

Curriculum Policy

September 2023



Introduction

At St Helen's School we provide all our pupils with a curriculum which is broad, balanced, and meaningful to each individual. We are committed to developing in all our students the values, skills and dispositions which will enable them to be 'brave and true', to become lifelong learners, to fulfil their fullest potential in education and adult life, and to make a positive and valuable contribution to the community in which they will live and work.

St Helen's provides opportunities to develop linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, physical and aesthetic and creative skills, knowledge and understanding, appropriate for their ages. At each Phase or Key Stage, it prepares our students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of the next stage of their education and their lives.

We take a holistic approach to the curriculum, identifying at key points the knowledge, skills and aptitudes which we expect students to have attained within each subject or area of learning, and designing the curriculum to be continuous, progressive, sequential and memorable in order to enable pupils to develop these.

Our curriculum provides students with opportunities to celebrate their own distinctive differences, to develop a strong moral compass, to embrace diversity and inclusion, alongside the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those who hold different faiths and beliefs.

I. Aims & Objectives of the Curriculum

The overarching aim of the curriculum at St Helen's is to develop in students the Learner Habits and Character Attributes which we believe are essential to success in education and life:

Learner Habits	Character Attributes
Pursuit of Knowledge	Courage
Problem-Solving	Integrity
Creativity	Resilience
Metacognition	Kindness

By nurturing these key characteristics, the St Helen's curriculum will empower our students to be critical thinkers, to know themselves, to develop a life-long love of learning, and to stand up for what is right.

Our objectives are to provide a curriculum which:

- Challenges individuals academically, allowing them to discover their intellectual strengths, to pursue knowledge as an end in itself, as well as towards specific outcomes
- Gives all students the opportunity to learn and make progress
- Is broad, balanced, memorable and meaningful to each individual
- Supports the development of high standards of oracy, literacy and numeracy across all areas of the curriculum
- Fosters self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for their own learning in pupils
- Promotes intellectual curiosity, independent thinking and the value of collaboration and teamwork
- Enables pupils to explore a wide range of academic, cultural, creative and sporting interests
- Provides a stimulating and challenging learning environment in which pupils are continually required to 'think hard'
- Ensures that assessment and feedback to pupils enhances learning, informs teaching, and promotes excellent progress

- Includes age-appropriate Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education (PSHCE) and Relationships & Sex Education (RSE), enabling pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of the relevant issues and enables them to make the fullest possible contribution to society in their adult lives
- Prepares students for life in an ever-developing world
- Increases awareness among students of their rights and responsibilities as global citizens
- Is underpinned by fundamental British values
- Represents, respects and celebrates the diversity of our students' cultures, faiths and beliefs
- Promotes respect for all people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in Section 4 of the Equality Act (2020):
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

2. Principles which underpin curriculum content

The curriculum is designed to be inclusive, to allow for different learning profiles and prior learning experiences at key entry points, and to ensure that each student is provided with appropriate challenge across all areas of learning.

Curriculum content is designed to be appropriate for the ages, aptitudes and needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and/or an EHC plan.

All students have the opportunity to learn, develop and make progress through equitable access to:

- A broad and balanced curriculum
- An approach to teaching and learning which enables each student to have and fulfil the highest expectations of herself, which encourages independent thinking and learning, and which embodies the principles of 'teaching to the top and scaffolding down'
- Flexibility of teaching to allow for the different learning needs of all pupils
- Support from the Individual Needs Department in order to assess special education needs or individual learning needs and offer any specific support and access arrangements required at any stage of their time at St Helen's
- Regular, constructive feedback which enables pupils to understand the next steps in their learning, and enables pupils and their parents to understand the progress pupils have made along with challenging and attainable targets for improvement (from gradesheets, reports and Parents' Evenings)
- A coherent programme of PSHCE and RSE which reflects the school's aims and ethos and encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act (2010) and any other relevant legislation or statutory guidance
- Wide-ranging opportunities within the curriculum and co-curriculum for students to be involved in sport and the creative and performing arts

- A diverse range of co-curricular opportunities which enrich and extend the taught curriculum, help students to develop wider interests, to develop teamwork and leadership skills, to develop a sense of responsibility to other people and the wider community, and to raise self-esteem
- Accurate, up-to-date and impartial higher education and careers advice, delivered primarily by the Futures Department, which enables students to make informed choices about a broad range of study and career options and supports them in the process of accessing these options
- Opportunities for students to serve their community through charitable fundraising, voluntary work and outreach

