



Working together to promote & celebrate achievement

# **Curriculum Policy**

## **Applicable from 27th January 2022**

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Irene Papadopolou". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Chair of Governors**

## Introduction

**Ofsted's** current working definition for curriculum is:

*'a framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage (**intent**); for translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within institutional context (**implementation**) and for evaluating what knowledge and skills pupils have gained against expectations (**impact/achievement**).'*

The current **National Curriculum** states within our curriculum we should:

*'Introduce pupils to the best that has been thought and said, through a study of the essential knowledge they need to be educated citizens.'*

## Intent

At Plashet School we are committed to providing a high quality academic experience for all our students by teaching them core academic subjects. Our Curriculum is designed to be 'broad, balanced and rich' with particular emphasis on Maths, English, Science, Languages and Humanities. We also ensure our students all receive excellent teaching in sport and the arts. Our curriculum is extended to include study of art and design, drama, music, design technology, sports science, business studies, computing science and ICT. This academic curriculum is complemented by our 'Learning for Life' and Physical Education Curriculums.

Our aim is to nurture thoughtful, confident and independent young women. A 'knowledge curriculum' is therefore an entitlement for all our students. To maximise the potential of all students regardless of their ability or social background, our curriculum has a focus on the acquisition of 'powerful knowledge' across a range of academic and creative subjects. Our curriculum is rich in subject knowledge supporting students to build on and extend existing knowledge. This supports the development of disciplinary thinking and furnishes our students with the skill to think critically, develop informed opinions and become active citizens.

In turn these aims and intent drive curriculum design, teaching and learning and assessment. Subject leaders have thought carefully about the body of knowledge our students should hold in each subject. Each subject curriculum is coherent, structured and well-planned offering progression and building on prior learning while offering success in GCSE examinations and a good foundation for study at Key Stage 5. However, we are confident our curriculum also brings with it the level of cultural literacy that allows students to play a fully engaged role in society while equipping them for their future careers.

Learning at Plashet is also designed to encourage a sense of accomplishment. This is achieved through careful sequencing of substantive subject knowledge. Students are supported to extend and build on existing schemas through application and connection of new knowledge. We promote high expectations for all students and believe the opportunity to acquire new knowledge is exciting and highly motivational for our students while the opportunity for achieving mastery builds self-esteem and a love of learning.

Although 'the curriculum' at Plashet School defines what students learn in their lessons this should not be limited to the academic curriculum alone. At Plashet our subject curriculum is underpinned by the core values of democracy, mutual respect, individual liberty and equality for all. All members of our school community feel valued and included, our taught curriculum therefore is inclusive and designed to be accessible by all.

## Principles of Curriculum Design at Plashet School

To ensure we are equipping our students with all the knowledge they need, our subject curriculums are carefully planned taking into account learning at Key Stage 2, the national curriculum and GCSE specifications. To ensure our students have a solid foundation for future study our curriculum also links to the requirements of the Key Stage 5 subject specifications.

Subject specialist teams consider the depth of knowledge required to work towards mastery in each subject. We ask the types of questions that allow us to understand how different subjects work and what each body of knowledge should look like. We also reflect on our context, the knowledge our students already hold and the implications this has on content selection and sequencing. This is because our curriculum is designed to go beyond the requirements of the national curriculum and of GCSE specifications.

Research in cognitive science points us to two useful findings: first that 'higher-order' thinking skills or disciplinary thinking cannot exist without factual knowledge, and second that we learn in the context of what we already know. Therefore, substantive knowledge is taught sequentially building schemas so that students can see how knowledge links together. Skills are recognised as 'disciplinary knowledge', the product of fluency of substantive knowledge within each subject. This distinction is important, we do not only want our students to simply understand a concept and memorise it. We want our students to be able to transfer knowledge between subject disciplines and use their knowledge effectively.

The following principles are considered in the design of Plashet School subject curriculums:

- Knowledge builds in schemas, subject teams are therefore best placed to decide what 'powerful knowledge' students should master and therefore what the body of knowledge looks like in each subject
- Learning is designed in a spiral formation so what is taught in Year 7 deliberately links to more complex ideas later on. Knowledge taught is sequenced carefully to manifest itself in the knowledge of future content and promote progress.
- Knowledge is the enabler of skill. We support the development of disciplinary thinking. Students therefore study the background and context of what they are learning so that they can understand and make connections easily within and beyond the subject discipline.
- What students are taught is always explicitly linked to what they already know.
- To strengthen the development of schemas, misconceptions are always tackled. Learning is designed so that students' progress onto the next concept only when the previous concept has been mastered.
- Lesson design takes into account understanding of cognitive load and working memory. Students are supported to remember what they have learnt. Teachers use the principles behind cognitive science to reinforce learning and increase retention and retrieval of subject knowledge content.
- Students are supported in their exposure to a wide range of vocabulary and a range of fiction and non-fiction academic reading.
- Students should also make links across the curriculum in their learning of mathematics. To support mathematical fluency and confidence in numeracy, teaching of mathematical concepts in any subject discipline should, where appropriate, adhere to the agreed Plashet School Mathematics Methodology Policy.
- Curriculum and assessment are inherently connected. Student assessment is designed to support the assessment of impact, evaluation and refinement of subject curriculums.

## Implementation of the Curriculum

### Key Stage Three

The focus of our curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 is the development of student learning across a broad range of subject knowledge content. The majority of students in Years 7 and 8 will study Maths, English, Science, a Language, Humanities, Philosophy, Religion and Ethics, Art, Drama, Music, Design Technology and Computing. All students will also study 'Learning for Life' and participate in physical education.

