



Curriculum Policy

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Statutory Policy	No

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Smith', written over a faint circular stamp.

Chair of Governors Date: **July 2024**

SUMMARY

This policy contains statements on the aims and principles on which the curriculum is constructed (known as curriculum rationale and intentions) and explains how the curriculum is organised at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 (curriculum implementation).

This policy reflects the requirements for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the [Academies Act 2010](#), and the [National Curriculum programmes of study](#) which we have chosen to follow.

It also reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014](#) and [Equality Act 2010](#), and refers to curriculum-related expectations of governing boards set out in the Department for Education's [Governance Handbook](#).

Introduction

The curriculum of the School comprises all the experiences that students have at school, whether inside or outside of the classroom. The quality and nature of this range of experiences fully reflects the philosophy, values and aims of the School.

Our curriculum gives an entitlement to all students, irrespective of social background, culture, race, religion (including those who choose not to have a religion), gender, sexual orientation, differences in ability and disability to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes necessary for their development as active and responsible citizens. It is broadly based upon the National Curriculum published by the Department for Education (DfE).

Our curriculum reflects the changing world context. It takes account of the need for economic competitiveness; the latest technological developments and their impact upon the workplace; the need for lifelong learning and the need for our students to have flexible skills.

Our curriculum satisfies legal requirements. It is broad, balanced, relevant, coherent and differentiated, and ensures progression to the next stage.

Our curriculum expects and requires:

- A highly professional teaching and support staff.
- Teachers and learners to develop the concept of lifelong learning.

Our curriculum recognises:

- The role of parents/carers, teachers, support staff, the wider community and the students themselves in ensuring the highest quality learning experiences for all of our young people.

Curriculum rationale and intentions

Our curriculum is designed to support the School's vision of being an outstanding learning community and achieving our mission of 'helping learners succeed' along with enabling us to fulfil our aims of ensuring that every student will:

- feel safe, happy and healthy and know how to keep themselves, and others, safe, happy and healthy;
- enjoy high-quality learning opportunities, in a school at the leading edge of innovation; feel challenged and inspired to achieve excellence in every aspect of their lives.
- become confident, enterprising, creative learners, fully-equipped for life and work;
- become fully-rounded and responsible citizens, making a positive contribution to the school, local, national and global community.
- 'Be the Best You Can Be' through the curriculum;
- 'Work hard, Be Kind and Take Responsibility' – students will demonstrate these core values through their lived experience of the curriculum.

The curriculum, through its design and delivery seeks to:-

- Reflect the aims and values of the School.
- Build on students' prior experiences, skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Provide opportunities for our students to succeed in their learning in a safe and happy environment and in so doing, develop the confidence, knowledge and skills needed to make a contribution to the wider society.
- Promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.
- Equip all students with the essential skills of literacy and numeracy.
- Develop lively, enquiring minds and the ability to empathise, question and think creatively and critically.
- Enable all students to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and practical abilities relevant to the needs of adult life at home, work, at leisure and as consumers and citizens in a fast, changing world.
- Enable all students to acquire a reasoned set of attitudes, values and beliefs including a respect, knowledge and understanding of other people's religious, cultural and moral values and ways of life.
- Enable all students to acquire an understanding of the social, economic and practical order of the world and of the inter-dependence of individuals, groups and nations.
- Enable all students to respond positively to opportunities, challenges, responsibilities and to experience a sense of personal achievement.
- Enable all students to develop self-confidence, self-awareness, a sense of self-worth and fulfilment, with the will to contribute to the welfare of others and to society.
- Enable all students to handle uncertainty, to respond positively to change and to create and implement new ideas.
- Develop independent and collaborative learning skills in all students.
- Aim to raise standards of achievement through outstanding practice in teaching and learning.
- Enable all students to achieve a positive destination

Using these aims and values as our starting point we have developed a broad, balanced, relevant, coherent and differentiated curriculum which meets our learners' needs and reflects the philosophy, values and aims of the School. We believe in the National Curriculum, upon which our curriculum is based.

We believe in a knowledge-based curriculum where teachers are clear about delivering substantive and disciplinary knowledge through their subject areas. Resources, such as knowledge booklets and knowledge organisers have helped to achieve this aim.

