

Curriculum Policy (Secondary Schools)

The White Horse Federation

September 2023

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Towards a common curriculum

Our secondary schools are working together to develop a common curriculum. The first stage in this process involves aligning curriculum hours and examination boards. Schools are now adopting common curriculum sequencing and common assessments. In time, this will enable schools to work together collaboratively to develop common curriculum materials and resources.

The development of a common curriculum across the trust offers practical benefits to schools, namely:

- helping to reducing teacher workload
- the provision of high-quality and cost-effective resources
- the opportunity to collaborate during assessment moderation
- the chance for staff to share best practice from our classrooms and exchange ideas and expertise on curriculum content
- the opportunity to access career development opportunities in curriculum design and leadership

Principles of Curriculum Design

Our curriculum is characterised by six principles:

- A** – Academic and ambitious
- B** – Balanced and inclusive
- C** – Core of literacy (reading, writing and oracy)
- D** – Developing character
- E** – Enriched with cultural capital and the co-curriculum
- F** – Foundational knowledge at its heart

A – Academic and ambitious

Our academically rigorous and ambitious curriculum is designed by subject experts to expose all students, regardless of background and starting point, to ‘the best that has been thought and said’. The curriculum is rooted firmly in a traditional academic core and is characterised by high rates of entry into the English Baccalaureate at Key Stage 4. The curriculum presents high levels of academic challenge, which sparks students intellectual curiosity and spurs them to fulfil their full potential. The ultimate measure of success for our curriculum is the academic outcomes that students achieve.

B – Balanced and inclusive

Our curriculum is broad and balanced at each key stage. At key stage three (years 7, 8 and 9), alongside a traditional academic core, all students study a range of creative arts, technology and sport. Students have the opportunity to continue studying these subjects at key stage four (years 10 and 11) and key stage five (years 12 and 13).

Students are only entered for well-regarded, valuable qualifications that enable meaningful progression routes to higher education and employment. In most cases, the qualifications studied at key stage four are GCSEs and the qualifications studied at key stage five are A Levels. However, students may also be entered for vocational qualifications where these offer the best chances of academic success and a strong progression route.

Our approach to inclusion prioritises students being in the class, learning from teachers. All students have an entitlement to study the full curriculum. Higher prior attaining students might study a topic in greater depth. Lower prior attaining students might focus on grasping the essential 'core knowledge' and having repeated opportunities to practise this, whilst not being precluded the opportunity to go further. Whilst some students may receive additional intervention during lesson time, this will always be time-limited and students will return to studying the full curriculum at the end of the intervention cycle.

C – Core of literacy (reading, writing and speaking)

Our curriculum prioritises the development of each aspect of literacy: reading, writing and speaking. In doing so, it recognises that literacy is not only fundamental for adult life, but also integral to academic success.

Our focus on in-class guided reading ensures that every student benefits from a vocabulary-rich curriculum characterised by challenging texts that teachers explain with precision and concision. These texts enrich students' vocabulary and enable them to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings with increasing confidence and eloquence.

Through both the formal and informal curriculum, we seek to foster a love of reading in each student. Where students are identified as having a reading age significantly below their chronological age, they are provided with time-limited, intensive intervention.

D – Developing character

Our curriculum prioritises students' personal development and deepens their understanding of what it means to be a good citizen in modern Britain.

Students in all year groups follow a taught course in personal development that covers personal, social and health education (PSHE); relationships and sex education (RSE); citizenship; careers education; and religious education. Daily tutor time sessions and weekly assemblies develop students understanding and appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters (SMSC). The co-curricular programme offers students varied opportunities to develop and demonstrate good character, such by playing in a sports team, volunteering or participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

E – Enriched with cultural capital and the co-curriculum

Our curriculum takes students beyond their immediate, daily experience and educates them about some of the most powerful ideas that have shaped and continue to shape human understanding.

