



ST BENEDICT'S SCHOOL
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Curriculum Policy – Senior School

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1 Introduction

At St Benedict's School, our Curriculum Policy is rooted in the enduring wisdom of the Rule of St Benedict, which calls us to "listen with the ear of the heart" and to nurture each individual within a community founded on love, respect, and integrity. The principles of the Rule—hospitality, humility, and the pursuit of excellence—guide our approach to teaching and learning, ensuring that every student is valued, supported, and challenged to fulfil their unique potential.

High Performance Learning Philosophy

St Benedict's School is committed to the principles of High Performance Learning (HPL), as developed by Professor Deborah Eyre. Central to our approach is the belief that intelligence is not fixed—#EveryoneCan. We reject the notion that only some students are capable of high performance. Instead, we recognise that through systematic development of Advanced Cognitive Performance Characteristics (ACPs) and Values, Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs), all students can achieve exceptional outcomes.

This philosophy underpins every aspect of our curriculum design and delivery. We focus on current performance and attainment rather than perceived 'ability', understanding that with appropriate challenge, support, and the explicit teaching of high performance learning behaviours, all students can progress beyond expectations.

Our curriculum is designed to provide a broad and balanced education, equipping students not only with academic skills but also with the qualities needed to thrive as compassionate citizens in British society and the wider world. We are committed to meeting the needs of all pupils, including those with additional needs, through personalised planning and inclusive practice. In this way, our curriculum reflects the Benedictine ethos: fostering dignity, fairness, and generosity in every aspect of school life, and preparing students for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences that lie ahead.

The School's Curriculum Policy is intended to meet the ISI regulatory requirements, and therefore the needs of all our pupils.

1.1 Its major objectives are to:

- a) Provide plans and schemes of work that include opportunities for pupils to acquire a broad range of skills that will equip them for further study beyond school, for their chosen career path and for their role as a citizen in British society. Such skills will include speaking and listening; literacy; numeracy; ICT skills; research and other skills necessary for independent learning. The policy plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, allowing all to learn and make appropriate progress, recognising that intelligence is not fixed and can be developed through effective teaching and purposeful effort. This includes those pupils with an EHC plan.
- b) Provide full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age, which gives a varied and broad experience in religious, linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.
- c) Provide a wide range of optional Sixth Form A-Level subjects to cater for the interests, aspirations of this age group.
- d) Provide subject matter within the curriculum that is appropriate for the different ages, aptitudes, and

needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.

e) Provide an appropriately personalised curriculum where this is judged to be in the best interests of those pupils who otherwise might struggle to access the full curriculum.

f) Provide an age appropriate programme of personal, social, health, and economic education which reflects the aims and ethos of our Catholic and Benedictine School.

g) Provide high quality, accurate, and up to date age appropriate Careers guidance by the Head of Careers, to assist pupils in making informed choices about their career pathway. This is delivered impartially, to ensure that pupils are informed about the wide range of career options available to them. This encourages them to fulfil their potential by enabling them to make appropriate choices at GCSE and A level.

h) Provide effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life as members of British Society and the broader global community. In doing so, the school actively promotes fundamental British values in a variety of ways across both the formal and the informal curriculum. These values include respect for democracy and the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

The structure of the curriculum is reviewed (and may be revised) annually. Major reviews of the curriculum are undertaken every few years or more frequently where external changes require this, such as reform of GCSE and A level.

1.2 How we deliver the curriculum described above

We meet our objectives by careful planning and by effective use of the resources available to us. This includes:

- Provision of a two-week timetable based on a six-period day of 50-minute lessons. The daily curriculum is broken down into three sessions of two periods as follows. Periods 1 & 2 are before morning break, periods 3 & 4 after break and before lunch, periods 5 & 6 are after lunch. This enables efficient use of resources, timetabling of practical lessons requiring double periods, restricts the amount of time taken up moving around the site and encourages good lesson planning. Weeks are designated Red or Yellow to help identify the relevant weeks across the year.
- Highly qualified and skilled specialist subject teachers and support staff who are encouraged and supported to take advantage of the many opportunities for professional development and whose performance is appraised at least every two years.
- Good accommodation and facilities that have been improved over the last few years through major capital investment, including the most recent Sixth Form /Art & Design Building completed in the Autumn of 2015.
- A fair distribution of budgets between competing uses.
- Consultation with those who are responsible for delivering the curriculum at those times when change is being considered or imposed externally. Subject leaders contribute to this automatically but additionally all teachers are invited to apply to take part in working parties to review specific aspects of the curriculum or matters that impact on this.
- Regular and clear communications with subject leaders e.g., through weekly briefings or regular timetabled meetings.
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning e.g., through regular delegated scrutiny of work and lesson observations by Heads of Department, supplemented by frequent Senior Leadership work scrutiny and lesson observations.

