

Curriculum Policy

Introduction

This policy explains the key principles which inform decisions we make about the content and delivery of our curriculum at the Infant, Junior and Senior School levels.

It explains our approach to schemes of work, particularly as regards the level of planning detail we expect teachers to supply and maintain up-to-date.

It then outlines our approach to delivering exam courses in Years 9-11, our approach to curriculum delivery for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and our approach to the delivery of IT.

Key Principles

We aim to deliver an intellectually ambitious curriculum. This is necessary because we maintain a high view of every child's mind. What satisfies a student is direct engagement with substantive learning across every subject area. As a rule, we want children to engage with the best of the past and present (books, art, music, etc.), material that has proven itself over time.

We aim to deliver a substantive curriculum. All learning must have a clear purpose and avoid wasting pupils' time.

For Infants and Juniors we aim to keep lessons short and to the point, believing this helps maintain higher levels of motivation and concentration. We aim to be efficient, to stick to the point and keep up the pace in lessons. In the Senior School, the daily timetable is standardised into eight 45 minute lessons per day.

We aim to deliver a broad curriculum. Students are entitled to a broad inheritance. A narrowed curriculum would risk failing to cultivate the diverse range of aptitudes amongst our students. It would fail to help children form a relationship with particular areas of knowledge or facets of the human experience that could be enriching for them in adult life. Our assumption is that forming relationships – a sense of familiarity or connection with – all major areas of knowledge and facets of the human experience is intrinsically life-enhancing.

We aim to make natural connections between learning and life through frequent outings. In our Infant and Junior Schools, and in Y7 and Y8 of the Senior School, every Friday afternoon is an open slot in the timetable that we use for educational outings or special school-based activities. The goal of our Enrichment Programme is to keep the learning experience fresh.

We place a priority upon whole books and self-education. We stress books because we want children to develop the intellectual patience to engage with a sustained argument or narrative, to be capable of deeper reflection and analysis. We also believe books are the tool par excellence of self-education in adult life.

We concentrate on core skills (reading, writing, spelling, maths) through the use in our earliest years of programmes of study that have been proven to be effective, recognising that these skills are foundational to success in future learning. We use a phonetic approach to reading and a Maths programme that makes frequent use of manipulatives.

We concentrate on oral feedback through the practice of narration in the upper Infant School and the Junior School. While writing skills are of paramount importance, we do not place undue emphasis upon written outcomes up through Year 4 or Year 5. It is imperative that all children are intellectually

stimulated and inspired. Over-emphasis upon written outcomes can hinder enjoyment in learning and undermine confidence for those who find it more difficult.

We keep homework to a minimum, believing that we already have access to the best hours of a child's day and that we ought to be able to make efficient use of that time. We also want children to have time outside of school to pursue other interests. Homework in the earliest years will focus on reading. In the Junior School homework will increase gradually (toward 30 mins per night five days per week in Year 6). We recognise there are important self-management lessons to be learned from regular homework as children enter the Senior School. At the upper end of the Senior School students can expect up to approximately one hour of homework per night five days per week.

All major decisions regarding curriculum content – such as key text selection – and delivery are made in consultation with the Director of Studies and the Headmaster.

Schemes of Work

Schemes of work are held on our central computerised filing system, consisting of a sequence of unit of work plans. Teachers have a responsibility to maintain up-to-date unit of work plans for each subject, they are expected to undertake daily/weekly lesson planning, and should at all times be able to provide evidence to demonstrate this.

Schemes of work should give an overview of the length, objectives, key vocabulary, key resources and assessment strategies for each unit. They should detail the main activities and resources deployed in each unit of work.

The goals of schemes of work are (a) to give an overview of specific content to enable effective planning and progression across year groups, and (b) to supply sufficient detail to enable other teachers to pick up the programme of study with the benefit of a range of ideas and resources to hand.

Exam Courses

We offer IGCSEs rather than GCSEs, with the exception of Latin, as they are generally considered better courses which prepare pupils more thoroughly for progression to A-level.

Our pupils make their IGCSE subject choices at the end of Year 8 rather than the end of Year 9. This allows more teaching and learning time within each IGCSE course, enabling teachers to explore topics in greater depth, or explore more topics on a syllabus, and feel less pressure merely to 'get through the material'. As they progress through the course, pupils are thoroughly prepared to understand the demands of the exams themselves and good exam technique, but throughout their IGCSE years we keep the focus upon intrinsic reasons for studying each subject.

We encourage pupils to take 10 subjects. Subject to discussion, it is possible for pupils to take more or less.

SEN Pupils and Curriculum Delivery

As a general rule, Heritage expect that its pupils will be able to access mainstream classroom teaching without the need for significant 1-1 support. With active support from parents, including a willingness on their part to pay for 1-1 work if necessary, we can serve children with specific special needs, such as dyslexia, effectively.

Pupils whom we judge to have special educational needs will have a PDP (Personal Development Plan). The class teacher, with support from the SENCo and the Head of School (Infants or Juniors) is responsible for completing this and maintaining it up to date. For Senior pupils, the SENCo, with support from a pupil's tutor, will complete and maintain PDPs. PDPs are updated twice annually and detail areas of need as well as strategies to meet those needs. The PDP is signed off both by the teacher and the parent(s) concerned either in person or by email.

Where children have specific academic needs in relation to core skills, we aim to offer a modest amount of one-to-one or small group support with our teaching assistants up through Year 4.

Where we judge a child to require more one-to-one or small group tuition to help close the gap in a core skill, we may speak to parents about extra tuition which parents would be required to pay for.

We may recommend that a child do only one foreign language rather than two if that child has a particular difficulty with the English language.

We recognise that the more able also can be considered to have a 'special need'. Our rich curriculum is intended to aim high, and therefore to stimulate and stretch the most able. The content of the curriculum itself, plus effective differentiation, are used to extend the more able. Additional opportunities arise, such as being involved in the delivery of assemblies, for example to promote a charity the school is supporting.

Computing

We deliberately prioritise books over computers. This is because we believe it is a higher order skill to possess the intellectual patience to read a whole book. A key goal for our pupils is that they should feel at home in the world of books. This preference for books means that we do not aspire to have computer based lessons at the Infant and Junior level. We do not have interactive whiteboards in our classrooms.

We expect children to do occasional computer-based homework, we have a computing lesson once per week during Year 6 to Year 8, we do computing activities as part of our Enrichment Programme, and we are offering a Computer Science IGCSE. Other uses of computers is encouraged, such as:

- Practising keyboard skills as homework;
- Internet based research as part of homework;
- Typing up written work increasingly frequently;
- Students with dyslexia are encouraged to rely increasingly upon laptops for written work for homework, in lessons and during exams.

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