



HIGHDOWN SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Curriculum Policy

Aspiration – Respect – Excellence

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

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Curriculum Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policy/policies:

- Equality Statement & Objectives
- Inclusion Policy
- Learning & Teaching Policy
- Literacy Across the Curriculum Policy
- Numeracy Across the Curriculum Policy
- PSHCE including RSE Policy

Curriculum Intent

Every student will experience a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum throughout their five-to-seven-year journey at Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre. This will enable all students to acquire and develop knowledge, understanding and skills in English, mathematics, science, humanities, modern foreign languages and the Arts.

The focus of the curriculum through Years 7 to 9 is to develop a wide range of skills and help to foster students' thirst for learning through inspiring and relevant learning experiences. Through the wide variety of subjects, topics and themes studied, students will also develop the personal, learning and thinking skills required to succeed in their GCSE and/or Technical awards and qualifications and post-16 studies. The curriculum will develop creative, enquiring and independent learners adept at problem-solving and teamwork, providing a foundation for life-long learning.

The curriculum through Years 10 and 11 will offer a broad range of subjects for all students. Students will follow a package of courses (their 'study programme') which is personalised to best meet their needs and in which they can maximise their success, enabling progression to further education or training.

At post-16, Highdown School provides the opportunity to gain further qualifications for personal development and enhancing career prospects. As in Years 10 and 11, students study a package of subjects (their 'Study Programme') that best meets their needs and will provide a progression route to higher education, training or employment. Students will study a range of subjects, including traditional A-Levels, technical awards and qualifications, or a blend of these.

Students will develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the curriculum. A personalised programme of Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship education (PSHCE) through timetabled lessons throughout the year, will promote students maturing into healthy young citizens who will make a positive contribution to society. From September 2023 PSHCE has been rebranded as Character, Culture and Citizenship, (CCC) and has increased curriculum time.

The curriculum aims to develop successful, confident, independent, responsible and resilient young people, who are well-prepared for, and progress on to, further and higher education and/or employment.

Equality and diversity

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre is totally committed to promoting equal opportunity and inclusion. In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education guidance: The Equality Act 2010 and schools, our curriculum will display a discriminatory-free approach to teaching and learning throughout the school. Departments present opportunities for promoting cultural diversity within subjects. Further information can be found in our Equality Statement and Objectives.

Inclusion

Developing the whole person is central to our ethos at Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre. Highdown's ARE ethos (Aspiration, Respect, Excellence) embodies our efforts to make Highdown an environment where every student is supported and enabled to reach full academic, social and emotional potential. Further information can be found in our Inclusion Policy.

PiXL Edge

Employers agree that 'soft skills' are as important as academic knowledge and understanding. Many say they are more important. The PiXL Edge programme helps students develop these skills in a systematic and immersive way. Students across the age and ability spectrum are able to develop, capture and accredit those qualities. The PiXL Edge programme is focussed on five attributes: Leadership, Organisation, Resilience, Initiative and Communication. All students have the opportunity to develop their PiXL Edge profiles as they progress through the school through the completion of approved activities within their curricular, extra-curricular and personal experiences.

Extra-curricular programme

Highdown offers a wide and varied programme extra-curricular activities that take place outside of the formal curriculum. The offer will vary from year to year and term to term, for example different sporting clubs will be offered at different points in the year. Every year students will be able to participate in activities in the fields of sport, the arts, personal development and cultural opportunities.

Mentor Programme

All students from year 7 to 13 follow a mentor programme designed for their year group. The mentor time programme supports the development of the learner thus enabling them to access and benefit from the rich curriculum on offer at Highdown. Students have five 25-minute sessions each week devoted to different aspects of their development:

- literacy and vocabulary development x2
- non-cognitive learning skills following the VESPA framework
- the soft skills following the LORIC scheme
- SMSC

One of the 5 mentor sessions will be in vertical mentor groups. This will incorporate PiXL Edge and allow students to work across years within their Houses to prepare for different school wide events across the year.