Guest speakers, lectures, educational visits, theatre trips and competitions are purposefully planned into the curriculum to enhance students' cultural capital. Our co-curricular programme extends students' learning beyond the classroom and provides opportunities for them to play, compete, perform, act, volunteer and lead across a wide range of sports, creative arts and other pursuits.

F – Foundational knowledge at its heart

Our curriculum is written with memory in mind. Our focus on foundational knowledge, complemented with hinterland knowledge, ensures that learning is deep and meaningful and that students are able to make links, find connections and build a schema or mental picture of a subject. Our classroom pedagogy, knowledge organisers and assessments support students in committing foundational knowledge to long-term memory. Our curriculum is sequenced cumulatively, always building on prior knowledge and skills. Summative assessments are, accordingly, cumulative. Across academic years and key stages, knowledge and skills are revisited again and again in increasingly complex ways.

Allocation of curriculum time

The academy follows a one-week timetable comprising thirty fifty-minute lessons. In addition, students attend daily Tutor Time sessions and participate in a range of co-curricular activities.

Key Stage 3

Key Stage 3 is a three-year programme. All students study a broad range of academic subjects including:

Subject	Periods per week
English	5
Maths	5
Science	4
History	2
Geography	2
Modern Foreign Language	3
Computer Science	1
Religious Education	1
Art	1
Music	1
Drama	1
Technology	1
Physical Education	2
Personal Development*	1

*Personal Development comprises PSHE, RSE and Citizenship. More information can be found in the *Personal Development Policy*.

Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4, an appropriate balance is struck between maintaining curriculum breadth and allowing students to specialise in their areas of strength and interest. Students study a broad academic curriculum, comprising compulsory core subjects, guided choices in EBacc subjects and a further two options.

Subject	Periods per week
English	5
Maths	5
Science	5
Option 1 – History or Geography	3
Option 2 – Modern Foreign Language*	3
Option 3	3
Option 4	3
Core PE	2
Personal Development & Religious Education	1

*The majority of students study a language at Key Stage 4. However, a minority of students are invited to choose another option subject, instead of studying a language.

We offer a broad range of courses, including:

Science	- Separate Sciences (GCSE Biology, GCSE Chemistry and GCSE Physics)
Computer Science	- GCSE Computer Science - BTEC Level 2 IT
Humanities	- GCSE History - GCSE Geography

Modern Foreign Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE Spanish - GCSE French - GCSE German
Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE RE - GCSE Citizenship - GCSE Economics
Creative Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE Art - GCSE Music - GCSE Drama - BTEC Level 2 Performing Arts
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE Product Design - GCSE Food Technology
PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE PE - BTEC Level 2 Sport
Vocational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSE Business - BTEC Level 2 Business - BTEC Level 2 Health & Social Care - BTEC Level 2 Travel & Tourism
Core support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional Maths support, depending on individual needs - Additional English support, depending on individual needs

Key Stage 5

At Key Stage 5, students study three A Levels or equivalent. Exceptionally, students may study four A Levels.

We offer a broad range of courses, including:

English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level English Literature - A Level English Language
Maths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Maths - A Level Further Maths
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Biology - A Level Chemistry - A Level Physics
Computer Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Computer Science
Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level History - A Level Geography
Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Spanish - A Level French
Social Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Philosophy & Ethics - A Level Government & Politics - A Level Sociology - A Level Psychology - A Level Economics - A Level Law
Creative Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Art - A Level Music - A Level Drama - BTEC Level 3 Performing Arts
PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level PE - BTEC Level 3 Sport
Vocational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Level Business - BTEC Level 3 Business - BTEC Level 3 Health & Social Care

Sixth Form students receive six periods of tuition in each subject and complete three periods of directed study time in each subject. The remaining three periods may be used for personal development activities, including sport and exercise, volunteering and co-curricular activities.

The wider curriculum

We are committed to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our students. We encourage our students to learn eagerly, to reflect wisely and to behave with integrity. We support our students in developing into well-rounded, thoughtful and healthy citizens who are equipped to cope with the challenges that life throws at them. We teach students the qualities, values and dispositions that they need to flourish in our society.

