



The Henry Cort Community College

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Dear Parents/Carers

GCSE Photography

Now that students have settled into the academic year, I would like to share some important information about GCSE Photography. This creative and practical course is designed to develop technical skills, artistic understanding and visual communication through the medium of photography.

Course Expectations

Students are expected to participate fully in lessons and complete all coursework and homework by the required deadlines. As photography is a practical subject, students will also need to take photographs outside of school hours and in a variety of locations. This independent photography work is an essential part of the GCSE course and will help students develop both their technical skills and creative ideas.

Equipment Requirements

To support their coursework, students will need access to the following:

SD Memory Card

I strongly recommend that students have their own SD memory card for use in school. This enables them to take ownership of their work and helps prevent photographs from being mixed up with those of other students.

A 16GB SD card is more than sufficient for GCSE Photography.

SD cards can be purchased through SCOPAY for **£5.90** or from most electrical and online retailers.

Camera or Photography Device

Students will need access to a device capable of taking good-quality photographs outside school. This could include:

- A smartphone
- A tablet
- A compact digital camera
- A DSLR or mirrorless camera

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Please be reassured that a smartphone, tablet or compact camera is perfectly acceptable for GCSE Photography, provided it is capable of producing high-quality images.

Any photographs taken at home must be uploaded to Google Drive before the lesson. Students will not be permitted to access images directly from their phones whilst in school.

School Equipment

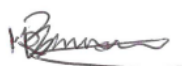
Students will have access to the department's Nikon D5500 DSLR cameras during lessons.

For students who have a particular interest in photography or who may wish to continue studying photography beyond GCSE, investing in a DSLR or mirrorless camera may be worthwhile. These cameras provide greater creative control and flexibility through interchangeable lenses and manual settings.

Further guidance on purchasing a camera can be found below.

If you have any questions about the course or equipment requirements, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to supporting students through an exciting and inspiring year of Photography.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Bimson
Teacher of Photography

Guidance on Purchasing a Camera for GCSE Photography

There is no single camera model that I would recommend for every student; the best choice will depend on your budget, interests and future aspirations. The information below should help you make an informed decision.

DSLR or Mirrorless Camera?

If your budget allows and your young person has a keen interest in photography, a DSLR or mirrorless camera is worth considering.

Both types of camera offer:

- Excellent image quality
- Interchangeable lenses
- Full manual control of aperture, shutter speed and ISO
- Greater creative flexibility than most smartphones or compact cameras

Mirrorless cameras are the newest generation of camera technology. They offer many of the same features as DSLRs but are typically smaller and lighter because they do not use an internal mirror mechanism. They can, however, be more expensive.

Both DSLR and mirrorless cameras are excellent choices and would serve students well throughout their GCSE studies and beyond.

Where Should I Buy a Camera?

A refurbished camera can provide excellent value for money.

I recommend **MPB** (<https://www.mpb.com/en-uk>), a trusted retailer specialising in used and refurbished photographic equipment. We have purchased much of our school equipment through MPB and have been very pleased with both the quality and service provided.

New cameras can also be purchased from retailers such as:

- Currys
- Argos
- Amazon
- Directly from camera manufacturers

What Do We Use in School?

The Photography Department uses **Nikon D5500** DSLR cameras.

At the time of writing, the camera body is typically available through MPB for approximately **£274-£379** (excluding a lens).

The Nikon D5500 provides all the features required for GCSE Photography and remains an excellent choice for students learning photography. One limitation is that some older Nikon lenses may require manual focusing, whereas newer lenses support autofocus.

Further information about this camera can be found at:

- MPB: <https://www.mpb.com/en-uk/product/nikon-d5500>
- Ken Rockwell Review: <https://www.kenrockwell.com/nikon/d5500.htm>

Which Camera Brands Are Recommended?

The most widely respected camera manufacturers include:

- Nikon
- Canon
- Sony
- Fujifilm
- Panasonic

When using Nikon cameras, I have found Sigma lenses to be particularly good value and of excellent image quality.

What Accessories Are Needed?

Before purchasing a camera, please check carefully which items are included. Some retailers sell the camera body separately from the lens.

Essential Equipment

- Camera body
- Lens
- Battery
- Battery charger

- SD memory card

Useful Optional Accessories

- Camera case
- Spare battery
- Additional memory cards
- Tripod
- Lens cleaning kit
- USB memory card reader
- Additional lenses (e.g. macro or telephoto)

Further Advice

If you are considering purchasing a camera and would like more personalised guidance, visiting a specialist camera shop can be very helpful.

The following resources also provide detailed reviews and buying advice:

- <https://www.kenrockwell.com>
- Photography review videos on YouTube

I hope this information is helpful and assists you in choosing the most suitable equipment for your young person.

