, borderline or overly-tutored children would struggle, as would children who only feel comfortable when they get things right,' added a parent. 'Teaching is all about constantly challenging the children, who have to be prepared to learn through failing sometimes.'

Not the best place for heavyweight SEN, but the learning support unit (which is located centre school) employs good, competent staff (an extra one just appointed when we visited, allowing for more individual help) who cheerfully and successfully handle bright pupils with processing or other difficulties. 'Our admissions process is good at finding those who will thrive here, so it's generally a smooth process getting them the help they need once they join,' says the head. Parents concur. 'We knew our son was dyslexic, and whilst it was not really recognised by his primary school, this school picked it up in a single test at the application stage and has been fantastic in ensuring he gets all the support he needs now he's a pupil, including special lessons in the school day.' Mostly dyslexia, dyspraxia and Asperger’s, and although relatively few enter with SEN, regular monitoring usually means that the one or two per cent reach four or five per cent by third form. School speaks of the 'gift of dyslexia' and how it enables the world to be accessed in a different way. Learning support also organises mentoring for those struggling to maximise their potential, as well as help around resilience, relieving stress, facilitating study skills etc.

Careers guidance starts in the fourth year, peaking in the sixth form. Similarly detailed help with university applications in sixth form, with any pupil aiming for Oxbridge or any of medicine, dentistry or veterinary science given no shortage of special assistance. 'This starts early and is incredibly detailed and individual,' said one parent. But the rarefied approach to academia here means careers are not regularly discussed in the classroom. 'We are not providing a vocational education,' says head. 'Our view is that the more academic our pupils are, the stronger they perform at university and the more doors will open for them. In any case, many pupils will wind up doing jobs that haven’t even been invented yet.'
GAMES, OPTIONS, THE ARTS

Sport has such a strong reputation here that there’s a myth that non-sporty types won’t get on. Pupils, parents and the school assure us this isn’t the case, with one pupil telling us, ‘Everyone has to take part in sport because it keeps you fit and healthy, but there’s no ethos of “You will enjoy sport, no matter what!”’

Excels in rugby (D teams in most year groups), hockey, cricket and cross-country for boys and netball, lacrosse and tennis for girls. International reputation in cross-country. Other major games also on offer, along with sailing, squash, badminton, aerobics, golf, athletics, climbing and table tennis. School owns a 400 acre farm - Woollams – about a 10 minute drive away, with 75 acres dedicated to world-class, jaw-droppingly impressive pitches (including Astroturf) and courts, plus a spacious and modern pavilion, where pupils who do commit to sport are expected to spend most Saturdays. These dazzling outdoor facilities are complemented by a state-of-the-art sports centre on site, with good-sized climbing wall, fitness centre, dance studio, sports hall, gym, swimming pool (where sixth-formers can train to be lifeguards and then get a job at the pool in the summer) and even an endless pool with motion-capture technology to analyse style, strength, conditioning etc (the sports hall also has cameras throughout for analysis of sports play).

Outstanding coaching, and national and international sporting honours, plus numerous school representatives in county teams, across many sports. In the English Schools AA national cross-country championships, half the county senior team come from St Albans and the intermediate team are current national champions. School are 10 times winners of the King Henry VIII relays and recently notched up fourth place in the world cross-country championships. But whilst the school enjoys its winning, head insists this is not at all the privilege is quickly removed if they’re not impeccably behaved), keeping the school from feeling remote and elite. From fifth year, pupils can go into town for lunch (although the privilege is quickly removed if they’re not impeccably behaved), keeping the school from feeling remote and elite. That said, the on site cashless refectory serves an excellent array of food (some of the best we’ve seen) keeping younger (mainly from local independents and states) in the sixth in 1991. ‘It’s a wonderful co-ed school for girls to enter from a single-sex school because all the girls are new together,’ said one parent. ‘I don’t know any of the girls who don’t love it here,’ said one female pupil, although it’s generally agreed that girly-girls may struggle amid the testosterone. Boys say the presence of girls ‘makes us more mature.’

Music on the up, with 185 lessons taught by peripatetic teachers every week and many pupils play to a very high standard. Now a Steinway school, it’s no wonder that piano is performed at the abbey twice a week, and many teachers every week and many pupils play to a very high standard. From fifth year, pupils can go into town for lunch (although the privilege is quickly removed if they’re not impeccably behaved), keeping the school from feeling remote and elite. That said, the on site cashless refectory serves an excellent array of food (some of the best we’ve seen) keeping younger (mainly from local independents and states) in the sixth in 1991. ‘It’s a wonderful co-ed school for girls to enter from a single-sex school because all the girls are new together,’ said one parent. ‘I don’t know any of the girls who don’t love it here,’ said one female pupil, although it’s generally agreed that girly-girls may struggle amid the testosterone. Boys say the presence of girls ‘makes us more mature.’