Personal Development

The academy's Personal Development programme seeks to:

- support students in developing confidence, resilience, independence and strength of character
- support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- ensure that every student knows how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy.
- ensure that every student has an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships
- promote students' understanding of and respect for fundamental British values.
- promote students' understanding of and respect for equality of opportunity and diversity

Co-curriculum

The academy's co-curricular programme seeks to:

- connect pupils to the world of work, further education, training and employment
- enrich the curriculum
- provide exposure to culture, the arts and sports
- build character, integrity, resilience and judgment

More information about these aspects of the curriculum can be found in our *Personal Development Policy*.

Grouping of students

The academy uses a combination of mixed-ability grouping and setting by ability. When setting is used, this is always based on academic considerations, rather than behaviour considerations. Upon entry into Year 7, ability sets are initially determined by Key Stage 2 data, nationally recognised aptitude tests and/or early internal assessment. In every year group, setting is reviewed following regular internal assessments. This enables students to move up and down sets as appropriate.

In Key Stage 3,

- Students are set by ability separately in English, Maths, and Science. In each subject, there is a top set and a nurture group. The middle sets may be mixed-ability. The composition of the top set will always be representative of the gender profile and pupil premium profile of the year group.
- Students are taught in mixed ability groups for all of their other subjects.

In Key Stage 4,

- Students are set by ability separately in English, Maths, Science.
- Students are taught in mixed ability groups for option subjects, although setting by ability may occur when two classes occur simultaneously.

Each set follows the same curriculum. The complexity and depth of the content is tailored for each set to ensure appropriate levels of stretch and challenge for all students.

Curriculum Leadership

Effective curriculum leadership requires a close partnership and ongoing dialogue between the Leadership Team and Heads of Department about the design of the curriculum, how it is taught and what students learn as a result. Whilst the Leadership Team have overall responsibility for the intent, implementation and impact of the academy's curriculum, Heads of Department are the subject experts that drive the curriculum at subject-level.

The Leadership Team must:

1. Maintain an overview of what is taught in each subject and to each year group, and how this fits with the trust's vision for education
2. Have a clear understanding of the principles underpinning effective pedagogy
3. Ensure that key curriculum documents are in place for every subject, including curriculum overviews, long-term and medium term-plans, assessments and resources.
4. Maintain an ongoing dialogue with Heads of Department about curriculum matters, by prioritising this in regular line-management.
5. Develop an understanding of curriculum intent, implementation and impact at subject-level, by inviting Heads of Department to present to the Leadership Team
6. Ensure that departments dedicate meeting and training time to curriculum priorities.
7. Appreciate how the curriculum builds on what students have learnt (or not learnt) at primary schools
8. Monitor inclusion and SEND provision and how well the curriculum meets the needs of specific students and groups of students.
9. Evaluate the impact of the curriculum, by monitoring the work that students produce, analysing examination results and tracking student destinations.
10. Monitor, evaluate and review the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum, as part of the annual academy review cycle

Heads of Department must:

1. Have a clear vision for their subject (i.e. what it means to study the subject and why it is important)
2. Have an in-depth knowledge of their subject's curriculum at each key stage, understanding why and how topics are taught, what is included and what has been left out, and how this compares with the national curriculum.
3. Produce and review curriculum plans, ensuring that long-term plans are consistent with the current academic year and that medium-term plans are in place for every unit.
4. Ensure that the department are knowledgeable about the intent of the curriculum and its proper implementation, steering teachers away from curriculum resourcing and towards instructional planning.
5. Provide support and training for the department to address gaps in curriculum knowledge, pedagogical subject knowledge, and wider subject knowledge.
6. Evaluate the impact of the curriculum, by monitoring the work that students produce and analysing the result of formative and summative assessments
7. Enact academy-wide policies relating to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, intelligently at subject-level

Curriculum documentation and resources

For each subject, the following curriculum documents should be readily available:

1. A **curriculum summary** that details
 - the aims and vision for the subject
 - why it is important to for students to learn about the subject
 - a top-level overview of what is taught in each year and why has this content been chosen
2. A **long-term plan** that details
 - the units that are taught in each year and the order in which they are taught

- how long each unit should last
- the key assessment that accompanies each unit

3. Medium term plans for each unit of work which detail

- the prior knowledge that should be expected from students
- the core knowledge to be taught each lesson/week
- key vocabulary to be introduced each lesson/week
- lesson resources
- independent writing tasks
- assessment strategies
- homework

Typically, medium-term plans will cover 6-8 weeks of teaching, focusing on a topic (rather than term) and culminating in an independent piece of assessable work.