Careers

The careers programme is guided by the CDI framework (2021) and the Gatsby benchmarks. Students experience a range of activities during mentor time, CCC lessons, Careers Spotlight sessions during the 5 Careers Weeks', curriculum lessons and through experiences of the workplace and encounters with employers. Students have a specialist input of careers information and guidance through assemblies, group work and 1:1 sessions which broaden knowledge and awareness of pathways, careers and decision making. The Highdown Excellence Plan supports goal setting and action planning which is in an integral part of a robust careers development programme.

Key Stage 3

All students experience a broad range of subjects in years 7, 8 and 9. This provides a fantastic foundation of knowledge and skills in preparation for study at Key Stage 4. The table below shows the number of periods allocated per subject per year group, over a two-week, 50 period timetable. Each lesson is 1 hour in length.

Subject	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Accelerated Reader	1	1	0
Art	2	2	2
Computing & ICT	2*	2*	2*
Design and Technology	2	2	2
Drama	2	2	2
English	8	8	7
Geography	3	3	3
History	3	3	3
MFL (French/Spanish/Chinese**)	4	3	4
Mathematics	7	7	8
Music	2	2	2
Physical Education	4	4	4
CCC***	2	2	2
Religious Education	1	1	1
Science	6	7	8
Steam	1	1	0

*Plus Technology rotation

**Students following the Mandarin Excellence Programme will have additional lessons each week, these are taken from a combination of mentor periods, after school lessons and 1 Pe lesson per fortnight.

***In addition to 2 periods per fortnight CCC is also covered in assemblies and within other curriculum subjects.

At the start of year 7 all students will study French, Spanish and Chinese. Towards Christmas students will participate in an options process where they state their preferred language to study for the remainder of Key Stage 3. Most students will get their first choice but this cannot be guaranteed.

Most subjects are taught in mixed attainment groups in Key Stage 3. Maths is set based on prior and current attainment from October half term in Year 7. English is taught in mentor groups in year 7 and

then in mixed attainment groups in years 8 and 9. Science is taught in mentor groups in years 7 and 8 and mixed attainment groups in year 9.

In year 8 Students will complete an options process for Design and Technology subjects. This allows them to study fewer subjects more deeply in year 9 for increased specialist knowledge and skills development in preparation GCSE.

In year 9, students will complete an options process for study at Key Stage 4.

Key Stage 4

The curriculum followed by students at Key Stage 4 is designed to allow for specialism and a degree of choice. Students are advised regarding which study programme is best suited to their needs. All students have the same core entitlement and will study GCSEs in English (GCSE Language and GCSE Literature), Maths and Science (triple or combined GCSE). From September 2023 year 10 will have 4 GCSE option choices with Religious Studies and Citizenship being options rather than compulsory GCSEs. Students will also study core Physical Education and CCC (non-GCSE subjects). Most students will choose 4 option subjects to study alongside the core subjects. Option subjects are mainly GCSE but there are some vocational courses.

The table below shows the number of lessons for each subject over a two-week, 50 period timetable. All lessons are 1 hour in length.

Subject	Year 10	Year 11
English	8	8
Mathematics	8	8
Science	10	10
Physical Education	2	2
CCC	2	2
Option A	5	5
Option B	5	5
Option C	5	5
Option D	5	5
Technical qualifications (within options)*	5	5

Options subjects – Art, Art Graphics, Art Photography, Business Studies, Citizenship, Computing, Creative iMedia, Design and Technology, Drama, Economics, Food Preparation and Nutrition, French, Geography, Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, History, Mandarin Chinese, Music, Music Technology, Physical Education, Spanish, Sport Studies, Textile Design (Art), Statistics and Religious Studies.

*Technical qualifications – Cambridge National Sports Studies (Level 1 & 2), Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (Level 2), iMedia (Level 1 & 2).

Study Programme

All students will follow a specific Study Programme. A 'Study Programme' refers to a combination of different subjects and qualifications, some core and some optional. Students are recommended for a particular Study Programme based on attainment and progress information and on our knowledge of the students. All Study Programmes are designed to ensure students have clear progression routes to post-16 education and/or training, and that they have a broad and balanced experience.

