

# GOSFORTH ACADEMY CURRICULUM POLICY

## The aims of our curriculum

1. Provide students with an introduction to the essential knowledge they need, empowering them to be educated and responsible citizens.
2. Enable students to retain and apply this essential knowledge to develop their subject-specific and transferable skills.
3. Build upon prior knowledge to maximise the progress made by all students.
4. Inspire students to become life-long learners.
5. Create a culture of high aspiration through challenging content and therefore pride in achievement.
6. Promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, including fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.
7. Build students' character through the promotion of the six virtues we have chosen: courage, integrity, persistence, service, teamwork and empathy, and creativity and pride in your work.
8. Promote knowledge and understanding of how students can keep themselves safe and healthy.
9. Develop students' numeracy, literacy and oracy, including the sustained expansion of their vocabulary.
10. Prepare students effectively for the next stage in their education or career.

## Legislation and guidance

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 the school has 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](#).

## Roles and responsibilities

### Trustees and Local Advisory Group

They will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and hold senior leaders to account for its implementation. The governing body will also ensure that:

- A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets.
- The school is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, Maths, and Science, and enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the requirements of the funding agreement.
- Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- All courses provided for pupils below the age of 19 that lead to qualifications, such as GCSEs and A Levels, are approved by the secretary of state.
- The school implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements.
- It participates actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- Pupils from Year 9 onwards are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced.

### Senior leaders

Senior leaders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to, and that:

- All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the school chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the school.
- The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the governing body.
- They manage requests to withdraw children from curriculum subjects, where appropriate.
- The school's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements.
- The governing body is fully involved in strategic decision-making processes that relate to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
- The governing body is advised on whole-school targets in order to make informed decisions.
- Proper provision is in place for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with SEND.

## **Middle leaders**

Leaders of Teaching and Learning are responsible for the implementation of this policy in their departments and ensuring that:

- Effective long-term planning is undertaken and the curriculum information on the website is up to date.
- Effective medium term planning is undertaken in the form of schemes of work which support the aims of our curriculum and are in line with whole-school expectations.
- Staff in their departments are aware of and follow those schemes of work.

## **Curriculum organisation**

The curriculum is taught through discrete subjects, which means that students are taught in almost all cases by teachers who are specialists in those areas. We believe that this enables us to meet our curriculum aims most effectively. Our intake is very diverse in terms of social, cultural and ethnic background, and ability range. To meet the very differing needs and ambitions of our students we offer a very wide range of academic options at GCSE (especially in modern languages) and also a wide range of options of a more vocational nature. This very varied offer continues into our Sixth Form. By doing this, we are confident that all students can access the curriculum they need.

## **Timetabling**

In Gosforth Academy there are 68 periods over a two-week timetable cycle, with 7 periods per day from Monday to Thursday, and 6 on Friday. These are usually 50 minute periods, though periods 2 and 4 each day last 45 minutes. Students in Years 9-11 are timetabled for 64 periods. They have the option of participating in the programme of extra-curricular activities in period 7 on Tuesday and Wednesday (known as “7 Up”), as well as at other times in the week and in our Yellow Week at the end of the Summer term (where students opt for a week-long enrichment activity). The number of lessons for which students in Years 12 and 13 are timetabled depends on their study programme (the number and type of courses they take); all have some periods of free time for private study during the school day, some of which may be designated as study periods to be spent in the Library or other learning facility. All students attend a 10 minute registration period at the start of the day, though Post-16 students who have achieved the Independent Learner Award are not required to attend all of these. There is also an extra-curricular programme available to Post-16 students.

## **Key Stage 3**

In Year 9 at Gosforth Academy, students follow a broad and balanced curriculum, with continuity from Years 7 and 8 in our three feeder schools ensured through termly Key Stage 3 liaison meetings across the pyramid. National Curriculum programmes of study are followed, with an increasing focus as the year progresses on laying the foundations for GCSE study.