4. Resources for each unit of work, including:

Resource	How it should be used
1. 'Knowledge organisers' that specify the core knowledge that students need to learn for each unit	Regular (weekly) quizzing to improve retention
2. Glossaries that specify the academic language (tier 2 and 3) needed to apply knowledge in each unit	This language is taught explicitly in lessons, revisited regularly, and expected in student writing
3. Good quality reading resources, checked carefully for accuracy and accompanied with pre-planned comprehension questions	Used as 'read aloud' material in every lesson
4. Model answers for each significant activity	These enable students to access the task and show students what excellence looks like
5. Additional teaching resources (with guidance notes, as appropriate)	To be reviewed carefully and adapted by teachers in advance of teaching
6. Homework tasks	For teachers to set, in addition to setting revision from knowledge organisers
7. Subject knowledge enhancement materials	For teachers to read in advance of teaching the topic

5. Examples of student work that showcase what mastery, inclusion, and progression look like in the curriculum.

The format of curriculum documents

Curriculum summaries and long-term plans should follow a common style and format across subjects and year groups, as they are made available to parents and published on the academy's website. Adapting a consistent approach to these documents, makes it easier for students, parents and other stakeholders to understand them.

The style and format of other curriculum documents, such as medium-term plans and resources, will vary between subjects, in recognition that curriculum planning is highly subject-specific. For example, although most medium-term plans will contain the information detailed above, departments may add additional information to best suit the nature of planning and teaching in their particular subjects.

Curriculum monitoring, evaluation and review

The curriculum is subject to ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review by heads of department and the leadership team. Key aspects of this process include:

Review of curriculum intent:

1. Review of curriculum documentation: Through regular line management, each head of department meets with a member of the leadership team to review planning documents to ensure that they are updated and are continually developed to reflect academy priorities.
2. Curriculum presentations: Once a year, each head of department presents their curriculum to the leadership team. This enables the leadership team to develop their subject-level understanding of the curriculum and provides an opportunity for heads of department to succinctly articulate key developments within their curriculum.

Review of curriculum implementation:

3. Lesson visits: Heads of department and members of the leadership team regularly visit lessons to observe, at first hand, the implementation of the curriculum. More information about the focus and nature of lesson visits can be found in the academy's *Teaching and Learning Policy*.
4. Regular line management: Heads of department meet fortnightly with their leadership team line manager. Teachers meet at least once per half term with their line manager. Reviewing the implementation of the curriculum is a key focus of these meetings. During this time, feedback from informal lesson observations is discussed, representative samples of exercise books are scrutinised and class data is reviewed.
5. Department Review Weeks: Once a year, each department participates in a holistic review of its curriculum planning, implementation and impact. This is led by the leadership team. The purpose of the review is to inform the leadership team's self-evaluation of the academy, to celebrate excellent practice and to support middle leaders in identifying departmental development priorities.

Review of curriculum impact:

6. Work scrutiny: In addition to the regular sampling of exercise books through line management, heads of department and the leadership team conduct a termly centralised work scrutiny to evaluate the quality of students' work and how well students are progressing through the curriculum.
7. Data Analysis Meetings: Following each assessment point, heads of department meet with the Vice Principal (Academic) to review the attainment and progress of individual students, groups of students and the cohort overall.

Related policies

The *Curriculum Policy* should be read in conjunction with:

- *Teaching and Learning Policy*
- *Reading Policy*
- *SEND Policy*
- *Personal Development Policy*