The majority of students will follow the EBacc or Main Study Programme where, in addition to the core curriculum they will study four option subjects. Some students will be recommended to follow the Technical Study Programme where they will study predominantly GCSE qualifications in addition to a Level 1 or Level 2 vocational qualification. Students are recommended for Technical Study Programme following analysis of data and in dialogue with key staff, parents/carers and the students themselves. We strongly believe that this study programme will offer these students the best chance of success by the end of the year 11 through the assessment structure provided by these qualification types. Some students on the Technical Study Programme may study fewer qualifications with additional support being put in place to support their individual needs. Therefore, ensuring they progress to further education or training.

All option subjects are taught in mixed ability groups while the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science are taught in sets.

Sixth Form

All Sixth Form students will follow a Study Programme that:

- Provides progression to a level higher than that of their prior attainment
- Includes qualification of sufficient size and rigour to stretch students and are clearly linked to suitable progression opportunities in training, employment or higher education
- Includes opportunities to develop employability skills
- Includes activities unrelated to qualifications, which develop character, skills, attitudes and confidence that support progression.

Students will follow an agreed CORE AIM, which is the main type of qualification students are studying. This will either be an Academic Core Aim, where students study purely academic subjects such as A-Levels, a Vocational Core Aim, where students study a Technical Level qualification such as a BTEC Level 3 course, or a mixture of both Academic and Vocational qualifications.

All students studying an A-Level based Study Programme will have ten timetabled study sessions across a fortnight. Study sessions may consist of a combination of directly taught lessons, periods of individual assessment, individual one to one mentoring/tutoring, or time for students to work independently on their work. For some courses, the required practical time allows students to progress at their own pace to craft their work whilst receiving regular feedback from their teacher(s). Such work does not always necessitate a teacher to be with the students for all the timetabled sessions. This is particularly so where there is a small number of students studying a subject, as they will cover the course content in depth more quickly than for a large cohort of students. Furthermore, the smaller group size enables more of a 'private tuition' approach to learning and support.

To enter the sixth form students must meet the entry criteria. From September 2024 this includes achieving at least a grade 4 in both English and Maths.

In addition to allocated lessons, a student's study programme will also include non-qualification activities, such as mentor periods, allocated independent study time, PSHCE and a weekly enrichment activity. It will also include work experience for a week during the term time.

Example Study Programmes:

- Academic Core Aim for student who has 9-4 in English and Maths
 - Substantial Qualification(s): A Levels x 3
 - Non-Qualification Study: Mentor Periods x 5 per week (includes assembly), Enrichment Period x 1 per week, CCC x 2 per week in year 12 and 1 period per fortnight in year 13.
 - Study Period x 2
- Vocational Core Aim for student who has 9-4 in English
 - Substantial Qualification(s): Technical Level Qualification + A Level x 2
 - Non-Qualification Study: Mentor Periods x 5 per week (includes assembly), Enrichment Period x 1 per week, CCC x 2 per week in year 12 and 1 period per fortnight in year 13.
 - Study Period x 2

The following courses are running for the academic year 2024-25:

Subject	Qualification
Art & Design	A Level
Art Fashion (Textiles)	A Level
Art Photography	A Level
Biology	A Level
Business Studies	A Level
Chemistry	A Level
Chinese Mandarin	A Level
Computing	A Level
Drama	A Level
Economics	A Level
English Language and Literature	A Level
English Literature	A Level
EPQ	A Level standard with UCAS points
French	A Level
Further Mathematics	A Level
Geography	A level
History	A Level
ICT	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate
Mathematics	A Level
Mathematics	GCSE (Yr 13 only)
Mathematical Studies	AS Level (2 year)

Music	A Level
Music Technology	A Level
Physics	A Level
Politics	A Level
Psychology	A Level
Psychology (Applied)	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate
Sociology	A Level
Spanish	A Level
Sport	BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

The Curriculum Policy will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Deputy Headteacher [Quality of Education] in conjunction with the Curriculum Group and will be overseen by the SSB.

Senior Leaders and Curriculum Leaders will monitor the curriculum throughout the school year through:

- Learning walks
- Lesson observations
- Departmental reviews
- Curriculum exploration
- Link meetings and Department meetings
- Progress data & Student outcomes