Subject	Hours per fortnight	Subject	Hours per fortnight
Maths	6	Music	2
English	6	Art	2
Science	6	Drama	2
Language (or Literacy and numeracy)	5	Design Technology	6
History	3	Computing	2
Geography	3	Physical Education	4
Philosophy, Religion & Ethics	2	Learning for Life	1

In Year 9 students continue to study maths, English, Sciences (combined or separate), a language and Philosophy, Religion and Ethics. All students will also study 'Learning for Life' and participate in physical education.

To allow for a broad and balanced curriculum with additional depth of study, students will study three subjects choosing one from each of the following categories:

Arts Subjects	DT Subjects	Other Subjects
Art Drama Music	Graphics Food technology Fashion and design	Business Studies ICT Physical Education Sociology

Subject	Hours per fortnight	Subject	Hours per fortnight
Maths	8	Arts Subject Choice	4
English	8	DT Subject Choice	4
Science	6	Other Subject Choice	4
Language	5	Physical Education	2
History	3	Learning for Life	1
Geography	3	Philosophy, Religion & Ethics	2

Most students will also specialise in their choice of humanities subject later on during the academic year.

## Key Stage Four

All of our students have the opportunity to study the core academic subjects at GCSE. As students' progress into their GCSE studies during Years 10 and 11, there is a continued emphasis on English, Maths, Science (combined or separate) and in most cases a humanities subject and a language. Most students will also study for one additional GCSE option including a choice from Art, Drama, Music, Graphics, Food & Nutrition, Physical Education, Business Studies, Sociology, Child Development, Computing and ICT. All students also study Religious Studies with most students following the GCSE course. All students will also study 'Learning for Life' and participate in physical education.

Subject	Hours per fortnight	Subject	Hours per fortnight
Maths	8	Subject Choice	6
English	8	Physical Education	2
Science	12	Learning for Life	1
Language	5	Religious Studies	4
History or Geography	5		

## Numeracy, Reading, Writing & Oracy

At Plashet all students are entitled to access a rich, broad and deep curriculum. However, we acknowledge that this entitlement rests on two cores; reading, writing and oracy as well as numeracy. Without them, you cannot learn anything else.

Therefore, we invest in building secure foundations for our students, checking students' prior knowledge before giving them more. Literacy and numeracy are prioritised in both Key Stages and embedded throughout both curriculums. To ensure that all students are equipped with the basic building blocks for learning now and in the years to come a small minority of students will study a personalised curriculum with an additional focus on English and Maths.

On entry to the school, all students are assessed in English and Maths. Those students identified as needing extra help are placed on a personalised curriculum of intensive learning, developing their core skills in maths and English quickly and effectively to match the expected standard for their age. In turn we aim to accelerate their progress and close the attainment gap in maths and English so all students can access the mainstream curriculum. We believe this strategy is the best strategy to support the equity of curriculum offered and the self-esteem and learning confidence of each targeted student.

## Learning for Life

Learning for Life is our collective term for Citizenship, Personal Social Health Education (PSHE), Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), Careers, Individual Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and learning about financial wellbeing and capability. All students participate in learning for life throughout their five years at Plashet School. This is taught in discrete lessons with dedicated curriculum time and a specialised team of teaching staff.

## Special Educational Needs

In line with the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Curriculum at Plashet school is differentiated for SEND students in each subject area. This curriculum is designed with the same principles in mind but with reasonable adjustments to suit the needs of each student. In addition, there is an enriched curriculum for SEND students that includes the AQA Unit Award Scheme in a range of subjects;

English, Maths, Science, Religious Studies and Food Technology. We have also introduced a Cambridge National qualification in Child Development, an ASDAN course in Personal, Social Development and an AQA Unit award in Food Preparation and Nutrition.

## **Enrichment**

Students also take part in a range of additional curriculum enrichment activities both within and outside of the mainstream curriculum. All subject departments offer enrichment activities ranging from sports coaching and competitions to maths challenges, theatre, music, art and design and debating.

Our enrichment curriculum is deliberately designed to strengthen and support student learning be it through the deliberate practice of a sport or musical instrument or the promotion of disciplinary thinking through creative writing and poetry, making in DT, chess club, debating, film club or STEM activities to name but a few.

## **Impact of the Curriculum**

Regular review and assessment is an important part of the curriculum process. We believe the true quality of a curriculum is not measured in schemes of learning but in the knowledge students retain and in the competent demonstration of what they can do with this knowledge.

All students at Plashet participate in formal summative examinations at two points during the academic year. Summative attainment data is analysed against each student's starting point and progress evaluated. Teachers will analyse attainment at exam question level, reviewing scripts and drawing conclusions from this. Where gaps in student knowledge occur or there are misconceptions, teachers in each subject department will work collaboratively to amend schemes of learning and ensure the subject curriculum is improved.

Alongside this during the learning process, teachers will use formative assessment to analyse student learning, progress and attainment. Where they feel additional knowledge is required to fully cement understanding, as subject specialists our teachers can stretch and challenge each student to ensure the background and context of learning is complete. This results in greater understanding and fluency of disciplinary knowledge so students make connections in their learning more easily.

The curriculum is a regular feature of our established self-review framework. A range of staff are involved in school self-review, which takes a themed approach and includes learning walks, student work and book scrutiny and student focus groups.

### **Related Policies:**

Assessment

CEIAG

Home Study

Teaching & Learning

Reading, Writing and Oracy

Relationship and Sex Education

SEND

Supporting Community Resilience

Mathematics Methodology Policy