



Course Choice for S5

Key Factors

The priority for the school is to ensure that, as far as is possible, every young person experiences success in the courses they are undertaking in S5 (and S6) and leaves with a set of qualifications which opens as many doors as possible for them beyond school.



The advice we offer each pupil is based on three factors

- Our personal knowledge of them
- A detailed understanding of how pupils in Jordanhill School perform in S5
- National data about the likely level of success based on performance to date

We expect every pupil to be ambitious and to take on a significant challenge. The school believes that a positive, optimistic attitude to education and learning underpins academic successes. We actively encourage pupils to have high expectations and avoid saying that they *won't* cope or *can't* do great things.

However, we do not encourage pupils to set out on programmes which carry a high risk of failure as this is ultimately de-motivating and restricts rather than enhances options beyond school.

Every year, before and after the results are published, we help pupils choose the most suitable courses and ensure that they have the entry requirements for each of their chosen subjects. This can be a lengthy process, but pupils without the individual entry requirements for a subject or the overall grades to study a package of subjects are highly unlikely to succeed.

Factors to Consider

- Over 90% of pupils in S5 say that the work in S5 is far more demanding than they had expected
- A tiny minority of HE courses ask for pupils to pass all of their Highers in S5. Increasingly, the universities let applicants use results gained in both S5 and S6.
- Pupils with 3 'B' grades at Higher are better placed than those with 4 or even 5 'C' grades when applying to university
- Attempting Highers in all of the subjects in which you have the entry requirements is only a good idea if you have scored highly in all of your S4 subjects
- Rates nationally for re-sitting Highers are very poor
 - less than 50% of pupils pass a Higher in S6 if they failed it in S5
 - only 15% of pupils who gain a 'C' improve on this grade in S6



The idea that *'I might as well do the Higher because I can always re-sit it next year'* simply does not work.

When we speak to pupils about their course choices at the start of S5, it is common to hear them say they will work much harder in S5 than they did in S4. Many pupils assure us that they will change their work patterns and / or arrange for extra support out of class. Our analysis of Jordanhill pupils and their successes takes all of these factors into account.

Overall S4 Performance as a Guide to S5

Points Scale

Nationally, the performance of every pupil in every subject and level is translated into a **points score**. This forms the basis of the analysis of performance in every course and also of individual schools such as Jordanhill. A pupil's points score average (**PSA**) is the best predictor of future performance.

National 5	
Band 1	89
Band 2	84
Band 3	79
Band 4	74
Band 5	69
Band 6	64
Band 7	52

We have undertaken a detailed analysis of how our pupils perform in S5 based on their PSA in S4. This therefore takes into account the following factors

- Jordanhill pupils perform much better in S4 than might be expected
- The high levels of support at home
- The generally positive work ethic of our pupils
- The improvement that pupils make in Jordanhill from S4 to S5 is better than might be expected

National 4 33

National 3 18

This reveals some startlingly clear thresholds which pupils need to reach in S4 to have a reasonable chance of success at Higher Grade in S5.

PSA	Likelihood of Passing		
	5 Highers	3 Highers	1 Higher
>75	High		
66 - 72	Reasonable	High	
60 - 66	None	50:50	High
50 - 60		None	Reasonable
<50			None

In the last 8 years

- Fewer than 1 in 40 pupils who has a PSA below 60 passes 4 or more Highers
- Fewer than 1 in 10 pupils who has a PSA between 50 and 60 passes 3 or more Highers
- Fewer than 1 in 10 pupils who has a PSA of less than 50 passes 1 or more Higher

We will provide every pupil with the points resulting from their performance in the S4 internal examinations.

While most pupils will improve their PSA between December and May this does not happen automatically.

Pupils must actively plan to reach a level of attainment in S4 which raises the likelihood of success in S5.

In S5 we offer a wide range of National 4, National 5 and Skills for Work courses so that pupils can choose a combination that suits them and will lead to success. (See the curriculum map in the course choice booklet.)

Higher Grade Entry Requirements

The entry requirement for most Higher Grade subjects is an 'A' or a 'B' at National 5. Pupils are also expected to reach the PSA threshold at which they have a reasonable chance of success for the combination of Highers chosen. For individual Highers the chances of passing are around

	70% with a Grade A at National 5
	30-45% with a Grade B at National 5
	10% with a Grade C at National 5

Entry to subjects such as Art and Music depend more on the pupil's aptitude for that subject.

Direct entry to Higher in a subject not studied before is likely to depend on performance in related subjects and/or the mathematical and/or language demands of the course. Prior performance in Mathematics and English as well as PSA will be taken into account.