

ACADEMIC & CURRICULUM POLICY

*“.. in which the strong will have ideals to inspire them and the weak may not be frightened away by excessive demands.”
(RSB 64:19)*

1. Requirements of the Curriculum

1.1. A written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified below in sub-parts (a) to (i) is implemented effectively.

- Provision of full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act, 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.
- Ensure pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- Provision of lessons in written and spoken English.
- Provision of personal, social and health education, which reflects the school’s aims and ethos, and encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act and the RSE framework.
- Provision of accurate, up-to-date careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education, which is presented in an impartial manner; enables pupils to make informed choices about a range of career options, and; encourages pupils to fulfil their potential.
- For pupils above compulsory school age, provision of a programme of activities, which is appropriate to their needs.
- Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
- Ensure effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society

1.2. The written policy, plans and schemes of work:

- Take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
- Do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

2. Aims and Ethos

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

- To guide pupils and staff to encounter Christ through experience of a Benedictine community of faith
- To be uncompromising in the pursuit of academic excellence
- To foster a culture of unselfish love, integrity, humility and leadership through service
- To develop the character and confidence of young people through sport and extra-curricular opportunities
- To develop the school community's facilities and resources through strategic stewardship

2.2. The academic curriculum aims to develop the potential of every 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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural 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 follow 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*) during afternoon registration, reflects the compatibility of teaching and learning with spiritual life in a Benedictine school.

2.3. The academic curriculum is designed to provide pupils with an experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. This is catered for by a wide range of subjects on offer for all year groups, and curriculum enrichment opportunities such as trips, academic societies and programmes for gifted pupils. All lessons provided are in written and spoken English, and are planned to ensure pupils acquire and develop speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. Plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.

2.4. The curriculum offer and curriculum enrichment programme ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. We aim to prepare our pupils for living spiritually fulfilling, rather than selfish, lives, and to ensure they have acquired the skills and confidence to continue to develop personally after they have left Downside.

2.5. At Downside, we are committed to ensuring that all pupils have an equitable access to the curriculum. We have departments dedicated to Learning Support and EAL, and there is both a Learning Support Register and an EAL Register. In addition, we provide Learning Support for pupils, who are not on the Learning Support register, but require additional support in certain subjects or with study skills.

3. Requirements of Teaching

- Enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.
- Foster in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves.
- Ensure lessons are well planned and employ effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account when planning lessons.
- Demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.
- Make effective use of classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range.
- Demonstrate that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and use assessment data to plan teaching in order for pupils to progress.
- Ensure pupils behave and act responsibly.
- Supports and encourages the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010.

4. Academic Curriculum

4.1. The academic curriculum at Downside is mainly traditional in terms of the subjects that are offered for study across the First to Fifth Form. There is a wider range of subjects offered in the Sixth Form. The curriculum offer aims to provide pupils with experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. We also aim to ensure pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.

4.1.1. First and Second Forms

- In the First and Second Forms, pupils study Religious Studies, English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Classical Civilisation, , French, Spanish, PE, Music, Art, Design Technology, Drama and Computer Science.
- Where numbers permit, pupils are set according to ability.
- PE is taught as part of the curriculum.
- Pupils can develop ICT skills in their Computer Science lessons and through their learning within the curriculum.
- PSHEE is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes personal, social and health education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including PSHEE, for pupils to learn about fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

4.1.2. Third Form

In the Third Form, pupils study Religious Studies, English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Latin, PE, Music, Art, Design Technology, Computer Science and Drama. In addition, pupils will study two languages from French, Spanish and Latin.

- Setting occurs in English, Mathematics, Science, and across Art, Design Technology, Drama, Geography, History and RS.
- PE is taught as part of the curriculum.
- PSHEE is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes personal, social and health education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including PSHEE, for pupils to learn about fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

4.1.3. Fourth and Fifth Form- GCSE

- The curriculum at GCSE means that pupils study on average ten subjects. The core subjects include English Language (or English as a Second Language for some pupils whose first language is not English), Mathematics, Religious Studies and Science (either three separate sciences or Combined Science). Most pupils will study English Literature if they are studying English Language. The optional subjects are as follows:
- History, Geography, Latin, French, Spanish, German, Computer Science, Music, Art, Design Technology and PE.
- Most pupils will opt for three of these optional subjects from September 2026.
- Setting occurs in English, Mathematics, Science and RS and in other subjects, where there is more than one set per teaching block.
- The selection of examination specifications in each subject is determined by our aim to provide a traditional, rigorous learning experience for pupils, which includes ensuring that they are fully prepared to progress in a particular subject at A Level.
- Pupils can continue to develop ICT skills through their learning within the curriculum. Computer Science is also offered as a GCSE.
- PSHEE is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes personal, social and health education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including PSHEE, for pupils to learn about fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

