



Academic and 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)

A. REQUIREMENTS - CURRICULUM

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 drawn up and implemented effectively.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Ensure pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
 - c. Provision of lessons in written and spoken English.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 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 broad range of career options, and; helps to encourage pupils to fulfil their potential.
 - f. For pupils above compulsory school age, provision of a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs.
 - g. Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.
 - h. Ensure effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
2. The written policy, plans and schemes of work:
 - a. Take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those with an EHC plan.
 - b. 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.

i. **Aims and Ethos**

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:

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

ii. **Supervised education**

A teacher or responsible adult is available to support pupils as necessary for all academic teaching periods. Pupils in First to Fifth Forms attend supervised study if they do not have a lesson, or possibly in the event of short notice teacher absence (as per our Lesson Cover Policy).

Sixth Form pupils can work independently when they do not have a lesson, and are able to work in house, any of the libraries or ICT suites, and a responsible adult can be readily contacted if necessary.

iii. **Areas of experience**

The academic curriculum aims to develop the potential of every pupil to the point where they exceed their academic expectations, while deepening their 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*) at noon each day during lesson time, reflects the compatibility of teaching and learning with spiritual life in a Benedictine school.

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 broad and balanced curriculum offer for all year groups, and an Academic Enrichment Programme, which includes 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.

The curriculum offer and Academic Enrichment Programme ensure that pupils are effectively 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.

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.

iv. **Special Educational Needs**

The curriculum, plan and schemes of work take proper account of the needs of all pupils, in terms of ability, need and aptitudes. All policies ensure that there is adequate provision for groups of pupils; for example:

- The Learning Support Policy details how the School makes provision for pupils with SEN, and for those with learning difficulties.
- The EAL Policy details how the School makes provision for pupils whose first language is not English.
- The Gifted Policy details how the School makes provision for those pupils identified as 'gifted', and are listed on the Gifted Register. The Academic Enrichment Programme outlines the activities and events provided by the School for all pupils, with specific provision for Gifted pupils.
- The other academic policies eg Marking and Assessment, Quality Assurance and Reporting, detail how the School tracks and monitors the progress of all pupils, including groups of pupils, throughout their time at the School.

v. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education

The School ensures that a written and effective plan to provide PSHE is implemented in a broad and appropriate way. The SMSC Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that PSHE is promoted through the SMSC programme, and the Director of Pastoral Care ensures that PSHE is promoted through the Tutor Programme.

The School's provision of PSHE encourages respect for other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

vi. Careers Education

The Careers Education and Guidance Programme details how the School provides Careers guidance for pupils in the School. The School ensures that Careers guidance is presented in an impartial way, and that it enables pupils to make informed choices about a broad range of options. This includes timely advice to help pupils choose GCSE and post-16 courses. From the start of the Third Form, in particular, pupils are presented with a wide range of opportunities to learn about various careers, which supports them in making choices about GCSE and A Level courses.

The Careers Education and Guidance Programme explains how a range of events and activities encourage pupils to fulfil their potential, and to enable pupils to 'know themselves' and how their strengths, weaknesses and interests relate to the world of work; learn about different careers and opportunities; obtain individual guidance; have some work experience; and gain information about training, education and occupations beyond School. The School consciously works to prevent all forms of stereotyping in the advice and guidance they provide to ensure that girls and boys from all backgrounds and diversity groups consider the widest possible range of careers, including those which are often portrayed as primarily for one or other of the sexes.

vii. Opportunity to Learn and Make Progress

All pupils are provided with opportunities to learn and make progress (see B. ii.) through a broad and balanced curriculum, which also includes effective provision of PSHE (see B. iv.) and Careers guidance (see B. v.). See C. for specific detail about the curriculum provision for pupils within the School.

Refer to the EAL, Gifted and Learning Support Policies for further detail on the School's provision for those pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties, those with English as an additional language and the most-able pupils. In addition, the Academic Enrichment Programme outlines the activities and events provided by the School for all pupils, with specific provision for Gifted pupils.

Refer to the Spiritual and Emotional Wellbeing Policy for further detail on how those pupils who have other particular needs eg carers at home, emotional distress, receive the support they need in order to achieve educationally whilst taking into full consideration the impact of their particular needs.

Refer to the Quality Assurance, Marking and Assessment and Reporting Policies for further detail on how the progress of all pupils, including different groups eg EAL, Gifted and those with special educational needs and learning difficulties, is tracked and monitored across the School.

B. THE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

The academic curriculum at Downside is broad and balanced, and provides opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress, and to provide experience of the key areas (see B. ii.).

The School's curriculum makes provision for all requirements (see A. 1. A-h), and fulfills the general requirements of A. 2. A-b.

The curriculum is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (see Curriculum Plan and Subject Handbooks).

i. First and Second Forms

- In the First and Second Forms, pupils study Religious Studies, English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Latin, French, PE, Music, Art, Design Technology and ICT.
- Where numbers permit, pupils are set according to ability.
- PE is taught as part of the curriculum, and is single-sex as per the DfE's 'The Equality Act 2010 and Schools' statement.
- Pupils can develop ICT skills in their ICT lessons, through their learning within the curriculum and through our Academic Enrichment Programme.
- SMSC is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes PSHE education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including SMSC, 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.

ii. Third Form

- In the Third Form, pupils study Religious Studies, English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Latin, PE, Music and Art. In addition, pupils can opt to study either German or Spanish as a second language, and Classical Greek is available instead of Art and Design Technology.
- Setting occurs in English, Mathematics, Science, Languages (MFL and Latin), and across Geography, History and RS.
- PE is taught as part of the curriculum, and is single-sex as per the DfE's 'The Equality Act 2010 and Schools' statement.
- ICT lessons are delivered as part of an activity carousel and pupils follow a course lasting for approximately 6 weeks. Pupils can develop ICT skills in these lessons, through their learning within the curriculum through our Academic Enrichment Programme.
- SMSC is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes PSHE education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including SMSC, 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.

iii. Fourth and Fifth Forms

- 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 three sciences (either separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics, or Combined Science). Most pupils will study English Literature in addition to English Language.

