

UPPINGHAM

ACADEMIC AND CURRICULUM POLICY

This policy is intended to be read in conjunction with:

- SEND Policy
- EAL Policy
- Non-taught & Bilingual Native Speaker Languages Policy (MFL)
- PSHEE Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Careers & Higher Education Policy
- The Policy for promoting Fundamental British Values
- The Staff Handbook
- The GCSE Prospectus
- The Sixth Form Options Guide
- The various departmental subject teaching details (Schemes of Work, SEN statements, FBV statements)

Introduction

Uppingham School's academic curriculum is a component of the School's "total curriculum", which is the term used for the complete educational experience of being a pupil at a genuinely seven-day-a-week boarding school.

This culture of total education and focus upon the development of the "whole person", playing to the strengths, separately, of each pupil, has been a part of the tradition of the school for a century and a half, since the great 19th Century reforming Headmaster, Edward Thring. The philosophy of the school has been, and is, the development of each individual pupil through his/her own areas of strength.

The academic curriculum, therefore, joins with a wide extra-curricular programme as an element in the education of the young people within this school community. For this reason, the School attaches great significance to the role of guidance of the individual pupil in the person of the Housemaster or Housemistress, and the Tutor (and sometimes others, for instance Leighton Group mentors and the Academic Scholarships Co-ordinator). They keep a regular watch on the progress of the pupil, considering his or her progress in the spheres of personal, sporting, dramatic, musical and other extra curricular areas, as well as academic progress. In this context, therefore, the School seeks as broad a learning curriculum as is achievable for each individual pupil.

Partly because of its objective to give a broad approach to education, Uppingham therefore offers an unusually wide range of academic subjects from which to choose, especially in the Sixth Form. Considerable guidance is available to pupils (and their parents) in their selection of subject choices.

It follows from the School's philosophy that in general Uppingham School does not select pupils purely upon academic ability. The criterion for the admission of pupils is usually a judgement as to whether they will be the sort of pupils who will benefit from the breadth of opportunities which are available at this school. Since these opportunities do include, centrally, the academic curriculum, the School does expect a basic level of ability or achievement on entry to the school, and also to gain entry to the Sixth Form.

The School keeps class sizes as small as is possible. In comparison with many schools, class sizes are relatively small at this school and teacher/pupil ratios also low. The classroom culture matches the general culture of the school, which is supportive, encouraging and provides opportunity for natural curiosity to thrive. The academic support given to the pupils within the formal timetabled lessons, and outside them, is extensive.

The School considers carefully the varying needs of pupils. Some pupils who need extra support may receive additional help from their teachers, tutors or housemasters/mistresses. We value the importance of the whole team around a pupil to ensure that the best support can be provided from a variety of angles, as required. Pupils also have access to a comprehensive enrichment programme offered by the School, which includes academic societies. The aim is that all pupils are able to optimise their performance at all levels, not least in the academic sphere.

The Balance of the Academic Curriculum

Most of Uppingham's pupils enter the school at the age of 13 into Year 9, which is known as the Fourth Form. There is a small intake to Year 10 (the Lower Fifth) and a significant intake into the Sixth Form in Year 12 (Lower Sixth). The general balance of the curriculum reflects this intake pattern.

The first year (Fourth Form) is designed as a foundation year in which the pupils study a very broad range of subjects of many different disciplines. This aims to provide opportunities to study subjects which they may never have encountered before, whilst continuing to develop their existing knowledge and skills. This also gives pupils the opportunity to have sampled almost all subjects from which they will choose their (I)GCSE options at the end of the first year.

In the middle two years, Lower Fifth and Upper Fifth, pupils select subjects and study the GCSE, or, in some cases, IGCSE curriculum. At this level, all pupils are required to study English, Mathematics, Science (a variety of routes to study Science are available) and select from 16 optional subjects. Whilst we would strongly advise that at least one GCSE studied is a modern foreign or classical language, we acknowledge that this may not be appropriate for all pupils, and so we consider pupils' individual situations closely to best support them in making appropriate GCSE choices. One of the options is to study two GCSEs in tandem, Greek and Latin, known as "Gratin". Pupils may be entered for examinations in other subjects.

In the Sixth Form, pupils are given an almost free choice of 29 subjects. BTEC Sport is offered instead of A level PE, and the double BTEC (National Diploma in Sport) is available for those specialist pupils who wish to complete the equivalent of two A levels in the subject.