We recognise that it is our duty to provide students with as many enriching cultural opportunities as possible that supplement and enrich their understanding of the curriculum and the wider world we inhabit. This involves direct, explicit teaching in a form which provides students with a deep cultural understanding alongside offering cultural opportunities beyond the classroom. Our

Enrichment Experience which takes place every July is a wonderful opportunity for all students to take part in a cultural experience, linked to subjects, beyond the classroom.

Our curriculum is intended to develop habits of mind, ways of thinking about a subject, ways of studying that subject and ways of being a practitioner of a subject.

Curriculum Implementation

Key features of our current curriculum model:-

- **Currently, students in Years 10 – 11 study their GCSEs over 3 years** (years 9-11). This has proved highly popular with students and parents/carers.
- However, we are gradually phasing out a 3 year KS3, and current students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are following a 3 year KS3 curriculum. This is enabling students to study subjects in greater depth and breadth, building on KS2 starting points and giving them full entitlement of the curriculum before they begin KS4 in Year 10. We remain ambitious for our students though, and through careful planning of the curriculum, and where we have robustly demonstrated that students have both met, and exceeded, the aims and objectives of the national curriculum, students will begin studying topics beyond the national curriculum during Year 9. These scaffolds help to prepare students for their learning in the next key stage.
- **Being ambitious for our students**, we are fully committed to the Ebacc qualification. Students in KS4 **have three option choices** (from a list of 18 subjects) under a **'free options' system**. This gives them the widest-possible choice. The **only stipulation is that students have to choose a language and a humanity** although this restriction is relaxed in the case of a small number of students with unique needs. Sutton Trust research reveals that studying the EBacc can help improve a young person's performance in English and maths. Students can only choose one D&T subject and two vocational subjects. Students are **not forced to choose particular pathways based on their ability**. **Separate sciences** are offered in KS4 with approximately a fifth of Year 11 entered for separate sciences each year.
- **Further Maths and Statistics** are offered in KS4 to the more able where appropriate.
- **Open KS4 bucket includes:** Business, Design and Technology (including Engineering), Drama, Fine Art, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Health and Social Care, ICT, Music, PE/Sport, Photography, Sociology.
- **Vocational provision in KS4 includes:** NCFE Technical Award in Business and Enterprise, OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Creative iMedia, OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Health and Social Care, OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Engineering and OCR Level 1/2 Cambridge National Certificate in Sport Studies. These vocational qualifications are offered as an alternative to GCSEs in these subjects at KS4 to suit preferred learning styles and learners' needs. OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Diploma in Health and Social Care is offered in the sixth form in response to student voice, as, given the success of our vocational Health and Social Care qualification in KS4, students wanted a pathway which would allow them to pursue their interest in this subject further at post-16 level.
- KS4 offers **alternative pathways** (e.g. separate sciences, fast maths, vocational subjects). 'National initiatives' e.g. EBacc also influence our curriculum offer.
- **At GCSE, support for students with weak literacy skills** is provided through Extra English lessons which are timetabled during KS4 modern foreign languages. In Years 7 and 8, students receive Extra English and follow a recognised programme called 'Direct Instruction' which aims to develop their literacy skills. Year 7 students follow this program alongside the Year 7 English Scheme of Learning in a newly created support set in English. Some students also receive ten hours of English or maths tuition during PE or C&PSHEE teaching time for 6 weekly periods.