4.1.4. Sixth Form- A Level

- In the Sixth Form, a wider range of subjects is offered, including those subjects offered at GCSE, plus Business Studies, Economics, Further Mathematics, Environmental Science, Classical Civilisation,, Psychology and Politics. The curriculum offer and curriculum enrichment opportunities for the Sixth Form are appropriate for pupils' needs, and, in keeping with our aims and ethos, seek to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
 - Most courses offered in the Sixth Form are A Level except:
 - BTEC Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Extended Certificate
 - BTEC Sport (both Extended Certificate and National Diploma)
- BTEC Information Technology Extended Certificate

- 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. In addition, there is a programme of enrichment activities such as academic societies, for example, which is appropriate to pupils' needs.
- The EPQ is offered as part of the suite to enhance pupils' understanding of academic research and to support their UCAS applications.
- Setting may occur where there is more than one set per teaching block.
- All Sixth Form pupils follow a General Religious Studies course, which covers a range of topics and teaching is organised as part of a carousel.
- Pupils can continue to develop ICT skills through their learning within the curriculum.
- PSHEE is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes personal, social and health education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including PSHEE, for pupils to learn about fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

5. Curriculum Strategies

5.1. As is consistent with the idea that "the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from" (Rule of St. Benedict: Ch. 64: 19), the academic needs of pupils of all abilities are focused upon through the setting of ambitious, yet realistic, targets. This is supported by 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 and programmes for gifted pupils, 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 complete Prize Essays, and the Extended Project Qualification.

5.2. 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.

5.2.1. Planning for learning

- Schemes of work are in place for all subjects taught in each year group. Each scheme of work is reviewed regularly. Plans and schemes of work into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
- In addition, the plans and schemes of work do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

5.2.2. Aims for learning:

- Enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught.
- Foster in pupils the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves.

5.2.3. Expectations of teachers:

- Ensure lessons are well planned and employ effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are considered when planning lessons.
- Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.
- Make effective use of classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range.
- Demonstrate that pupils' work is assessed regularly and thoroughly, and assessment data is used to plan teaching in order for pupils to progress.
- Ensure pupils behave and act responsibly.

5.3. Differentiation

5.3.1. First, Second and Third Forms

- Setting where numbers allow.
- We have Learning Support and EAL departments, which underpin all subject areas. There are referral systems for both Learning Support and EAL, which allow the respective Heads of Learning Support and EAL to support teachers in their planning and teaching.
- Provision is made within all subjects' schemes of work to cater for pupils of all needs and abilities, and those with an EHC plan.

5.3.2. Fourth and Fifth Form - GCSE

- Setting in the core subjects and where there is more than one set per teaching block.
- We have Learning Support and EAL departments, which underpin all subject areas. There are referral systems for both Learning Support and EAL, which allow the respective Heads of Learning Support and EAL to support teachers in their planning and teaching.
- Following assessment upon their start at the school, a recommendation is made, where it is deemed necessary, for pupils to attend EAL support lessons. EAL pupils may be withdrawn from mainstream English to follow a Cambridge English as a Second Language course (IGCSE). Refer to the EAL Policy for further information.
- Provision is made within all subjects' schemes of work to cater for pupils of all needs and abilities, and those with an EHC plan.

5.3.3. Sixth Form- A Level

- Setting may occur where there is more than one set per teaching block.
- We have Learning Support and EAL departments, which underpin all subject areas. There are referral systems for both Learning Support and EAL, which allow the respective Heads of Learning Support and EAL to support teachers in their planning and teaching.
- Following assessment upon their start at the school, a recommendation is made, where it is deemed necessary, for pupils to attend EAL support lessons. In addition, some pupils may require an English qualification to enter a UK university and lessons to prepare pupils for the IELTS qualification are provided. Refer to the EAL Policy for further information.
- Provision is made within all subjects' schemes of work to cater for pupils of all needs and abilities.

5.4. Learning Support

Refer to the Learning Support section of the Academic Standard Operating Procedure.

5.5. EAL (English as an Additional Language)

Refer to the EAL section of the Academic Standard Operating Procedure.