At whichever level pupils make subject choices, considerable advice is available to them. At (I)GCSE and A-Level full curriculum prospectuses are available to the pupils. They also receive advice from subject teachers, heads of departments, tutors, housemasters or housemistresses. In addition, their parents are included centrally in the process of making choices. The Assistant Head: Sixth Form reviews all pupils' Sixth Form options with heads of academic departments.

Specified Areas of the Curriculum

Linguistic

The curriculum focuses upon developing pupils' communication skills and increasing their command of language through listening and speaking, reading and writing. These skills are most overtly brought into focus in lessons in English, and also in modern and classical languages. In the Lower School years curriculum time allocated to English is generous. The teaching of literacy and literary skills is not, however, confined to these subjects, and the policy of the School is that all teachers teaching all subjects will participate in the objective of encouraging good linguistic and literary standards in all work. Communication skills are enhanced by the strong culture of debating which exists within the school, including, for instance, annual debating competitions between houses in both the Lower School and in the Sixth Form.

Mathematical

The Mathematics curriculum, as well as the curricula for Science, Design Technology, Economics, Geography, to name a few, include a focus upon encouraging pupils to calculate fluently, to understand and appreciate relationships and pattern in number and space and to develop the capacity to think logically and to express themselves clearly.

Scientific

Almost all pupils are currently expected to study at least two science subjects until GCSE, and the weakest pupils study all three in more limited detail through the Combined Science IGCSE. The work which pupils do for these subjects focuses upon an understanding of nature, materials and forces, and also upon developing the skills associated with science as a process of enquiry. Pupils also develop their practical skills through conducting experiments.

Technological

Design Technology, Textiles and Art are offered, and all of these subjects are popular elective subjects at GCSE. In addition to this, the School promotes a strong culture of developing digital literacy.

Coding is offered as an option in the Fourth Form and is subsequently Computer Science is available as a GCSE.

The School operates a "Bring Your Own Device" approach, and pupils in all years bring their own laptops/tablets to school. The School is advanced in its culture of communication through its own network, where teachers and pupils communicate work with each other, are linked with the internet and school intranet and learning management system, Uppnet.

Prep work is set via Uppnet Tasks and pupils are encouraged to develop their ICT skills at a number of levels. Many departments have developed areas of Uppnet, which includes suggested resources to help the pupils work in these areas. OneNote is widely used by teachers to arrange teaching resources, foster collaboration and monitor pupils' work. All teaching staff are provided with a Microsoft Surface device, and trained to use it through induction sessions with the IT department to support teaching. The provision of online teaching using Zoom during the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 significantly increased the use of educational technologies to support teaching. Many departments continue to use subject specific online learning platforms.

Human and Social

Humanities and Social Sciences attract strong support at Uppingham. In recent years History, Religious Studies and Geography have been among the more popular choice subjects at all levels. In addition, History of Art, Politics, Economics and Business are popular Sixth Form subjects.

Physical

In addition to the traditionally strong extra-curricular sporting culture at Uppingham School, pupils study Physical Education in their first year at the School, developing the skills that enable them to access the wide-ranging sports programme. Physical Education GCSE is a popular option, and in the Sixth Form BTEC: Extended Certificate in Sport is available, with the possible extension to The National Diploma in Sport (equivalent to two A levels). This syllabus focuses on the pupils' own physical skills as well as upon their academic qualities.

Aesthetic and Creative

The aesthetic and creative areas of the curriculum are strong at Uppingham. The school has a reputation as a particularly strong non-specialist musical school, where a majority of pupils study musical instruments (many of them study as many as three or four instruments) and where Music as a GCSE or A-Level option is also popular, with Music Technology also offered in the Sixth Form. The Leonardo Centre is the home for Art, Design Technology, Textiles courses. History of Art is housed with English, to foster exciting cross-curricular discussion opportunities. Drama & Theatre Studies is available as a GCSE and A-Level option. There is also a strong tradition of performing drama at Uppingham at all levels. All Fourth Form have access to creative subjects through a carousel curriculum, meaning that they are able to experience a wide range of Drama, Music and Leonardo subjects before selecting GCSE choices.

