

# DOWNSIDE

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# SCHOOL

## ACADEMIC AND CURRICULUM POLICY

### AIMS

The main aims of the academic curriculum at Downside reflect the overall strategic aims of the Monastery and School as set out in the Development Plan, which are:

- To be a focal centre for Catholic Benedictine life
- To instil a love of learning and of each other
- To strive for the best
- To be a sustainable community

The academic curriculum aims to develop the potential of every individual pupil to the point where they exceed their academic expectations, while deepening understanding of the Roman Catholic and Benedictine ethos of the school. Downside regards academic success as an integral part of the broader cultural, social and spiritual development of pupils. The core curriculum reflects the school's priorities in that it contains Religious Studies in addition to English, Mathematics and Science. Religious Studies is studied by all pupils to GCSE; in the Sixth Form all pupils attend a General Religious Studies course in addition to their A Level subjects. In accordance with the School's Mission Statement a considerable emphasis is placed upon traditional Benedictine values such as community, self-discipline and the importance of prayer in daily life, throughout pupils' time at Downside. The opportunity of prayer, represented by the saying of the *Angelus* (or *Regina Caeli*) each day during lesson time, reflects the compatibility of teaching and learning with the spiritual life in a Benedictine school.

### THE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

The academic curriculum at Downside is mainly traditional in terms of the subjects that are offered for study, both in Plunkett House (the Preparatory Department) and in the Senior School.

#### **Plunkett House**

From the First Form (Year 7) all classes in English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Classical and Modern Languages, Music and Art are taught by senior school teachers in preparation for the Common Entrance examinations, which all pupils sit at the end of the Second Form (Year 8).

#### **Senior School**

The curriculum at GCSE means that pupils study on average ten subjects. History, Geography, Latin, Classical Greek, French, Spanish, German, Music, Art and Design are included in the subject options that are available, in addition to the core subjects of English Language and Literature, Mathematics, Science (normally as three separate subjects) and Religious Studies. PE is taught as part of the curriculum from the First to the Third Form, but

not as a GCSE subject. ICT skills are acquired through inclusion in the departmental schemes of work. PSHCE is delivered by means of a weekly tutorial period.

The adoption of the more demanding IGCSE in the Sciences and in History reflects our belief in the merits of a traditional, rigorous curriculum.

### **Sixth Form**

At A Level a wider range of subjects is offered, normally including additional subjects such as Business Studies, Economics and Physical Education.

The curriculum is designed, therefore, to accommodate the interests of a wide range of pupils, fostering academic confidence and creativity within a range of broadly traditional subjects.

## **CURRICULUM STRATEGIES**

As is consistent with the idea that “the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from” (the Rule of St. Benedict), the academic needs of all abilities of pupils are focused upon through a well-orchestrated tutorial system (each pupil has a Tutor within their boarding house), The curriculum is designed to provide pupils with the best possible qualifications for success in later life. It encourages pupils with wider academic interests by means of Academic Societies which cater for the needs of more able pupils throughout the school. These place a particular emphasis upon fostering a love of learning in pupils, by means of encouraging them to do Prize Essays, and the Extended Project Qualification, on any topic of their choosing. There is a Learning Support department for those who require extra help of a specialist nature and we aim to provide smaller group teaching for lower ability pupils until GCSE Level. The enabling of pupils to achieve excellence through a range of measures, and through a combination of enthusiasm and hard work, is designed to be part of a process of preparation for success in later life.

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

Detailed protocols cover all aspects of the routine academic life of the school, (Marking, Assessment, Monitoring Academic Progress, Learning Support, Plagiarism, Classroom misbehaviour), which are readily available to teaching staff and management on the school network.

## **THE ACADEMIC AND TEACHING STAFF**

Although some members of the monastic community teach in the school, the teaching staff at Downside is drawn mainly from outside. Most of the staff, in addition to their teaching duties, act as Tutors, as well as supervising and organising extra-curricular activities, including games.

### **Academic Heads of Departments**

Each Head of Department is responsible to the Head Master, through the Director of Studies, for the efficient running of his or her department; for the implementation of all Academic Policies within their Department; for allocating the teaching within the department and deciding on which pupil goes into which set; for controlling the budget of the department; for arranging the setting of internal examination papers at appropriate times of the year and consulting with the Director of Studies on all matters concerning curriculum and examinations. Departments are arranged into seven Faculties:

- English, EAL, Learning Support

- Religious Studies
- Mathematics, ICT, Design
- Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish, Latin, Greek)
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), PE
- History, Geography, Business Studies and Economics
- Art, Music

Heads of Faculty Meetings occur every three to four weeks in term time.

### **Academic Administrator**

The Academic Administrator is responsible for administration of the academic side of School life.

### **The Examinations Officer**

The Examinations Officer liaises with Heads of Departments and Examination Boards. He/she is also responsible for external examinations.

### **The Learning Support Co-ordinator**

The Learning Support Co-ordinator has special responsibility for pupils who require extra one-to-one tuition because of a special need, such as dyslexia. He/she liaises with staff to keep them informed about pupils who may require special consideration in the delivery of the curriculum.

### **The EAL Teacher**

A small number of pupils each year require extra English teaching because English is not their native tongue. They are given extra lessons in English, in small groups to help them access the curriculum. This is co-ordinated by the Head of EAL

### **The UCAS Co-ordinator**

The UCAS Co-ordinator oversees pupils' applications to universities through UCAS. The Director of Studies and the Academic Administrator assist the UCAS Co-ordinator.

### **The Careers Guidance Co-ordinator**

The Careers Guidance Co-ordinator ensures that all pupils receive advice about their career intentions and that they are properly equipped and qualified for the next stage in their development.

**List of Academic Teaching Staff** - Please see web site

Policy reviewed August 2011 and confirmed as the current Policy

**Dom Leo Maidlow Davis**