The curriculum has been designed to help students to develop:

- the essential Learner Habits and Character Attributes (see Aims and Objectives above)
- lively and enquiring minds
- the ability to synthesise and evaluate information critically
- the ability to retrieve prior knowledge and apply to familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- The ability to question and argue rationally
- The ability to listen and communicate effectively
- The gross and fine motor skills which will enable them to apply themselves successfully to physical tasks

The curriculum enables all students, as appropriate to their age and cognitive development, to develop the digital literacy skills which will prepare them for a world in which technological advances are continuous and exponential. In Years 7-13 all students have their own devices through which they are expected to access much of the curriculum.

In their delivery of the curriculum, staff are expected to promote the school's aims and ethos and the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance. This is achieved through offering a balanced presentation of opposing views when political issues arise, having clear expectations of behaviour, treating students equally and fairly, listening to their opinions and concerns with respect and an open mind, and encouraging them to work collaboratively.

The curriculum is kept under continuous review to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate to the needs and aspirations of students, allows them to reach their full potential, and enables them to acquire knowledge, skills and dispositions which they will require in further education, employment and adult life in the context of a rapidly changing world.

3. Details and implementation of the curriculum

In EYFS and KS1 the curriculum is delivered through a two-week timetable cycle, comprising 50 timetabled 55-minutes lessons per cycle.

In KS2 – 5 (Years 3-13) the curriculum is delivered through a two-week timetable cycle, comprising 56 timetabled 55-minute lessons per cycle.

In most subjects students are taught in mixed ability classes or teaching groups. Students are given additional support or challenge by their teachers as and when required in all subjects. Students are taught in broad ability bands in Mathematics (Years 7 – 11) and are taught in the same bands in Science in Years 10-11. In Mathematics the top and middle bands study material from the Level 2 Certificate in Further Mathematics alongside the GCSE in Years 10 and 11, taking all examinations in the summer term of Year 11. In lower bands, the GCSE curriculum is supplemented as appropriate with topics from the Further Mathematics syllabus.

Key Stage	Curriculum subjects
EYFS	<p>As a basis for planning, Nursery & Reception use the three Prime and four Specific areas of learning and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication & Language ○ Physical Development ○ Personal, Social & Emotional Development • Specific Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Literacy ○ Mathematics ○ Understanding the World ○ Expressive Arts & Design • In addition to these Areas of Learning, the children are taught Phonics, Mathematics, Ballet, Drama, Music, Physical Education (including swimming from Summer Term in Nursery) and Topic on a weekly basis • ICT, Computing and Technology are embedded across the curriculum • Outdoor learning and learning through play takes place on a daily basis, utilising our various outdoor spaces • Trips and Visitors are used to enrich the curriculum on at least a termly basis • Cross-curricular links are made wherever possible • Children are taught by combination of Form Teachers and specialist subject teachers
KS1 & KS2	<p>On a weekly basis, pupils are taught the following curriculum subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics, English (Reading, Writing & SpaG), Read Think Explore, Science, Geography, History, Art & Design, Drama, Music, Computing, French, Design & Technology, Religious Studies, Physical Education (including Swimming in both Key Stages and Ballet in Key Stage 1) and PSHCE • Trips and Visitors are used to enrich the curriculum on at least a termly basis • Cross-curricular links are made wherever possible • Children are taught by combination of Form Teachers and specialist subject teachers
KS3 (Years 7-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics, English, Science, Art, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Drama, Music, Geography, History, Religion Philosophy & Ethics (RPE), Physical Education, PSHCE • Students also select two Modern Foreign Languages from a choice of 4: French, German, Mandarin, Spanish • All pupils additionally study Latin in Years 7-8. In Year 9, they opt to study either Latin, Latin with Greek (Gratin) or Classical Civilisation
KS4 (Years 10-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core curriculum: Mathematics, English (Language and Literature), Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physical Education, PSHCE. • Students study at least one Humanities subject: Classical Civilisation, Geography, History, Religious Studies. • Students study at least one Language: French, German, Latin, Mandarin, Spanish. Classical Greek is offered as a co-curricular 'after hours' subject, and may be offered as a timetabled curriculum subject if there is sufficient demand • Students study two further Option subjects, which may be taken from the Humanities and/or Languages lists or from the following supplementary Options list: Art, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Drama, Music, Physical Education. • Pupils in the top and middle Maths bands are given the opportunity to sit the Level 2 Certificate in Further Maths.

