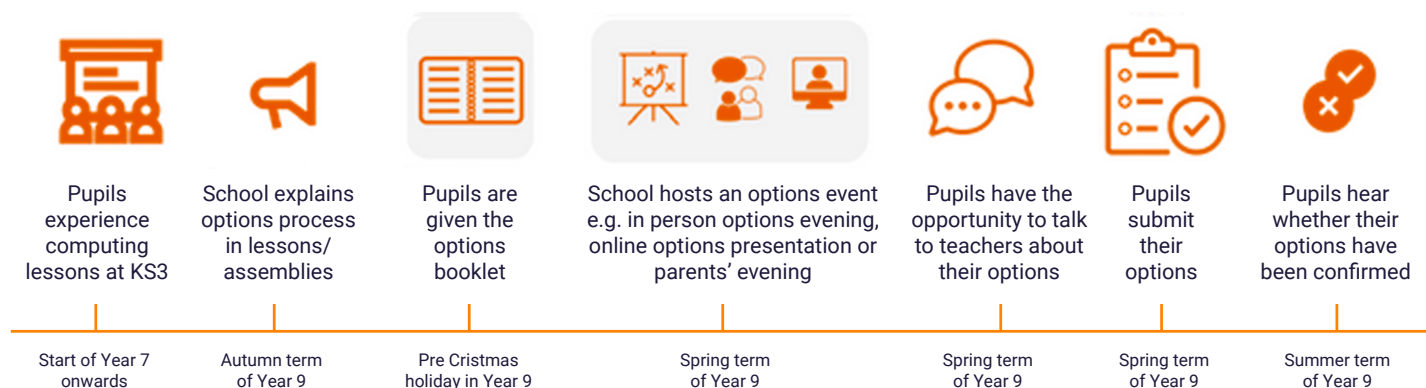# Presenting GCSE options choices

Informing students and their families about computer science

The options process

The options process is an important stage in a young person's journey through education. This choice needs to be an informed one and allow them to make the right decision for their own interests and future aspirations.

All schools have a process that is followed before students make their final choice, this allows us as teachers to help inform students and help them make the right decision for them.

Pupils experience computing lessons at KS3	School explains options process in lessons/ assemblies	Pupils are given the options booklet	School hosts an options event e.g. in person options evening, online options presentation or parents' evening	Pupils have the opportunity to talk to teachers about their options	Pupils submit their options	Pupils hear whether their options have been confirmed
Start of Year 7 onwards	Autumn term of Year 9	Pre Cristmas holiday in Year 9	Spring term of Year 9	Spring term of Year 9	Spring term of Year 9	Summer term of Year 9

Look at how computer science is described at different stages throughout the options process as this may highlight barriers that, for example, girls may face when making their informed decision on option choices.

Options booklets and event checklist

From October 2021 to July 2022, the Behavioural Insights Team conducted five types of exploratory research to understand how computer science is presented in options booklets and at options evenings.

☑ Language

Use familiar, non–technical language

Language is important in the description of the option subject and detailed descriptions of the course content should be removed.

☑ Role Models

Include relatable role model – quotes and in person

Relatable role models are an important element to the selection of an option and where possible near – peer role models need to be considered. A near-peer role model is someone close to the age bracket of the students and pursuing a relevant career path. For example, current GCSE or A level students sharing their journey and passion for the subject.

Consider:

✓ images of relatable role models showing diversity
✓ options evenings including diversity of older students involved
✓ quotes from an inclusive range of students on why they chose the subject

☑ Challenge

Present computer science as an enjoyable challenge

Remember to always share an honest message about computing – it is a challenge but an enjoyable one.

☑ Career options

Present a range of social and creative career options

Showcase a range of career options and pathways, especially those with social and creative aspects.

Think about sharing:

✓ what does the career involve
✓ where to find out more?
✓ importance and appeal to employers

☑ Requirement framing

Frame the requirements in terms of behaviours not fixed traits.

Requirements for accessing the subject are detailed in your GCSE options booklet and openly discussed with students. Consider when and how this is shared and move away from how 'good' a student needs to be in another subject area, i.e. Maths, to access the subject.

Making an informed choice
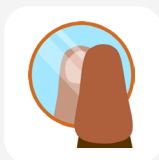
What can be used to ensure students are informed?

An informed choice is essential for students participating in the options process. Students need to be engaged in the subject before they choose their options. This can be achieved in a range of ways.

"Let's boost the self-efficacy of both teachers and students"

Computing Ambassadors

Computing Ambassadors are part of STEM Ambassador volunteers – people from a range of industries who can connect computing lessons to careers. Bring an ambassador to your classroom to introduce a topic, bring a subject to life, inspire girls to choose computer science, and to link learning to the real world.

Self-efficacy of students

Self efficacy is about the student's own beliefs in their own capabilities. Everyone has their own beliefs in their own capabilities. This can be something that holds us back in particular subject areas. However girls statistically get higher grades. Build in the ability to develop everyone's own self efficacy to allow students to make an informed choice.

Tech She Can

Tech She Can offers a wide range of free resources from assemblies, live and on demand, role models, lesson packs, animated lessons and after school club resources.

UK Bebras Challenge

Bebras is a UK based competition that allows students to develop their computational thinking skills. Statistically, problem solving is an area where girls rank higher. Giving them the opportunity to develop this skill by taking part in this competition, can develop their self-efficacy and awareness of the subject matter.

Family engagement events

One of the challenges facing students is family influence on option selection. Build family capital before options evening with opportunities for families to be familiarised with the subject and possible career opportunities.

I Belong

Our evidence-informed programme aims to help schools understand the barriers to girls' participation in computer science and make a plan to overcome them.

- ☑ complete the short course
- ☑ participate in a range of recommended activities
- ☑ claim our school certificate

Encouraging girls into computer science