BEECHEN CLIFF

Photography A Level

Curriculum Booklet

2026 - 2027

Head of Faculty: Mr P. Simmons

Head of Subject: Mrs A Wilmot

Subject Curriculum Intent:

"It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera… they are made with the eye, heart, and head."

Henri Cartier-Bresson

The A Level Photography curriculum at Beechen Cliff is designed to encourage a curiosity and love for Photography and lens based media, with the emphasis on advancing the students' independence by encouraging them to bring their own passions and interests to develop an individual who is confident and well prepared for further study or employment at the end of the two year course.

Photography is so much more than just conventional camera work. It can, depending on the students' interests, incorporate traditional film and printing techniques, including the development of film using our darkroom, digital photography, scanning, film and video, animation and digital manipulation using Photoshop. We very much encourage students to explore any area that best serves them to reach a conclusion in their work that is appropriate to their message and intentions. We also have various studio lights as well as opportunities to be involved in lighting for events and encourage students to make use of as much of these as possible in the time with us so they are as experienced as possible on completion of the course.

At Beechen Cliff we have a large number of students who join the Sixth Form from other schools and we try to ensure that their transition is as friendly and smooth as possible. If students have only had an experience of studying an art based subject at GCSE, and do not have a specific Photography GCSE, don't let that put you off, we just ask for enthusiasm and a willingness to learn! Our students are also predominantly White British, so it is important that they are given every opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the place Photography has in various cultures and communities and to put into context how social, economic and religious differences affect and influence art around the world. It is also important that students develop a sense of professionalism in their work, and understand the value of Photography in terms of employment and its use in society as a communication tool.

It is vital that all students understand the importance of research and visit galleries as part of the development of their ideas in this subject. This will allow students to develop a passion for Photography and their own style will grow from there.

We want students to try new things, and to work outside of their comfort zone. Becoming a successful Photographer comes from practice and perseverance, as well as a willingness to get out into the world to take their images. Take a chance!

Subject Curriculum Implementation:

The structure of the course takes into account that students joining the subject will have had varying degrees of experience in Photography. Some will have a GCSE qualification at grade 6 or above, others might have an Art based GCSE (such as Art and Design, Graphics or Textiles) but with little or no experience in Photography. Consequently, the course begins with an introductory term where we go over the basics of DSLR camera operation, use of studio lights and flash meters and use of Photoshop. This acts as a foundation on which students begin to build their skills through project work and independent learning. Experience has shown that even students who have a GCSE in Photography benefit from this recap, and also are useful in helping and supporting students new to the subject.

Following this introductory term, we quickly embark on the first of 3 'foundation' projects which take up the next three terms. These are teacher-led projects that have a specific brief, but the emphasis in each of these units is to encourage students to explore and push themselves to try new techniques that they have not tried before. All projects must show evidence of research, planning and experimentation and are designed to become increasingly student-led, culminating in the 'Artistic' project that students begin in January of Year 1, and ends at Easter. This acts as the stepping stone to their own 'Personal Investigation' which begins after Easter. This is their main Coursework element, which includes an essay as well as a rigorous Photographic investigation into a topic of their own choosing. At the end of each of the foundation projects, students present their work to the rest of the group in the form of critiques, where each student has the opportunity to show off their work and while the audience offers constructive feedback and support. Each project is then teacher assessed.

The A level in Photography is assessed on two main areas, the coursework element (60%) and exam (40%). The main coursework unit starts after Easter of the first year and ends in January. The exam preparation period begins in February of Year 2, and ends with the final exam in May. The Personal Investigation is handed in for final assessment at Christmas. They will then be given a mark and feedback as to how the work can be improved. The students then have the whole of January of the second year to improve and complete the outcomes for this unit before the final grade for the coursework is awarded at the end of January prior to the commencement of the exam.

The exam is sent by the exam board and is essentially a new project. The students are given a number of starting points of which they choose one. They are then given a set period of time (usually around 12 weeks) to research, plan, experiment and refine ideas prior to the final exam (15 hours) which they undertake in May. It is expected that students are willing to commit to the course. Taking photographs is time consuming, but you can't be a successful Photographer without doing so. As a minimum, on top of the lessons, we would expect a student to be doing 4 hours of homework each week.