- **Alternative qualifications** are offered to some lower ability students e.g. Entry Level Pathways qualifications.
- We **strongly support art, D&T, music, drama and sport** and have maintained curriculum time within these subjects. Students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 enjoy 4 hours of PE per fortnight and sport is offered as an enrichment activity in the Sixth Form.
- Our curriculum compares favourably to other local schools based on our research
- Our **Sixth Form offer** is based on what courses students require for university entry, employment or apprenticeships, our curriculum offer at KS4 and what other providers locally are offering. 21 subjects are offered in the Sixth Form, many of which are the facilitating subjects.
- In a typical academic year, the formal curriculum is enhanced by a **wide range of extra-curricular opportunities** that are offered each week which provide a plethora of sporting, creative and artistic opportunities. In addition to this, we are a long-established provider of the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and Silver awards and have had large number of students complete these awards through the School since its inception. Recent additions to our extracurricular offer have included second teams in a number of sports. In the sixth form, students have formed societies, many of which meet on a Wednesday afternoon during Enrichment time. Post 16 students are also encouraged to enhance their learning through studying MOOCs (massive open online courses) and watching TED talks.
- **More able students** in Key Stage 4 participate in our Super-Curricular Society which provides opportunities to deepen subject knowledge and explore degree courses, take part in A Level taster lessons, visit universities as well as learn practical skills such as first aid and sign language.
- In a typical academic year a wide range of **educational visits** would take place during the course of the school year
- The School has a **very strong sporting tradition** with success at local, county and regional level in a number of sports. Our netballers also regularly compete in the national finals, finishing in the top 5 schools in the country three times in recent years at U14 and U16 level.
- The **C&PSHEE** curriculum covers a range of topics relating to physical, mental and personal well-being. In a typical academic year, work in C&PSHEE is supported by speakers from external agencies and theme days where whole year groups take part in workshops covering such issues as sexual health, drugs and knives and weapons, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training for Year 8 & 9. These are well-received by our students.
- **SMSC** is delivered across all subjects. SMSC also underpins the assembly programme. All new schemes of learning have SMSC links in. SMSC is also specifically-assessed as part of the reflective lesson visits. Assemblies are tracked against the SMSC criteria. SMSC events have included a Loudmouth Theatre production on CSE, all students voting in the youth parliament elections, JLT and student voice activities, celebration of religious festivals, Black History Month display and assemblies.
- **British Values and teaching about the Protected Characteristics** are also promoted through the pastoral programme as well as being delivered across all subjects. Assemblies as well as a weekly personal development activity have been used to ensure students are aware of how to promote equality, diversity and tolerance in school and in the wider society.
- A programme of activities has been developed for tutors to follow each week during **registration time**. Activities supplied by the Maths and English departments help to support students' academic progress and literacy skills. Every week students learn the 'Word of the Week' and are encouraged to apply it in their written work to ensure they are ambitious in the vocabulary they use. In Year 7 students read a book as a form and these have been specifically chosen to look at issues such as equality and diversity, democracy, individual liberty and tolerance. Students in Years 8-10 complete a weekly form time reading article looking at a range of non-fiction texts. They explore the vocabulary used and use a range of reading strategies including summarising, predicting and activating. Oracy skills are also refined through the weekly turn and talk activity that these articles stimulate.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, students and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Higham Lane School recognises that AI has many uses to help students learn, but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism.

Students may not use AI tools:

- * During assessments, including internal and external assessments, and coursework
- * To write their homework or class assignments, where AI-generated text is presented as their own work

Students may use AI tools:

- * As a research tool to help them find out about new topics and ideas
- * When specifically studying and discussing AI in schoolwork, for example in IT lessons or art homework about AI-generated images. All AI-generated content must be properly attributed
- * Where a student uses an AI tool, the student should retain a copy of the question(s) asked and the AI-generated responses. Students must submit this along with the assessment.

Staff should:

- * Be aware that AI tools are still being developed and should use such tools with caution as they may provide inaccurate, inappropriate or biased content
- * Make students aware of the risks of using AI tools and that they need to appropriately reference AI as a source of information to maintain the integrity of assessments
- * See our Home Learning Policy for more information on how students can and cannot use AI for their assignments.

As the curriculum experts for their subjects, Subject Leaders, in close liaison with their Senior Leadership Team link, choose the GCSE and A-level specifications for their subjects and resource these courses accordingly. The introduction of any new courses/specifications is supported by CPD for the staff delivering these courses, where needed. Evaluation of the curriculum within particular subjects forms part of link meetings involving the Headteacher and/or their Senior Leadership Team link.

Curriculum Impact

Progress towards and against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) measuring the impact of the curriculum will be communicated to SLT and the GSC Curriculum and Standards sub-committee to support curriculum evaluation, evolution and review.

As a school we use a wide range of quality assurance activities to monitor and track the effectiveness of the delivery of the curriculum. This includes, and is not limited to, internal data analysis; lesson observations of teachers; learning walks of departments; book and folder looks within department curriculum time between teachers; book and folder looks completed by subject leaders and SLT; 'Curriculum Conversations' between SL/SLT links; and a wide range of student voice activities.

