

## **The Oundle Curriculum**

At the heart of the School's educational philosophy is a clear understanding of how pupils learn. The intellectual, social and emotional needs of the pupils drive the educational agenda. All pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress.

The School's curriculum equips its pupils to think, and we believe in providing a curriculum that is organised by learning rather than by assessment. The curriculum is flexible enough to allow each pupil to plot an individual academic path through the School, and all pupils are given the opportunity to excel. We place great emphasis on the 'craft of the classroom', and it is important that teaching is effective for all pupils, taking into account their educational needs. We understand the need for pupil-driven as well as teacher-centred learning, and we aim for pupils to become independent learners, capable of thinking and debating and who are prepared thoroughly for higher education and the responsibilities of adult life.

Throughout the curriculum we wish to promote excellence and achievement through delivery of subject matter that is appropriate in its level of challenge for the ages and aptitudes of all pupils. We aim for efficiency in preparing our pupils for public examinations; success in public examinations is deemed important as a worthy aim, as a platform for future success at university and beyond. We understand that education is about far more than examinations however, and strive to ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to explore areas of intellectual interest.

The School seeks to ensure that pupil progress and achievement is in no way held back by education support issues. Staff will differentiate their teaching as a matter of course to cater for the needs of the individual child.

The curriculum is structured into two distinct but mutually reinforcing strands: the examined curriculum and the extension curriculum.

## **The Core Curriculum**

The School is divided into seven year groups, and for curriculum purposes these are grouped into three distinct stages of education.

### *Lower Years*

The Lower Years are roughly equivalent to Key Stage 3 in the national framework. There is an intake of about sixty pupils into the First Form, which is supplemented by a small intake the following year in the Second Form (12+ entry). In the Third Form, the number in the year group grows to around two hundred.

### *"GCSE years"/KS4*

The Fourth and Fifth Form represent the 'GCSE years', and mark a time when many subjects will begin teaching programmes specifically written with (I)GCSE examinations in mind. The focus is not solely on examination performance: indeed, most departments schedule skills teaching over the course of many years up to and including the Fifth Form.

## *Sixth Form*

The Lower and Upper Sixth Forms make up the senior part of the School. Subjects in the Sixth Form are assessed either via A levels or as a Cambridge Pre-U.

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We provide full-time supervised education for all pupils; the pupils gain experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

Pupils with special educational needs are offered support throughout their time at Oundle by the specialist Educational Support department. The Educational Support department is not seen as a separate department but is fully integrated into all other academic disciplines. It is essential that all teachers are aware of the specific techniques they should employ to ensure that all pupils are able to reach their academic potential. Where a pupil has a statement, we ensure that the educational requirements of the pupil's statement are met.

## **The Examined Curriculum**

A broad range of subjects are studied in the junior years and though choice exists, it is limited. We do not wish to be overly-prescriptive, but the choices on offer to pupils in the First to Third Forms still ensure that all pupils gain an educational grounding in Mathematics and logic, Scientific method, English Language and Literature as well as the practical and creative disciplines.

All pupils sit IGCSE in Mathematics, English, three Sciences and at least one modern language, thus all pupils acquire advanced skills of speaking and listening as well as firm foundations in numeracy and literacy.

Subjects are examined at the end of the Fifth Form as GCSEs or IGCSEs. The choice of the examination board is at the discretion of each Head of Department in consultation with the Deputy Head Academic: each choice is made on the basis of what is felt to be a suitable fit for our pupils and what provides the best preparation for Sixth Form study.

Some pupils who show particular proficiency in languages, often as a result of being bilingual, are permitted to take an appropriate (I)GCSE in that language at the end of the Third Form. Pupils are not entered for public examination in the Fourth Form, so as to maintain the continuity of teaching and academic study during that year.

Subjects in the Sixth Form are assessed either via A levels or as a Cambridge Pre-U. The course offered is the one we believe to be the most coherent and intellectually stimulating. It is important that pupils are given the best chance to gain the grades they require for top universities (including, but not limited to, Cambridge and Oxford) but that they are also prepared thoroughly for the type of work they will encounter at university.

Further external qualifications may be gained (such as the AQA Extended Project Qualification) through the programme of extension that runs through the Lower Sixth Form.

*Full details of the core curriculum are available on the Academic section of the School's intranet.*

## **The Extension Curriculum**

Non-examined courses and *Voluntaries* form an important part of the School curriculum. We operate a full programme of activities that are appropriate to the educational needs of the pupils in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills. We aim to teach beyond the prescribed curriculum, thereby broadening the intellectual horizons of our pupils.

The Voluntaries system enables pupils to access both directed academic support (Academic Surgeries: one-to-one or small-group support sessions) and a large range of extra-curricular academic, cultural and physical activities (Electives). Voluntaries take place largely between 1715 and 1845 on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

All pupils from the First to Third Form are required to select a programme of Electives that run twice weekly throughout the first two terms of the year. Fourth Form pupils are given a little extra discretion but are encouraged to undertake at least one weekly Elective.

All pupils are encouraged to 'go beyond' what is possible in the classroom, either to extend their education in an area of interest or to try something completely new. There are also occasional one-off lectures from outside speakers. The strong relationship that exists between pupils and their tutors ensures that the pupils gain appropriate guidance with their choice of Voluntaries.

Senior pupils all study a timetabled extension course in the Lower Sixth year, which for the majority provides a schedule of supervisor-guided self-study of a particular topic, using the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) framework, or teacher-led investigation of broader themes (our bespoke Oundle *Quadrivium* courses). [Quadrivium mirrors and extends the in-house *Trivium* courses that Third Form pupils study as part of the timetabled curriculum.]

Other Sixth Form extension options include learning a new language *ab initio* to GCSE level, study for a music diploma, and accelerated study of Further Mathematics.

All Upper Sixth Form pupils attend a Sixth Form Lecture series, which involves weekly talks from eminent speakers and follow-up discussions in small groups with guidance from teachers.

Tuesday and Thursday evenings are set aside for Senior Academic Societies, primarily aimed at Sixth Form pupils, but open to inquiring juniors. Almost all subjects studied at Sixth Form level have an accompanying society.

*Full details of the academic extension programme can be found in the Deputy Head Academic's section of the School intranet.*

## ***University and Careers preparation***

Pupils are encouraged to think about university applications and potential career choices at an early stage, and a full careers programme exists through the Sixth Form. Pupils engage with the careers process from as early as the Fourth Form through the *Cambridge Occupational Analysts* programme.

*Details can be found in the Careers section of the School's intranet pages.*

PSHE lessons are delivered to all pupils via the School's *Learning for Life* (LfL) programme, which operates for all year groups. First to Fifth Form pupils have a timetabled Learning for Life lesson at least fortnightly; the programme is backed up by discussion sessions in Houses or by occasional half-day workshops, when lessons are suspended for this purpose. Our LfL programme helps to mould young people who are aware of their responsibilities to society and are ready to make a full contribution both during their time with us and when they leave Oundle.

## **Curriculum developments**

These are discussed and monitored by the Academic Development Committee (ADC, concerned with academic strategy), which is chaired by the Head and the Academic Curriculum Committee (ACC, the Heads of Departments' committee), chaired by the Deputy Head Academic.

Reviewer	ICS
Date implemented	4.11.19
Status	Active
Next Review (max 3 years)	1.11.22