Allocated Curriculum Time:

	Lower Sixth	**Upper Sixth**
Fortnightly lesson allocation	8 hours	8 hours

Course Information

Exam Board: **Eduqas**
Specification: **A level Art and Design (Photography)**

Lower Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas	Key Skills / Coursework
1	**Foundation Skills** • Operation of DSLR camera • Effective use of workflow/filing work. • Practical application of digital media. • Use of studio/off ca	Practice operation/develop skills of camera use. Use of Photoshop CC Practical application of skills prior to first unit.
2	**Portrait Unit** • Look at and recreate Portraits by a 'master' of photography • Develop Studio lighting skills • Advanced techniques (outdoor off camera flash, portrait in the landscape, home shoots. **Deadline mid-November**	Photoshop post shoot editing Advanced post production work. (Darkroom, cutting, slicing images etc) Presentation. Critique
3	**Landscape Unit** • Composition. Use of Aperture. • Depth of field • Advanced landscape techniques. How to make a landscape 'different' **Deadline Early January**	Pinhole photography. Infrared Photography Intentional Camera Movement Panoramic Photography Use of Photoshop to enhance images. Presentation & Critique
4	**Artistic Project** • Students are to investigate ways to produce eye-catching and more artistic photographic styles. • Work can go in any direction students wish. • Each student to spend a week exploring ideas before embarking on their own avenue of investigation based on sound research.	The topic is set in this instance by the student. They can look at any area of lens based media, but should be thinking about the outcome from the start. They need to explore an aspect of photography that will stretch them and appear imaginative and exciting to the audience. It helps if their work has a message to direct the idea.

	• During the latter phase of this unit, students have to start thinking about their Personal Investigation topic. **Deadline Easter.**	
5	**Personal Investigation** • This term the students commence their Personal Investigation. • They can work on any topic of their choosing, following discussion with the teacher. • They ensure the project has enough 'legs' to it to last 8 months. **Deadline Christmas Year 2**	Students develop their project through sustained investigation, and can allow the project to evolve and develop as the work progresses. It's not unusual for a unit to change significantly from the starting point to where it ends up. As long as the changes are documented and backed by research and evidence of experimentation is on display throughout.
6	**Personal Investigation** • This term the students commence their Personal Investigation. • They can work on any topic of their choosing, following discussion with the teacher. • They ensure the project has enough 'legs' to it to last 8 months. **Deadline Christmas Year 2**	Students develop their project through sustained investigation, and can allow the project to evolve and develop as the work progresses. It's not unusual for a unit to change significantly from the starting point to where it ends up. As long as the changes are documented and backed by research and evidence of experimentation is on display throughout.

Upper Sixth

Term	Curriculum Foci Areas	Coursework Key Skills
1	**Personal Investigation** ● This term the students commence their Personal Investigation. ● They can work on any topic of their choosing, following discussion with the teacher. ● They ensure the project has enough 'legs' to it to last 8 months. **Deadline Christmas Year 2**	Students develop their project through sustained investigation, and can allow the project to evolve and develop as the work progresses. It's not unusual for a unit to change significantly from the starting point to where it ends up. As long as the changes are documented and backed by research and evidence of experimentation is on display throughout.
2	**Personal Investigation** ● This term the students commence their Personal Investigation. ● They can work on any topic of their choosing, following discussion with the teacher. ● They ensure the project has enough 'legs' to it to last 8 months. **Deadline Christmas Year 2**	Students develop their project through sustained investigation, and can allow the project to evolve and develop as the work progresses. It's not unusual for a unit to change significantly from the starting point to where it ends up. As long as the changes are documented and backed by research and evidence of experimentation is on display throughout.
3	**Externally Set Assignment** ● The final deadline for submission of the Personal Investigation is the end of January ● Following this, the students will be given the Externally set Assignment. This will be an exam paper with a series of starting points, of which the student chooses one. ● The following 12 weeks involve the students researching, experimenting and developing their ideas on this topic until the exam itself which is a 15 hour period that students work to produce outcomes as a product of this preparation period.	It is up to the student how they interpret the exam starting point. They then discuss the idea with their teacher to develop a coherent response to this starting point based on research and ideas developed from practical experimentation. As with the Personal Investigation, the students' ideas might evolve and change as time goes on, as long as their changes are explained and backed up by note taking and research, changes in a plan are acceptable.