The optional subjects are as follows:

History, Geography, Latin, Classical Greek, French, Spanish, German, Music, Art, Design Technology, PE and Computer Science.

Most pupils will opt for three or four of these optional subjects.

- 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 broad and balanced 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 GCSE Computer Science, their learning within the curriculum and through our Academic Enrichment Programme.
- SMSC is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes PSHE education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including SMSC, 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.

iv. Sixth Form

- At A Level, a wider range of subjects is offered, including those subjects offered at GCSE, plus Business Studies, Economics, History of Art and Psychology. The curriculum offer and academic 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.
- 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, the Academic Enrichment Programme provides a wide range of opportunities for all pupils such as academic societies, for example, which is appropriate to pupils' needs.
- 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, and through the Academic Enrichment Programme.
- SMSC is delivered by means of a weekly teaching period, and includes PSHE education, as well as e-safety, in keeping with the ethos of the school.
- Opportunities are provided in all subjects, including SMSC, 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.

B. REQUIREMENTS - TEACHING

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) Ensure lessons are well planned and employ effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.
- d) 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.
- e) Demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.
- f) Make effective use of classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range.
- g) 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.
- h) Ensure pupils behave and act responsibly.
- i) Does 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.
- j) Does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010.

i. Teaching at Downside

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 and the Academic Enrichment Programme, including programmes for gifted pupils, which provide opportunities for all pupils throughout the school to foster a love of learning. For example, there are talks by outside speakers, a range of societies, including subject academic societies and a debating society (Abingdon), Prize Essays and the Extended Project Qualification.

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.

ii. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Sixth Form:

- 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.

iii. **Framework for Pupil Performance**

The School ensures that there is a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the School's own aims as provided to parents and national norms, in place.

Refer to Marking and Assessment, Quality Assurance and Reporting Policies, and the half-termly Academic Progress Reports which detail how pupil progress is tracked and monitored, and how pupils are supported in fulfilling their potential.

The School uses effective systems to ensure that the requirements as stated in D a., d. and g. allow for the accurate tracking and monitoring of the progress of all pupils, including groups of pupils.

First, Second and Third Forms:

- All pupils in each year group sit the MidYIS 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' MidYIS baseline predictions.
- Additional support may include additional support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

GCSE:

- All pupils in Fourth Form sit the Yellis test and this data, along with the MidYIS data if it is available and 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' MidYIS and Yellis baseline predictions.
- Additional support may include additional support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

Sixth Form:

- All pupils in the Lower Sixth sit the ALIS test and this data, along with previous baseline test data (MidYIS and/or Yellis) 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' ALIS baseline predictions.
- Additional support may include support sessions with the teacher, work report, mentoring and/or parental consultation.

C. ACADEMIC POLICIES

In addition to the EAL, Gifted and Learning Support Policies on the School's website, there are detailed policies which cover all aspects of the routine academic life of the school (Quality Assurance, Marking and Assessment, Lesson Cover, Library, Reporting, Plagiarism, Behaviour for Learning, Centre Assessment Appeals Procedure, UCAS and HE and Word Processor, which are readily available to teaching staff. The School's Behaviour Policy is also applicable for teaching staff.

D. 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.

i. Academic Curriculum Group

The Academic Curriculum Group is a strategic planning group of middle leaders (Heads of Faculty, Head of Learning Support, Head of EAL and the Academic Administrator) chaired by the Director of Studies. Each member is responsible to the Head Master, through the Director of Studies, 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.

Academic Curriculum Group meetings occur every three weeks in term time as per the school calendar.

There are eight Faculties:

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

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

ii. Academic Administrator

The Academic Administrator is responsible for all matters pertaining to examinations within the School, in liaison with the Director of Studies, including the supervision of examination invigilators. In addition, the Academic Administrator is responsible for producing the School timetable, in liaison with the Director of Studies, and overseeing supervised study and cover arrangements, as necessary.

iii. 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.
Refer to Learning Support Policy.

iv. 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.
Refer to EAL Policy.

v. The UCAS and Higher Education Coordinator

The UCAS and HE Coordinator oversees pupils' applications to universities through UCAS. The Director of Studies line manages the UCAS Coordinator.
Refer to UCAS and HE Policy.

vi. Head of Careers

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

vii. School Data Manager

The School Data Manager is responsible for managing all of the school's data, and is required to liaise with the Director of Studies with respect to reporting procedures and management of assessment data. The School Data Manager is also required to liaise with the Director of Studies and Academic Administrator with respect to the publication of examination results. Refer to Marking and Assessment Policy and Reporting Policy.

viii. List of Academic Teaching Staff - Please see web site

Policy reviewed 4th September 2018 and confirmed as the current Policy.

Daniel Gibbons