The subjects studied are English, Mathematics, Science, PHSCE, History, Geography, Music, Art, Drama, French, Design and Technology, Food and Nutrition, PE, Computing, and RE. Students also choose a second modern language from German, Spanish, Italian or Mandarin. In the vast majority of cases, students will be allocated their first choice, although we ask for a reserve choice, in case of

capacity issues. All allocations of this nature are made in a fair and equitable manner. Students are taught in their mixed-ability form groups in almost all subjects; we wish to wait until we have substantial first-hand experience of their ability and aptitudes in Year 9 before implementing setting arrangements for Key Stage 4 where appropriate, and it allows students the chance to experience various levels of challenge presented by texts and tasks of varying complexity and difficulty. The two exceptions are Mathematics and French/Spanish, where setting takes place based on assessment data obtained in advance from our feeder schools; we see these as subjects where setting allows a more effective delivery of content.

A small number of SEND students have additional literacy and numeracy support instead of studying French when we are sure that this will not be a viable Key Stage 4 option for them; in addition, a smaller number from this group are also withdrawn from humanities subjects to follow an ASDAN Bronze Certificate Personal Development Programme (which covers some humanities content). Decisions of this nature are always taken in conjunction with parents, feeder school SENCOs and in line with students' needs.

In English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and French, students begin work on topics which are further developed in Key Stage 4.

Students follow our Character Education Programme throughout the year, in which progress is monitored by the tutor team. This focuses on the virtues of courage, creativity, teamwork and empathy, persistence, service, and integrity.

#### **Key Stage 4**

Students make their option choices for Key Stage 4 in February of Year 9, following a programme of information, advice and guidance. The new academic year then starts in June with a new timetable, when Year 9 become Year 10. This allows students to make a start on their Key Stage 4 courses relatively soon after they have actually chosen them.

All students then follow a core of compulsory subjects: English, Mathematics, Science (either trilogy or triple), PE, and PHSCE.

The options available to students depend on their individual curriculum pathway. To identify the most appropriate one for each student we use qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources in order to gain the fullest picture possible of each individual's strengths, weaknesses and needs. Each student is then made a curriculum offer of one of the four different pathways. The aim of this personalised offer is to enable each student to access an appropriate curriculum which will give them the best chance of success in terms of qualifications gained and therefore progression opportunities at the age of 16. Students and parents who would like to discuss their curriculum offer further, are guaranteed an interview with the Senior Lead for Curriculum or the Principal to discuss and find a solution which is acceptable to all - there is considerable flexibility in the curriculum structure and between the pathways to allow this to happen. Although rare, levels of demand for courses and limited capacity may result in operational decisions being made to amend our offer. These decisions will be discussed at a senior level and communicated to all students and parents involved, as a matter of urgency.

In Year 11 the GCSE options offered are French, German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Drama, Dance, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Computer Science, Design Technology, History, Geography, Art, 3D Design, Textiles, Music, PE, Religious Studies, Media Studies and Business Studies. Vocational courses offered are the BTEC First Awards in Art and Design, and Travel and Tourism; the BTEC Tech Award in Health and Social Care; OCR Cambridge Nationals in Enterprise and Marketing, and Creative iMedia; the CACHE Level 2 Award in Child Development and Care; the Eduqas Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering.

In Year 10, the GCSE options are French, German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Drama, Dance, Food Preparation and Nutrition, Computer Science, Design Technology, History, Geography, Art, 3D Design, Textiles, Music, PE, Religious Studies, Media Studies and Business Studies. Vocational courses offered are the BTEC First Awards in Art and Design, and Travel and Tourism; the BTEC Tech Award in Health and Social Care; OCR Cambridge Nationals in Enterprise and Marketing, Information Technologies and Creative iMedia; the CACHE Level 2 Award in Child Development and Care; the Eduqas Vocational Award in Hospitality and Catering.

Citizenship and RE are delivered through the PSHCE programme, but also across the curriculum, through special focus days and the Assembly Programme. The Character Education Programme continues throughout Key Stage 4. In Year 10 the focus is on the importance of making moral choices, and in Year 11 the focus is on personal responsibility, organisation and well being.

Some students, depending on their needs, take in one option block the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness plus additional support with literacy and numeracy.

We encourage students to gain an extra GCSE qualification (if they wish and if available) in their first language, for example Arabic or Turkish.