- Departmental self-evaluation to assess overall performance of each department. This includes departmental analyses of public exam results and internal end of year assessments for the exam year groups. Review meetings are held with each Head of Department, the Deputy Head Academic, and the Head, during September and October each year. Priorities for the year ahead are agreed.
- Effective planning to take account of the needs of all pupils based on data from various sources e.g., baseline tests MidYIS, ALIS, regular internal assessments, and screening undertaken by Teaching and Learning Support which is headed by the SENCO. External data may also be used where available to ensure that a full picture of prior attainment and needs is given.
- Departmental schemes of work that plan and deliver effective differentiation to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with an identified SEN and those who are currently demonstrating high performance and academic scholars.
- Annual review of departmental schemes of work that take account of issues that may have been identified through the process of departmental self-evaluation.
- Monitoring of pupil progress takes place through regular standardised assessments in each subject, and frequent marking of pupil work (at least once every fortnight). Year group tracking meetings are held after assessment/tracking points. Students who are underperforming, relative to their MidYIS/ALIS grades, are discussed and appropriate interventions occur. The analysis of year group data for each tracking meeting includes a breakdown of results for males and females, those identified with SEN, and those identified as currently demonstrating high performance.
- A programme of academic enrichment is coordinated and led by the Head of Academic Challenge. This includes weekly lunchtime talks, workshops and seminars led by both staff and students. Academic stretch and challenge also takes place in departments with students entering national competitions, for example, the Maths, Chemistry, Physics and Biology Olympiads and Challenges, and essay prize competitions.

2 The KS3 Curriculum (Years 7, 8, 9)

Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum in the first few years that lays the foundations for a successful transition to study at GCSE, A Level and beyond. All pupils have one Computer Science and one ICT lesson per fortnight in F3, to lay the foundation for further development of digital skills through curriculum subjects. Form 3, Lower 4 and Upper 4 have their own school devices to use in lessons to support their learning. Digital skills are developed in the ICT and Computer Science lessons and applied in the different subject lessons as appropriate. All pupils undertake the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) in the L4 to develop research, writing, and presentation skills. Similar to the Extended Project Qualification, it involves an extended piece of independent research to answer a question of special interest to the pupil and is therefore an opportunity to tailor their own curriculum.

3 The KS4 Curriculum (the GCSE years)

A much greater element of choice is available to pupils as they move to this stage of their education and major choices have to be made by them. They are given considerable information, advice and support in choosing their optional subjects to ensure that they choose a curriculum that is balanced and right for them as individuals. Pupils are advised to choose at least two sciences, at least one language, one humanity subject (Geography or History), and one creative subject (Art, Music, Drama). This advice is given to help them keep

their options open if they are not sure about what subject choices to take for A level or what career pathway/s they might wish to take. While most pupils follow the curriculum indicated below, a very small number of pupils study slightly fewer than five optional subjects where this is considered to be in their best interests. This is discussed fully with pupils, subject teachers and parents before decisions are made, and mostly applies to pupils with a history of following a reduced curriculum at Key Stage 3.

4 The KS5 (Sixth Form) Curriculum

At this stage, all subjects become optional and students are given much help and advice to select subjects that are right for them as individuals but that also leave their choices for future careers as open as possible. For some careers, certain subjects are required, and this is discussed fully with pupils who use the services of our specialist Head of Futures.

Students choose three subjects to study to A Level. The new A levels are delivered as two-year linear courses with all exams being taken at the end of the two-year course. In addition, students take General Religious Studies, PSHE (including Careers/Higher Education advice) and Games. A good number of students undertake The Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). This is highly regarded by universities as it involves an extended piece of independent research to answer a question of special interest to the student and is therefore a great opportunity for students to tailor their own A level learning experience. Students gain higher level research, writing and presentation skills as part of their EPQ experience. Students may also be offered the option of undertaking one or more MOOCs (massive online open courses) of their choice in the lower sixth year, to provide tailored depth and/or breadth to their curriculum. Other qualifications in Drama or Sports Coaching may be taken by a minority of students. Students are also required to undertake some form of "Service" (voluntary work) and a number undertake work experience at different stages across the two years of the A Level course.¹

5 PSHE Curriculum

The PSHE Programme supports the school's objective to help pupils learn and achieve their full potential, recognising that through effective teaching, effort, and the development of high performance learning behaviours, all students can achieve success, and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. The school delivers a programme which gives pupils the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to make key decisions regarding their current and future health and wellbeing.

During their time at St Benedict's, we want our students to learn to be resilient individuals able to find happiness whatever life throws at them. We want them to be caring and thoughtful members of our Benedictine community and the wider world. We want them to have the information to help them stay healthy in both mind and body and to have the understanding and confidence to prosper when they leave us.

The programme of study incorporates the themes and skills as set out in the PSHE Association's guidance. The three core themes are: Health and Wellbeing, Relationships and Living in the Wider World. The programme seeks to develop students' intrapersonal, interpersonal and enquiry skills. The fundamental

¹ *Taking into consideration, the limits set by the Diocese regarding the 10% minimum R.E. requirement which excludes assemblies with religious content.*

British values are promoted, and students are encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance.

6 Personalised Curriculum

All requests to drop subjects must be referred to the Director of Teaching and Learning, who will liaise as appropriate with the relevant Division Head, Head of Department and with the Head of the Teaching and Learning Support Centre (SENCO). Advice or guidance on dropping a subject may also come from the analysis of progress at tracking meetings, held after key assessment weeks. If the decision to drop is thought to be in a pupil's best interests, and if written parental permission has been obtained, the Director of Teaching and Learning will make the change. Due consideration will be given to how and where the student then spends their additional time. This may be in the TLS Centre under the supervision of a member of staff, in the library, or in the Scriptorium, depending on the age and stage of the pupil.

7 Additional Information

Further information about the curriculum and how it is delivered effectively can be found in the following documents:

- Departmental schemes of work
- PSHE Policy
- Assessment and Reporting Policy
- SEND Policy
- High Performance Learners Policy
- HPL (High Performance Learning) Policy