Key Stage	Curriculum subjects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of students each year take GCSE Trilogy (Double Award) Science in place of separate Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
KS5 (Years 12-13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students study three or four A Level subjects from the following list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art, Classical Civilisation, Classical Greek, Computer Science, Design & Technology, Drama, Economics, English Literature, French, Further Mathematics, German, Geography, Government & Politics, History, History of Art, Latin, Mandarin, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physical Education, Physics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Spanish. Students additionally have the option to take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) or choose from a limited range of non-examined Enhancement courses. All students additionally follow a core curriculum of Physical Education, PSHCE, Sixth Form Lecture, Volunteering. In Autumn Term of Year 12 pupils undertake the Personal Impact Programme (PIP), a careers-based program enabling students to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a sense of self and confidence in articulating and showcasing personal skills and qualities develop their ability to market self themselves in professional contexts (CV, interviews, LinkedIn) develop networking skills From Spring Term of Year 12 to Autumn Term Year 13 students attend UniPrep (and UniPrep Plus if they are applying to Oxford or Cambridge Universities, or are applying for higher education courses in Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Medicine). These timetabled sessions are focussed on wider reading and admissions test preparation to enable students to submit strong applications to competitive HE courses.

Disability

The School has an Accessibility Plan and, in line with statutory requirements, aims to make all parts of the School and the curriculum accessible to all pupils, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Individual needs

The School has an Individual Needs Department which oversees the support of pupils with specific learning needs. The needs of these pupils, including those with statements or on an Education Healthcare Plan, are co-ordinated by the Head of Individual Needs who creates an Individual Student Profile for every child on the Individual Needs Policy. Teaching staff are expected to make provision for these pupils in their lesson planning and to address their needs by using appropriate and imaginative resources. The Head of Individual Needs supports colleagues in this. Teaching strategies are selected to help pupils to manage and overcome learning difficulties, and access arrangements for internal tests and public examinations are put in place according to JCQ regulations. Detailed records are kept and made available centrally to all staff across the School. Further details can be found in the School's Policy on Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties.

Able, Gifted and Talented Pupils

Within the Prep School, Class Teachers 'teach to the top' to ensure that all pupils, regardless of their abilities, are exposed to aspirational concepts and teaching methods. The most able pupils are extended in terms of the breadth and depth of curriculum content taught in all subjects. Specialist teachers in Art, Drama, Music and PE teach in the Prep school and are able to nurture those pupils identified as having particular talents in these subjects. Where possible, gifted and talented pupils are invited to take part in events which challenge them and extend their learning. Strong links with the Senior School ensure that opportunities are provided for challenge, in order for pupils to be stretched to reach their potential.

The Head of the HIP Scholars Programme has particular responsibility for identifying students with the highest intellectual potential (the able, gifted and talented) in Senior School. S/he ensures that all teachers are made

aware of pupils in this category and, with the support of the Deputy Head Academic, monitors their progress and evaluates the provision in place for them.

Students who display particular aptitude for performing arts and sports are supported in the development of their talents through the co-curricular programme and are given opportunities to display their talents to a wider audience through concerts, dramatic productions, art exhibitions or sports fixtures and competitions. In addition, Music and Sports Scholars and Exhibitioners are provided with wider opportunities to deepen their skills and experiences through the Promising Athletes Programme and Music Scholars' Programmes which are coordinated by the Directors of Sport and Music respectively.

Differentiation

At St Helen's, differentiation is achieved through our 'Teaching to the Top and Scaffolding Down' approach, which ensures that students are continually being challenged to 'think hard' about their learning, while simultaneously accessing the individual and collective support which will enable them to make good progress. Pupils develop different metacognitive strategies which help them to understand how they learn best, how well they have learned and how they could improve. This diversity is acknowledged in the Schemes of Work and lesson plans for each subject. These are written to present the curriculum through a variety of teaching methods using a range of resources. Regular review of the Schemes of Work is carried out to introduce fresh approaches to assessment techniques and to ensure the pursuit of excellence in the delivery of the curriculum.