Spiritual

All pupils study Religious Studies in their first year in the school, and the subject attracts strong numbers at GCSE and A-Level. The whole school meets in the Chapel five times every week; four times in an act of corporate worship, and on Fridays for congregational singing practice. A considerable number of pupils elect each year to be confirmed, and attend a series of classes before the confirmation service.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic

The School's own Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education curriculum is taught by a team of specialist teachers under the direction of the Director of Wellbeing. The programme encourages respect for all members of society. Pupils in all years follow a 'Wellbeing' curriculum. Although Economics is a Sixth Form subject, the Stock Trading Day in U5th is a popular event and the dedicated Futures and Careers team deliver age appropriate sessions to pupils throughout the School.

The Fourth Form Curriculum

The Fourth Form is the foundation year at Uppingham. The School's curriculum philosophy is to encourage the pupils in this foundation year – before the onset of (I)GCSE and subsequent examination courses – to sample as broad a range of subjects and disciplines as is realistically possible. This includes all specified areas of the curriculum, meaning that pupils study all subjects from which they make their (I)GCSE subject choices alongside their compulsory curriculum.

Pupils study English, Mathematics and the three science subjects. The pupils choose at least one language: French, Spanish and Mandarin. "Ab Initio" learners are supported in Mandarin and Spanish, whereas French classes are offered for those with a prior knowledge of the subject. Latin and Latin with Greek, known as "Gratin", are available for those with prior study. Computer Science and Classical Civilisation are further optional subjects. All pupils study History, Geography and Religious Studies and

have a weekly lesson of PE in addition to their cocurricular sports sessions. Pupils opt to study three of the five creative subjects: Art, Music, Drama, Textiles and Design Technology.

The classroom curriculum in the Fourth Form necessarily is slightly larger than for other year groups although in recognition of this pupils in the first year in the school do not participate in the Combined Cadet Force or the Friday afternoon cocurricular programmes.

The (I)GCSE Curriculum

During their first year in the school, the pupils will select four from twelve options to study at (I)GCSE. These options are currently Art, Ancient History, Computer Science, Design Technology, Drama, French, Geography, History, Latin, Latin and Greek, Mandarin, Music, Physical Education, Religious Studies, Spanish and Textiles. The advice which is given to pupils in making choices and descriptions of the specifications studied is contained within the GCSE Prospectus. This document is produced each year and reflects changes to option combinations and subject content which take place from year to year. The compulsory (I)GCSE subjects currently are: English, English Literature, Mathematics and Science. At least one modern foreign or classical language must be among the optional subjects selected for most pupils.

The Sixth Form Curriculum

In the Sixth Form the conventional pattern for Uppingham pupils is to study three subjects in both the Lower and Upper Sixth. Some pupils may study four, notably those taking Further Maths.

Pupils also follow a parallel curriculum. The parallel curriculum is an opportunity to develop additional skills, which for many will include the EPQ, but might instead focus on language learning, public speaking, sports leadership, an internal course studying psychology or additional AS subjects, based on pupil interest and demand.

The tariff required for entry into the Sixth Form is three (I)GCSEs at Grade 6 and three at Grade 7, or better. This tariff is applied in the interests of the pupils because the experience of the school demonstrates that pupils who achieve less than this tariff will be unlikely to achieve reasonable results at A level. Subject specific tariffs apply in some subjects. Details of the courses and advice given to pupils in making choices is contained within the Lower Sixth options brochure, which is reviewed each year.

Lesson span

All lessons are 55 minutes long, with a 5 minute changeover time. The School changed from 35 minute lessons in 1998, a decision which reflected the spread-out nature of the School (with relatively long transit times required between lessons) and also a desire to make all lessons more varied in content. There are not usually any double periods except that in the Sixth Form two contiguous lessons, between break and lunch, are timetabled for each subject on one day in the week. This two-hour span provides an opportunity for more developed practical work, mock exams and so on. Usually, the span includes two separate lessons (with different teachers) in the same subject. In the Fourth Form science is taught in a carousel arrangement and pupils have some double lessons to enable good quality practical work.

Class Size Policy

The School aims to maintain suitably sized classes wherever possible, in the interests of sustaining good pupil/teacher ratios and allowing the pupils to receive the maximum help possible. In the Sixth Form set sizes might be, typically, between 9 and 14, and in the Lower School between 14 and 24.

Set sizes must be determined in the final analysis by the number of pupils who choose the subject and the number of teachers who are available. The Assistant Head: Curriculum and Data makes the adjustments each year based upon initial subject choices from pupils made in January.