Setting continues to take place in Maths and where possible in Modern Languages. An additional reason to maintain this approach is the existence of two tiers of entry for GCSE in these subjects, and the divergence in the content that students of different abilities need to learn. This is also the reason why we introduce setting in Science in Key Stage 4. English is the only other subject where setting is used; although there are no tiers of entry, setting allows teachers to make a tailored selection of literature pathway, governed by the challenge presented within text selection. Although PSHCE groups are the same as in English, there is no setting in other subjects due to timetabling issues and also not preferred in the curriculum structure.

## **Key Stage 5**

We aim to provide a pathway into the Sixth Form for all our students, including those who have not achieved four 9-4 grades at GCSE, the minimum threshold to be considered for a Level 3 Programme of study. Our approach regarding entry is for us to be an inclusive Sixth Form, and aim to allow all students who have the potential to pass a course the opportunity to take it; the entry requirements for individual courses reflect this, and exist to ensure the choices made by the students will enable them to progress with as many options as possible. These are reviewed annually.

We aim to provide a wide range of A Level and vocational Level 3 options (Applied General qualifications) in a framework which allows Post-16 students a high degree of personalisation in their curriculum. Four option columns allow students flexibility in their choices. Most students choose three subjects, which they are expected to complete over two years. Although rare, levels of demand for courses and limited capacity may result in operational decisions being made to amend our offer. These decisions will be discussed at a senior level and communicated to all students and parents involved, as a matter of urgency.

There are 13 periods per fortnight in each subject. Any student who has not achieved a grade 4 or higher in GCSE English and/or Mathematics follows a re-sit course. In addition to a structured Tutorial Programme, all students take a non-examined Gosforth Academy-designed course in Citizenship in Year 12 to ensure breadth in their curriculum and help them to be well informed and engaged citizens.

For students not yet ready for a full Level 3 Programme we offer our Access for A Level Programme based on the BTEC Level 3 Certificate in Business, with one day of work experience per week undertaken. Students on these courses also take re-sit courses in GCSE English and Mathematics as appropriate. We aim to give them successful access to a full Level 3 Programme the following year through enhanced Level 2 qualifications and study skills, or alternatively successful progression to apprenticeships or further education.

There is no setting in any Post-16 subjects.

### **Cross-curricular provision**

Relationships and Sex Education is delivered in Key Stage 4 through the PSHCE Programme and in Key Stage 5 through the Tutorial Programme; it follows the 2020 statutory guidance.

We see three other areas as a priority in the curriculum followed by our students. These are: their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the development of their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, and mutual respect and tolerance; and careers education, advice and guidance. These are addressed where opportunities present themselves in the teaching of all subjects across the curriculum. However, differing option choices in Key Stages 4 and 5 mean that the curricula they follow diverge increasingly, and we believe that these important dimensions of their education should not be provided for through subject teaching alone. What ensures their effective provision are: PSHCE lessons in Key Stage 4; Citizenship lessons and the Tutorial Programme in Key Stage 5; our Careers Programme focused on the attainment of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks; structured Assembly Programmes; and our Character Education Programme in Years 9-11.

### **Extra-curricular provision**

A structured, co-ordinated and varied programme of extra-curricular provision is offered to students in all year groups.

For students in Years 9-11, period 7 on Tuesday and Wednesday is when many of the activities are on offer. No formal lessons are timetabled for years 9-10 in these periods in order to encourage

greater uptake, whilst Year 11 students also have access to enrichment activities when their school day finishes. Additional activities are also offered after school on the other three days. The programme aims to cater for as many interests as possible. In “Yellow Week” at the end of the summer term, the new Year 10 and 11 students choose a single activity for the week; a wide selection of trips (both day trips and residentials) and in-school activities are available, including the option of work experience for the new Year 11 students.

For students in Years 12 and 13, many extra-curricular opportunities align with the Tutorial Programme and careers education, but in addition to this numerous activities and clubs are offered to enrich their educational experience. Students are also strongly encouraged to gain the Gosforth Academy Community Award, based on volunteering and participation in the wider life of the school, as part of their Sixth Form experience.

## Curriculum planning

The curriculum offer and structure is reviewed annually in the Autumn term by the senior team of the Academy.