	Deadline for the preparation period is May.	
4	**Externally Set Assignment** ● The final deadline for submission of the Personal Investigation is the end of January ● Following this, the students will be given the Externally set Assignment. This will be an exam paper with a series of starting points, of which the student chooses one. ● The following 12 weeks involve the students researching, experimenting and developing their ideas on this topic until the exam itself which is a 15 hour period that students work to produce outcomes as a product of this preparation period. **Deadline for the preparation period is May.**	It is up to the student how they interpret the exam starting point. They then discuss the idea with their teacher to develop a coherent response to this starting point based on research and ideas developed from practical experimentation. As with the Personal Investigation, the students' ideas might evolve and change as time goes on, as long as their changes are explained and backed up by note taking and research, changes in a plan are acceptable.
5	**Revision and Exams**	
6	**Exams**	

Reading List

Rather than a reading list, we encourage our students to see as much Photography and Art and creativity as possible. We encourage regular gallery visits in order to obtain inspiration and ideas for their own individual work. Also use any source images as inspiration. It could be a film you have seen, a novel you have read, pictures in magazines or on the internet. Be responsive to images you see wherever they might be. Start collecting images that interest you in a journal or sketchbook.

Galleries

- https://www.victoriagal.org.uk/
- https://www.holburne.org/
- https://www.beauxartsbath.co.uk/
- https://www.castlefineart.com/galleries/bath
- https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/
- https://arnolfini.org.uk/

Ongoing Studying

In order to be successful in A Level Photography we encourage all students to embrace the subject, challenge themselves and not to be afraid to go wrong. Some of the best work comes from making mistakes and learning from them.
We have high expectations of our students and set deadlines that we expect to be met. Photography takes time, and we aim to use every lesson to be as productive as possible, and expect the same at home.
We organise gallery visits, trips abroad, guest workshops and talks. As students we would expect these to be taken advantage of, as well as organising individual inspirational trips and visits outside of school.
We not only ask that all students participate in the teacher led sessions, but also learn from peers. Talking about Photography and ideas is hugely beneficial in pushing work forward to higher levels. We organise critiques where students are expected to talk to the class about their project work, and gain inspiration from others' thoughts and interpretation.
There is no right or wrong with this subject, it is subjective, personal and always developing. We hope our students push themselves, challenge themselves and investigate their ideas in depth in order to get the most possible from the two years with us.

Revision

Formal assessments take place at the end of each Mini Project during the foundation stage in Year 12, and then at the end of the Personal Project in Year 13. This combined forms the 60% coursework grade.
The Exam completes the grading with the other 40%.
We expect for deadlines to be met, time spent not only in lessons and outside of lessons being as productive as possible.

Due to the nature of a coursework subject, there are not any specific revision techniques. As a department we expect you to keep on top of your work, take advice and guidance on board and not be afraid to challenge yourself. Take advantage of the space and equipment we have here in school, and be able to take on challenges and embrace new techniques.

Final Assessment Structure:

Component	Weighting (%)	Content	Proposed Exam Date
Personal Investigation	60%	• The coursework component is based on the Personal Investigation Project which starts after Easter in Year 12 and is completed at Christmas. Work from the foundation stage in Yr 12 can be added if relevant to the chosen personal project. This work is completed in a variety of sketchbooks that the students have full choice in. Students choose the topic of their investigation after discussion with their teacher.	Jan/Feb of Yr13
Externally set assignment	40%	• The exam commences in February and consists of a paper sent by the exam board containing a set of starting points which the pupils get to choose from. Once the starting point has been chosen, they work on this project, developing ideas, research and methods appropriate to their intentions. This period lasts for 10 school weeks. Work is created in a sketchbook of the students choice. They sit a final 20 hour exam where they realise these intentions in the form of an outcome or outcomes after Easter.	May of Yr13

Please see Exam Board websites for up to date information:
(https://www.eduqas.co.uk/qualifications/art-and-design-asa-level/#tab_keydocuments)

Year	Careers education in Art and Photography
12 & 13	**ALevel Art and Photography curriculum builds a strong foundation in visual literacy, critical thinking, and technical execution, opening doors to a wide range of creative and commercial industries.** A-Level Art curriculum trains students in skills highly valued by modern employers, including:

	• **Visual Communication:** Presenting complex ideas clearly through imagery. • **Project Management:** Taking an idea from initial research and mock-ups to a finished product. • **Resilience & Evaluation:** Analysing your own work, accepting critique, and problem-solving when a design fails **Artists and Photographers used to inform practice and research throughout the ALevel Course.** **Gallery visits, trips and visiting Artist/Photographers.**