Astronomy

Qualification	GCSE (Edexcel)
Course description	Astronomy subject content is divided into two broad areas, reflected by the two papers that comprise the terminal exam: • Naked-eye Astronomy (covering Planet Earth, the lunar disc, the Earth-Moon-Sun system, time and the Earth-Moon-Sun cycles, Solar System observation, celestial observation, early models of the Solar System, and planetary motion and gravity; • Telescopic Astronomy (covering exploring the Moon, solar astronomy, exploring the Solar System, formation of planetary systems, exploring starlight, stellar evolution, our place in the Galaxy, cosmology). 20% of the examination material will cover aspects of understanding observational astronomy, with a focus on knowledge, understanding and skills. A further 20% of the examination material will focus on mathematical skills. These skills will be delivered and assessed at all levels up to, but not beyond, the requirements specified in GCSE mathematics
Method of Assessment	As with other GCSE subjects, assessment will take the form of (a pair of) exams at the end of year 11; each is worth 50% of the qualification and lasts 1 hour and 45 minutes. The assessment will consist of a mixture of different question styles, including multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, calculations, graphical questions and extended open response questions. There is no coursework, although at least two pieces of observational astronomy are expected to be completed, one aided and one unaided. The aided observation may be completed using binoculars or a telescope if these are available to students, or there is access to a robotic telescope located in the Canary Islands, which can be directed to take deep space images.
Further Study after Year 11	A Level Physics, Mathematics or Geography.
Career Routes	A background in astronomy will prepare students for any career that involves astrophysics, geology or planetary science, but there are many wider areas that its study may benefit, including engineering pathways.