 Lots of outreach work (school motto is translated from Latin as ‘Born not for ourselves’), involving pupils going into care homes, working with children with learning disabilities etc. Children from local state schools enjoy some of the facilities, including pool and science labs. In fact, exceptionally strong links exist with local state schools, with sixth formers mentoring primary school children and together with staff providing masterclasses in maths, sciences and drama. Student voice traditionally weak, but improving,
with recently formed student council having brought about more water fountains and refurbished toilets. 'I think they’re really working on this area, but there’s still some way to go to ensure pupils are instrumental to what goes on in the school,’ said one parent. Despite the obvious links with the abbey, pupils say religion is low-key.

**PASTORAL CARE AND DISCIPLINE**

Horizontal tutorial system, plus prefects, full-time school nurses, school counsellor, chaplain, two heads of sixth-form and lots of senior staff with pastoral roles reflect the emphasis on pupil support. ‘My son says you can ask the prefects anything and that you never feel silly,’ said one parent. ‘Initially when my son started, he was a little bit quiet but his confidence has really grown, all thanks to the pastoral care,’ said another. Traditional when it comes to discipline, boundaries and order, although there’s room for boys to learn from their mistakes and we witnessed usual boisterousness at break. Entrance into sixth form earns a whole new level of respect and grown-up facilities, including an on-site Starbucks (not surprisingly, also used by staff). Bullying? ‘Yes,’ says head, ‘because every school does. But if you’re asking me if it’s persistent, then no.’ This, he puts down to both strong sanctions and encouraging pupils and parents to report any unpleasantness early on. ‘I always think youngsters are like pebbles on a beach – when the tide comes in, they inevitably bump and give each other a polish. But we have to make sure that’s all it is.’ Legal highs had just been added to the list of drugs for which pupils are expelled, when we visited.

**PUPILS AND PARENTS**

Over 70 per cent of pupils from local Herts area and about half of those from St Albans itself. The rest, including quite a few Jewish pupils, from north London, mostly from Enfield. Smaller number from other ethnic minorities or families where the first language is not English. Boys come into the first year bright-eyed, bushy-tailed and in the main, grow into interested, sharp, articulate young people who are, on the whole, grounded, not pompous. School works hard to integrate girls but it remains steadfastly a male environment, attracting resilient and robust girls into the sixth form. Eight school bus routes bring the majority of children to school, whilst others walk or get the train.

Parents are ambitious – mostly professional, many first-time buyers, plus a handful whose children would otherwise qualify for free school meals. Good sense of community among parents, if that’s what you want, but easy enough to opt out of the events and parent get-togethers if you don’t. Some parents say the school could be better at communication with them, particularly electronically. ‘As it is, I have to get my son to take a picture with his phone of the fixtures information,’ said one parent. Very strong Old Albanians, many of whom send their sons here and, later, their daughters. Only 13 schools have produced more Fellows of the British Academy and Royal Society. Notable former pupils go back to the year dot but recent ones include Sir Tim Rice, archaeologist Lord Renfrew, film producer Mike Newell, General Sir Richard Lawson and Prof Stephen Hawking.

**ENTRANCE**

‘Unashamedly a selective school, but not ultra-selective,’ insists head, although it is seriously over-subscribed, with more than three applicants per place. IQ of 125+ at 11+ and 127+ at 13+ (say discrepancy is due to tutoring, not innate ability). At 11, tests in English, maths and VR and interviews, all on the same day. NB part of a group of independent co-ed/boys’ schools that coordinate 11+ results. At 13, apply early, conditional offers made following assessments in Y7; late-comers compete for the few remaining places. Tests as at 11+: three interviews and entry dependent on CE results. Around 100 applicants for 40+ places at 16 – with minimum grade A/7 required in A level subjects and a grade average of 6.6 or over (with an A giving 7 points and a B giving 6) at GCSE for both external applicants and those moving through from GCSEs.

**EXIT**

A laudable 78 per cent go on to Russell Group universities, notably Birmingham, Bristol, Durham, Exeter, Nottingham and Warwick, with popular subjects including economics, engineering, history, law, maths and the sciences. Regular success with medicine and veterinary science applications (10 in 2017) and eight to Oxbridge.

**MONEY MATTERS**

Academic scholarships, for absolute excellence, worth five per cent of fees awarded on the basis of performance in the entrance tests at 11 and by separate exam at 13 and 16. Choral scholarships by audition at 11+. Art, music and sport scholarships at 13+. Currently 42 bursaries, 20 full-fees remission. Bursary funds equivalent to five full fees pa allocated by combination of need and merit so if top three pupils require 100 per cent bursary there will be little left for anyone else, but school usually manages to offer something to almost all who need it.

**OUR VIEW**

Hovering towards the top of the league tables, this is a friendly, outward-looking county school where academia comes first, and sport a close second. Fear not if your son (or sixth form daughter) isn’t sporty, however, as the ‘work hard, play hard’ ethos of the school can (and frequently does) mean pupils are drawn more towards drama, art or music than sports, in addition to their more intellectual studies. Traditional, disciplined and highly structured, this school demands high standards from all, but its emphasis on a rounded education means it is not the academic pressure-cooker that so many London schools are.