Electives Programme

Course Description:

At Mark Rutherford School Sixth Form, we believe that education extends beyond examination specifications. Our Year 12 Electives programme is designed to enrich students' learning, encourage personal development, broaden horizons and help prepare students for higher education and future careers.

Electives provide valuable opportunities to develop new skills, pursue individual interests, engage in wider reading and independent learning, and gain qualifications that complement A Level studies. Some Electives can also contribute valuable UCAS tariff points, strengthening university applications and demonstrating a commitment to learning beyond the classroom.

Students are encouraged to select an Elective that reflects their interests, aspirations and personal goals. We aim to run the courses as outlined below; final options will be confirmed in September 2027.

Elective Options:

1. **Physical Education (PE)**
   Our PE Elective offers students the opportunity to participate in a range of sports and physical activities throughout the year. Whether students are experienced athletes or simply enjoy keeping active, the programme provides a chance to maintain a healthy lifestyle alongside academic studies. Regular participation in sport is associated with numerous benefits, including:

   - Improved physical fitness and wellbeing
   - Reduced stress and anxiety
   - Enhanced concentration, resilience and motivation
   - Opportunities to develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills
   - A positive balance between academic work and personal wellbeing

The PE Elective is an excellent way for students to stay active, socialise with their peers and support their mental and physical health during their Sixth Form studies.

2. **Duke of Edinburgh - Gold Award**
   The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award is one of the most prestigious youth achievement programmes in the UK and is highly respected by universities, employers and apprenticeship providers. The Gold Award challenges students to develop independence, resilience and leadership through a programme that includes:

   - Volunteering within the community
   - Developing a personal skill
   - Physical activity
   - Planning and completing expeditions
   - A residential experience with people they have not previously met

Participation provides students with invaluable life experiences, helping them to build confidence, problem-solving skills and self-reliance. The award is recognised nationally as evidence of commitment, perseverance and personal achievement, making it a valuable addition to applications for higher education, employment and training opportunities.

3. **MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)**
   MOOCs provide students with access to high-quality courses from leading universities and organisations around the world. This Elective encourages students to take ownership of their learning by exploring subjects beyond their A Level curriculum. Students can select courses aligned with their academic interests, future degree choices or career aspirations. Benefits of the MOOC programme include:

   - Developing independent study skills
   - Exploring subjects in greater depth
   - Demonstrating intellectual curiosity and wider reading
   - Strengthening personal statements and university applications
   - Accessing learning from world-leading institutions

MOOCs are particularly valuable for students considering competitive university courses, as they provide evidence of wider engagement with their chosen field of study.

4. **OCR Level 3 Award in Personal Finance**
   One of our most popular Elective choices, the OCR Level 3 Award in Personal Finance has been introduced in response to significant student demand. This practical qualification equips students with essential financial knowledge and skills for adult life, including:

   - Budgeting and financial planning
   - Personal borrowing and debt management
   - Savings and investments
   - Insurance and financial protection
   - Understanding the wider financial environment

The qualification develops financial confidence and literacy, helping students make informed decisions throughout university and beyond. Students who successfully complete the qualification can achieve up to 12 UCAS tariff points, making it a valuable addition to their post-18 applications.

5. **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)**
   The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is an excellent opportunity for students to undertake independent research into a topic of their choice. Students plan, research and produce a substantial project, developing many of the skills required for university study, including:

   - Independent research
   - Critical thinking and analysis
   - Academic writing
   - Time management
   - Presentation and evaluation skills

The EPQ enables students to explore an area of genuine interest, often linked to their intended university course or future career path. Universities highly value the qualification as evidence of academic independence and intellectual curiosity. The EPQ can contribute up to 28 UCAS tariff points, and many universities recognise the qualification positively as part of the admissions process.

6. **STEM Smarties Club (Student Leadership)**
   STEM Smarties Club provides an exciting opportunity for Year 12 students to develop their leadership, communication and mentoring skills whilst inspiring younger pupils to engage with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Led by Year 12 students, members design and deliver engaging STEM activities, experiments and workshops for younger year groups, helping to foster curiosity, problem-solving and a passion for innovation. Students will gain valuable experience in teamwork, project management, public speaking and event organisation, making this an excellent addition to university, apprenticeship and employment applications. The programme also supports students in developing confidence as role models within the school community.

Students who actively participate in leading and delivering STEM activities can work towards the Villiers Park Leadership Challenge award, an accreditation that recognises leadership, teamwork and engagement in STEM outreach projects. This Elective is a great option for students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Medicine, Computing, Teaching or any career that values leadership and communication skills.

Elective Availability:

We strongly encourage all Year 12 students to participate in an Elective where possible. However, students who are studying four A Levels or who are required to re-take GCSE English or GCSE Mathematics may not be able to take an Elective due to timetable constraints.

Where timetable restrictions apply, we will discuss options with students individually. We always aim to accommodate students' preferences wherever possible while ensuring that their core programme of study remains manageable and successful.

Further Information:

Please see Mr Wilson (Deputy Headteacher – Curriculum) or Ms Vallance (Director of Sixth Form) for information about Electives.