Notable work

The 4/5-weekly Review system allows teachers, through the awarding of commendation grades, to highlight excellent effort. Pupils from each year group are congratulated for their approach to learning at the Headmaster's Assemblies. Teachers can also use the School network to award 'Commendations' to pupils for particularly good work or effort. Shields are awarded at Commendation Assembly at the end of each term to the boys' and girls' houses with the best records. Gold Pens are also awarded for singular pieces of outstanding work, as nominated by departments.

Policy on Enrichment

The School has enormously increased and extended its academic enrichment provision in recent years.

Curriculum enrichment is provided in academic departments through a wide range of seminars, day and residential trips, visiting speakers, pupil-led events, discussion forums with other schools, extension classes and exams (for example Olympiads and Challenges, each run to cater for a variety of ages. Where possible, pupils are invited and encouraged to submit extended essays to competitions. The academic Societies, run by departments, encourage wider interdisciplinary thinking and vary in nature, depending on the subject. For example, the Maths department offer extension sessions for pupils hoping to enter for the MAT, STEP or TMUA exams, as well as a "Riteangle" puzzle club in the lower school. Politics enrichment sessions are run through a combination of school-based lectures and a strong visit Guest Speaker programme. The "Flecker Society" in English encourages pupils to challenge both themselves and others to analyse and discuss literature, and each department has a variety of equivalent modes for extension. Other academic enrichment activities also available within the school include debating, public speaking etc.

Pupils who are awarded academic scholarships are invited to attend their Scholarship pathway sessions which take place on Friday afternoon for additional academic challenge. These sessions are coordinated and planned by the Academic Scholarships Coordinator.

During the calendar year spanning the two Sixth Form years an "Oxbridge" group appears; its membership identified by heads of departments and housemasters/mistresses. The Oxbridge co-ordinator takes overall responsibility for the activities of this group, although all academic departments are encouraged to support with subject-specific Oxbridge preparation.

In a school with a strong house culture (which might otherwise tend more than in many schools to separate the able pupils from each other) the enrichment provision ensures an opportunity for pupils to collaborate in a process of stretch, challenge and broader stimulation in the academic context.

Meeting the needs of all individual pupils

Whilst enrichment opportunities serve to offer additional academic challenge, the School offers support through department “drop in” times which each teacher is expected to offer for the pupils that they teach. Pupils are expected to prepare for these “drop in” times, for example, by bringing specific questions to follow up, to ensure that they make the most out of the time with their teachers. Pupil progress is closely monitored at all times informally through conversations between Heads of Departments, teachers, tutors and HsMs alongside formal tracking through a regular schedule of reviews and the use of our Pupil Information Management System (PIMS) to share updates.

At each review round housemasters/mistresses and tutors have access to a range of reports which allow them to track pupil performance relative to other pupils in the year and to baseline ability tests. In the IGCSE and Sixth Form years, pupils are set target grades against which their performance is measured and reviewed. This ensures that progress is monitored in a manner which considers relative performance rather than absolute performance for each individual pupil.

Supporting pupils with barriers to learning and SEND needs

Although the School is not a specialist school for helping pupils with specific learning difficulties, the Learning Support department supports a number of pupils who need academic mentorship and additional out-of-class support due to barriers to learning, including any pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Specific provision varies according to individual level of needs and a graduated response is used so that whenever possible pupils are supported through mainstream class teaching. Teachers understand that high quality adaptive practice is required in order to meet all pupils’ needs. Curricula are structured to ensure that suitable subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those with barriers to learning, is delivered. For pupils with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or EHCP, specific strategies to best support their learning will be considered in classrooms. If individual academic mentoring is provided for out-of-class support, extra lessons are arranged outside lesson times or during pupils’ study periods.

All pupils throughout the School are monitored via the Review System. When pupils join the School with previous diagnoses, information about their learning barriers or SEND need is shared with teachers directly through our Learning Support Sharepoint area, and a summary of information is also available on their class lists and attendance registers. When behaviours indicative of a barrier to learning are observed, the Learning Support department work with teachers to understand the nature of their difficulties, consider whether assessment pathways are required and share, where necessary, suggested learning strategies to help the pupils.

Close liaison between the Learning Support department and the Exams Officer ensures that pupils who require access arrangements for internal and public examinations are supported and accommodated. Teachers will be aware of any access arrangements recommended for their pupils, and wherever possible in a classroom environment, will seek to accommodate these for any in-class tests.

The Learning Support Policy includes more details of the School’s provision.