Continuity

Continuity between phases and Key Stages of the School is a vital element in curriculum design and management. Regular consultation between teachers in various Key Stages and the exchange of up-to-date data ensure that, as they move through the School, pupils meet fresh stimulation. Opportunities to reinforce and consolidate prior knowledge are embedded in Schemes of Work.

Homework

Heads of Department, Heads of Year, Subject Co-ordinators and Phase Leaders work to ensure that appropriate homework is set and marked promptly in line with the agreed whole school aims of homework which are:

- To cultivate the skills required for successful life-long learning
- To develop literacy, as this is at the heart of all learning
- To consolidate and practise knowledge, techniques and skills taught in the curriculum
- To apply acquired knowledge to new contexts and unfamiliar problems
- To create opportunities for students to develop independence in their learning
- In EYFS & KS1, to create opportunities for carers to engage in supporting their children's learning
- In KS1-KS5, to enable 'flipped learning' to take place
- In KS2-KS5, to provide opportunities for revision
- In KS2-KS5, to encourage wider research and to provide extension activities to deepen understanding of lesson objectives, especially for scholars and HIPs
- In KS3-KS5, to assess students' knowledge, skills and understanding

Homework is set as an integral part of a teacher's lesson planning. Pupils are given flexibility, wherever possible, to fit homework around their co-curricular and family commitments. It is expected that, from Key Stage 1 and above, students will be able to complete homework independently.

Homework should seek to develop core literacy skills as well as subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding. As students progress through the school an increasing proportion of their homework time is

devoted to 'self-directed' study, enabling pupils to reflect on their individual progress, identify key areas for improvement and take steps to realise that improvement. Form Tutors, class teachers and Heads of Year support students with their reflection and planning.

Futures (Higher Education & Careers)

As part of the Futures Programme, there is an extensive careers education and guidance programme, which is fully integrated into the School Curriculum. The overarching aim of the Futures Programme is to enable girls to flourish in their lives beyond school: to develop the resilience, self-confidence, professional and networking skills to become the leaders of tomorrow in their chosen fields.

The School's Director of Futures coordinates the delivery of the Careers education and guidance programme which is impartial, accurate, up to date, and enables students to make informed choices about the broadest possible range of options. The programme includes networking opportunities at sector-specific Futures Evenings and webinars for Years 10-13 and comprehensive individualised support with next-steps planning and applications into Higher Education, Degree Apprenticeships and careers, including individual meetings with an external careers advisor in Year 11 and bespoke Higher Education Planning meetings in Year 12. Pastoral leaders work alongside the Futures Team to encourage students to develop self-awareness so that they consider the widest possible range of career opportunities.

Review

The curriculum is monitored by the Deputy Head Academic (supported by SLT Line Managers) and Head of Prep School. The Curriculum Policy is reviewed annually.

Authorised by	Executive Team
Effective date of the policy	1 st September 2023 – 31 st August 2024
Review period	Annual

Appendix I

St Helen's is an academic and ambitious school which offers a liberal education and believes that offering breadth of choice enables students to fulfil their full potential and to flourish academically.

We offer a range of option subjects at GCSE and A Level which:

- Meets the aims and objectives of our Curriculum Policy
- Meets the expectations of a liberal and highly academic school
- Enables students to follow pathways which align with their academic strengths, interests and ambitions
- (At A Level) Offers pathways into tertiary study of:
 - Creative subjects (including art foundation courses)
 - Arts and Humanities
 - Languages, literature and culture (ancient and modern; by offering a range of classical and modern foreign languages)
 - Medicine and STEM
 - Social Sciences

Option subjects may be withdrawn if insufficient numbers of students opt to take them (typically 6 students at GCSE and 2 students at A Level).

Option Subjects at GCSE	Option Subjects at A Level
Art	Art
Classical Civilisation	Biology
Classical Greek (as a co-curricular additional subject)	Chemistry
Computer Science	Classical Civilisation
Design & Technology	Classical Greek
Drama	Computer Science
French	Design & Technology
Geography	Drama
German	Economics
History	English Literature
Latin	French
Mandarin	Further Maths
Music	Geography
Physical Education	German
Religious Studies	Government & Politics
Spanish	History
	History of Art
	Latin
	Mandarin
	Maths
	Music
	Philosophy
	Physical Education
	Physics
	Psychology
	Religious Studies
	Spanish