**Long-term curriculum plans** are in place for every subject and course in the form of curriculum outlines. These show the expected programme of study without significant disruption as has been seen recently. Adjusted curriculum outlines, where applicable, are held by Leaders of Teaching and Learning. Curriculum outlines are published on the Academy’s website and show:

- The curriculum content in each half term across each year of study
- The skills that are developed through the study of the subject
- Details of each qualification’s examination and assessment arrangements

**Medium-term curriculum plans** are in the form of schemes of work for each subject or course. There is an agreed approach across all departments which follows this guidance:

- A key test as to whether a scheme of work is fit for purpose is: would it clearly show a new/ inexperienced/ non-specialist member of staff how to teach the course effectively?
- Schemes of work should be living documents, subject to regular discussion and review, which promote consistency and creativity in the teaching within a department.
- Departments’ units of work do not need to adopt a specific design or use any particular template; instead, departments are free to set out their plans in the way they feel most appropriate.
- To ensure that curriculum planning is consistently effective across the school, there are key features that must be found in unit plans.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Content	Set out details of what is to be taught. In most cases this will be based on content already set out in an exam board specification or National Curriculum programme of study. List, for example, sub-topics, themes or key concepts. Differentiated content may be required for those subjects which still have tiers of entry at GCSE or use setting, otherwise differentiation will be built in at the level of lesson planning.
Duration/timings	Give guidance on the number of lessons/weeks that need to be spent teaching the different elements of the unit of work.
Assessment	Ensure this is in line with department assessment policy, and detail which tasks must be done as common assessments (e.g. end of unit tests, past paper questions), or list those which can be done as optional tasks either in class or as homework.
Suggested teaching approaches	Enable and encourage the sharing of good practice by listing possible learning activities to be used for the delivery of the unit that have been proven to be successful, effective or motivating.
Key vocabulary	In the teaching of each unit of work, students' vocabulary should be extended, both in understanding and active use - detail the key vocabulary to be taught to and used by students.
Why this, why now?	Identify links to prior knowledge including any key concepts, knowledge and skills previously taught that are necessary for successful learning in the unit, as well as opportunities for review. Identify links to curriculum sequencing. Why this unit or topic is included at this point and how it supports what comes next/reaching the end points. This should be at an appropriate level and need not explain why each individual lesson (or series of lessons) follows the last.
Resources	Provide a list of resources recommended for the teaching of the unit, and any others that may be useful or available for teachers to use.
Skills development	Detail any cross-curricular skills that should be developed in the teaching of the unit. These could be core skills such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, or others like problem-solving and team-working.
Cross-curricular links	Detail, as appropriate, how SMSC, British values and careers education are being included in the delivery of the unit of work. In some subjects, reference to RSE or topical topics such as climate change may be appropriate.

**Short-term planning** is undertaken by classroom teachers implementing the schemes of work, and is in line with the “must haves” that have been identified as necessary features of effective lessons at Gosforth Academy.

All lessons must have:

- Seating for learning
- Bell work/starter (unless there is a very good reason)
- Challenge
- Focussed and varied questioning
- Objectives shared and reviewed during the lesson
- Assessment opportunities

All lessons must demonstrate:

- Evidence of student learning and progress
- Differentiation
- High expectations and appropriate pace

## **Inclusion**

Teachers set high expectations for all pupils. They use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils
- Pupils with low prior attainment
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

Teachers plan lessons so that pupils with SEND and/or disabilities can study every National Curriculum subject, wherever possible, and ensure that there are no barriers to every pupil achieving. The SENCO and the team in the Student Support Base co-ordinate support for these students, both in lessons and in other provision in the Student Support Base itself.

The most academically able students are supported by a structured programme in tutorial periods in Years 9-11 with an emphasis on developing critical thinking skills, and through personalised and targeted provision in Years 12-13 which is focused on progression.

Teachers will also take account of the needs of pupils whose first language is not English. Lessons will be planned so that teaching opportunities help pupils to develop their English, and to support pupils to take part in all subjects.

**Date approved:** September 2021  
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**Signed:** .....

**Date to be reviewed:** September 2022  
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