English as an additional language

English is the first language for around 90% of pupils at Uppingham. For the small proportion for whom English is an additional language, support is provided where necessary to ensure that those pupils are able to achieve their academic potential. Teachers use adaptive teaching techniques to support EAL pupils in their classes.

Pupils are only admitted to the School after testing in English, and candidates must demonstrate sufficient aptitude to enable them to access the academic curriculum and take part in the wider life of the School community.

In the Fourth Form provision is available (termed “English Plus”), which is an alternative to a second modern language. Normally this course is provided for EAL pupils whose English needs significant development before the pupils are ready to access the GCSE curriculum.

Provision can be made for Sixth Form pupils for whom English is a foreign language to have individual extra English language tuition.

Some pupils benefit from further tuition and assistance with particular tasks, for example coursework and university applications. Private tuition is usually available in these circumstances, and about a dozen pupils each year are supported in this way.

The EAL policy includes more details of the School’s approach and provision.

Policy on Reports and References

Each pupil is formally reported upon to parents six or seven times per year; usually every 4-5 weeks. These reports, called reviews, are written by academic subject teachers. Pupils also receive a pastoral report each term with comments from housemasters/housemistresses, learning support, instrumental music, EAL teachers etc.

The Assistant Head: Curriculum and Data, alongside the Assistant Head: Sixth Form analyse pupil performance in their Reviews and publish performance data to Housemasters/mistresses. This data includes comparison with the baseline ability of pupils measured by MidYis tests at the beginning of the Fourth Form. In any cases of concern, conversations between the Deputy Head Academic, teachers, Heads of Departments, Housemasters, Housemistresses and Tutors will determine strategies to be followed to help the pupil to overcome the difficulties.

In the (I)GCSE years and Sixth Form years, pupils receive target grades for each subject based on MidYis / Alis data and teachers’ professional judgement, and reviews are written with reference to these target grades.

Policy on marking, feedback and assessment

Each department devises its own policies on marking, assessment, internal examinations and the use of data, in accordance with the following principles:

Teachers should:

- Be able to judge how well a pupil is performing against the standard expected of others in the same set and in different sets;
- Ensure that tasks are appropriately set, clearly marked, and returned ideally at the next lesson, and certainly within a week;
- Ensure feedback to pupils, both written and verbal, is given regularly and in ways which encourage and focus attention on possibilities for improvement;
- Ensure pupils understand what they are doing well and where and how they need to improve
- Keep clear and accessible records;
- Use available data (such as internal and external exam results and value-added data) to inform planning where appropriate;
- Write Reviews punctually, identifying clear next steps for improvement.

Examinations

Pupils do not sit formal examinations in the Fourth Form. Pupils are examined twice a year Lower Fifth years. These examinations are in December and in May/June. The normal pattern is for exams to take place in most classroom subjects and the results are reported to all teachers. The policy of the School is that pupils' own results should not be published to other pupils.

The School's policy is to allow pupils to be entered for any (I)GCSE or A-Level examination for which they wish to be entered. (I)GCSE exams are generally taken only at the end of the Upper Fifth year, though some native Language speakers take their GCSE in the Lower Fifth year (as laid out in the Native speaker / bilingual off timetable languages policy). In Latin some pupils are entered for GCSE at the end of the Lower Fifth year, continuing with Greek GCSE during the Upper Fifth. There is a formal mock examination process for the (I)GCSE pupils in January of the (I)GCSE year.

In the Sixth Form, Lower Sixth examinations are held in May and provide the basis for UCAS University Access Grades . Formal mock examinations are held in February of the Upper Sixth.

Advice to Sixth Form pupils and parents on examinations, remarks, re-entries, appeals and so on is issued each year by the Examinations Officer.

Framework for assessment and evaluation of pupils' academic performance

The framework therefore includes:

- the pattern of reviews (see above).
- examinations (see above)
- the tutorial system (see above)
- commendation (see above)
- Inadequate work is handled through a restorative approach. Teachers are expected to speak with pupils to support them in repeating unsatisfactory work. PIMS notes can be added to document these conversations, and liaison with the Heads of Departments, tutors and HsMs supports this.
- Pupils may be put into detention if repeated restorative conversations have not led to changes in behaviour.

Careers and Higher Education

The School's policy and philosophy for Careers and Higher Education guidance is published in a separate document. The School's ethos is to encourage all pupils to fulfil their potential, and a professional careers adviser provides impartial guidance, enabling pupils to make informed choices about a broad range of career options.

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