5.6. Assessment

Refer to the Marking and Assessment sections of the Academic Standard Operating Procedure.

5.7. Tracking and Monitoring

Refer to the Marking and Assessment, Quality Assurance and Reporting sections of the Academic Standard Operating Procedure.

5.7.1. First, Second and Third Forms

- All pupils in each year group sit the CAT4 test and this data, along with academic performance data (school examination results or entrance assessment results), is used as a baseline indicator.
- Additional support may include additional support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

5.7.2. Fourth and Fifth Form - GCSE

- All pupils in Fourth Form sit the CAT 4 test and this data, along with academic performance data (school examination results or entrance assessment results), is used as a baseline indicator.
- Target grades are based upon adding value to pupils' CAT4 test baseline predictions.
- Additional support may include additional support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

5.7.3. Sixth Form- A Level

- All pupils in the Lower Sixth sit the CAT4 test and academic performance data (GCSE results or equivalent or entrance assessment results) if it is available, is used as a baseline indicator.
- Target grades are based upon adding value to pupils' CAT4 baseline predictions.
- Additional support may include support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

6. Academic Procedures

Detailed procedures cover all aspects of the routine academic life of the school (Quality Assurance, Marking and Assessment, Lesson Cover, EAL, Learning Support, Reporting, Plagiarism and Pupil Behaviour), which are readily available to teaching staff.

7. The Academic and Teaching Staff

Most of the staff, in addition to their teaching duties, act as Tutors, as well as supervising and organising co-curricular activities, including games.

7.1. Academic Leadership Team

7.1.1. The Academic Leadership Team comprises is designed to manage the academic side of the school as follows. It is chaired by the Deputy Head (Academic) with the following

- Head of First to Fifth Form (Key Stages 3 & 4)
- Head of Sixth Form (Key Stage 5)

The Heads of Key Stages are focused on pupil and parent interaction and managing the specific curriculum requirements of each year group.

The Deputy Head (Academic) is focused on developing academic staff and pedagogy, as well as harnessing the intellectual capacity in the organisation.

7.2. Academic Curriculum Group

7.2.1. The Academic Curriculum Group is a strategic planning group of middle leaders (Heads of Department, Head of Learning Support, Head of EAL, Exams Officer and Head of Initial Teacher Training) chaired by the Deputy Head (Academic). Each member is responsible to the Head, through the Deputy Head, for leading development in their area of responsibility. It is the responsibility of a member of the Academic Curriculum Group to manage faculty administration and tasks efficiently, and to lead the faculty in achieving the School's strategic aims.

7.2.2. Academic Curriculum Group meetings occur once each half of terms per the school calendar. There are eight Faculties:

- Art and Design
- English
- Humanities (History, Geography, Business Studies, Economics, History of Art Psychology and Politics)
- Languages (French, German, Spanish, Latin,)
- Mathematics
- Music
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics and PE)
- Theology

Learning Support and EAL are Departments, which underpin the whole curriculum.

7.2.3. Exams Officer

The Exams Officer, in liaison with the Deputy Head (Academic), is responsible for all matters pertaining to examinations within the School, in liaison with the Academic Leadership Team, including the supervision of examination invigilators.

7.2.4. Head of Learning Support

The Head of Learning Support liaises with staff to keep them informed about pupils, who may require special consideration in the delivery of the curriculum.

7.2.5. Head of EAL (English as an Additional Language)

The Head of EAL liaises with staff to keep them informed about pupils, who may require special consideration in the delivery of the curriculum due to their language needs.

7.2.6. The Head of Sixth Form

The Head of Sixth Form in liaison with the Deputy Head (Academic) oversees pupils' applications to universities, both through UCAS and other systems (each Common App or direct application).

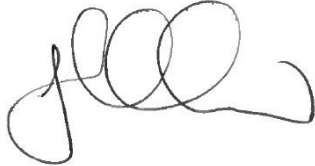
7.2.7. Head of Careers

The Head of Careers is responsible for provision of accurate, up-to-date careers guidance for pupils, which is presented in an impartial manner; enables pupils to make informed choices about a range of career options, and encourages pupils to fulfil their potential.

7.2.8. Head of Initial Teacher Training

The Head of Initial Teacher Training coordinates the ECT induction programme for ECTs, and mentors any teachers who are completing their teaching qualification whilst working at the School. The Head of ITT will also mentor trainee teachers from universities who undertake a teaching placement at the School.

7.2.9. List of Academic Teaching Staff - Please see the School's website.

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