

CURRICULUM POLICY

Date	Review Date	Contact
Date: 01.02.19	Date: 01.02.20	Head of School & Education

This policy is underpinned by the core values of Newbury Hall as stated in our aims & ethos.

Programmes, Principles & Procedures

The Newbury Hall Curriculum consists of three programmes:

- Intensive Academic Literacy (language, knowledge, skills)
- Intensive Exam Skills (IELTS, FCE, CAE, etc)
- Special requests & 1:1 (IGCSE subject-exam preparation & tasters, etc)

[Timetables](#) (simplified) are on our website; for special requests and 1:1s they are created for individuals on demand. Detailed, up-to-date timetables are provided to students at induction.

The [Newbury Hall Curriculum Insights](#) brochure contains details of some individual lessons.

Academic philosophy

Pupils do not come to Newbury Hall to repeat what they had been doing in lessons elsewhere; that has not worked well enough for them and they need a more satisfying academic experience. What we give pupils is a more relevant alternative - academic literacy across the disciplines in a tutorial learning atmosphere - so that they are properly supported towards their next step, be it to return home with better English or to enter mainstream UK education with more confidence.

Academic literacy is the foundation underpinning creative knowledge. Without a properly developed ability to learn by reading, listening and doing, there can be little hope of acquiring either the language and knowledge base with which to think or the sceptical playfulness of mind promotive of specific problem-solving and the open-ended exploration of possibilities. By disrupting tired and machinal patterns of thinking, curiosity, criticality and creativity can be engendered to the betterment of pupils' academic and broader success in life.

At Newbury Hall this means new language, knowledge and skills in the service of better thinking and becoming a better pupil generally. Academically literate pupils can successfully face the challenges of understanding and responding creatively to complex ideas in English and can generate both informed and personal opinions. To encourage this, many lesson types aim ultimately for 'elaborative recreation of the stimulus' through 'motivate, stimulate, articulate' processes as described in lesson guidance documents and lesson plans.

The classroom atmospheres created by the teaching team are vastly more important than any small-scale learning within an individual lesson; durable, flexible learning happens over longer

periods and neither can nor should be measured in an hour. We ask, rather, how our classroom atmospheres promote positive attitudes to learning: “Do our pupils enjoy being challenged by teachers they respect?” and then whether they make progress because of this in the longer term.

Course outlines & intended learning outcomes, including rationales

Whether a pupil stays with us for a week, a month, a year or more, the format of individual lessons on the Intensive Academic Literacy and Intensive Exam Skills programmes is similar each week while the specific content and outcomes change. This allows pupils to establish formative routines to hone their core skills rather than diluting their efforts, all the while acquiring broader general knowledge and improving their English.

Outcomes for lessons are typically described in terms of language, knowledge and/or skills; however, teachers are at all times encouraged to do whatever is in the best interests of the students and their moods in the class on the day as well as their longer-term ambitions.

Intensive Academic Literacy

Weekly lessons on the Intensive Academic Literacy programme include: writing craft workshops in essays & argumentation and journalism based on our in-house cultural calendar, biographies, debates, literature and reader’s theatre, reciprocal reading, subject tasters, guided research projects with presentations, book club with presentations and discussions, eloquence ‘walkshops’, training in philosophical thinking, etc. Grammar and pronunciation are embedded throughout all lessons in response to pupils’ errors or ignorance, and feedback is plentiful.

Outcomes for individual lesson-types are described in detail in students’ Learner Portfolios.

Over the longer term the Intensive Academic Literacy programme aims to provide an ideal transition for international pupils into mainstream UK education.

Intensive Exam Skills

Pupils on Intensive Exam Skills programmes learn exam strategies and do extensive practice tests with feedback against mark schemes so that they feel confident going into the exam. They also have dedicated language lessons to ensure they cover the exam vocabulary and grammar.

Special requests

On subject exam preparation courses such as IGCSEs teachers work from industry-standard exam board specifications and schemes of work, adapting them to students’ background, ambitions and the time they have with us on an individual basis; teachers may also supplement these with content or skills from other UK school key stages to compensate for students’ entry level. Mock exams and a study of mark schemes may feature heavily towards the end of such programmes if students have made good progress and wish to take an exam.

Summary of rationale for the design of the Academic Literacy programme

We try to meet our students where they are on arrival and prepare them for where they are going when they leave. To this end, we believe that a focus on transferable core skills that span the academic disciplines and on bridging the gap to those elements of a UK education that are typically most dissimilar to students' backgrounds are likely to have the greatest benefits for our particular students.

More specifically, we want our students:

- To develop autonomous study skills; the ability to research any given topic and respond critically and creatively to it, whether in spoken or written form;
 - We believe this focus on *any given topic* is far more important than learning key-stage-specific content in a largely non-transferable way, prepares students for a wider variety of future destinations (not just programmes following higher key stages) and encourages them to explore a wider range of interests or pursue a topic of interest in greater detail;
- Not to be overwhelmed when encountering full pages of native-level academic text as they will in IELTS exams, GCSE or A-level course books, etc.
 - This may necessitate a move away from CEFR-levelled materials as is in keeping with IELTS preparation courses generally;
- To be fluent in the general principles of essay and report writing, including structure, appropriate content and language, etc;
- To be confident in contributing to classroom discussions in a non-native language;
- To be able to maturely discuss sensitive issues such as those found in PSHE programmes, SMSC provision or concerning Fundamental British Values and ethics, etc.
 - Along with the demands of autonomous study, we find that this element is likely to be the most divergent from students' backgrounds and expectations.

In terms of the teaching team, our intention is that students encounter as many of our teachers as possible, no matter how long they stay. Differently from many schools, our students may have as many as eight different teachers in a week. We feel this sacrifice of consistency for variety is important in that each teacher has a different style, classroom atmosphere, pedagogical philosophy; different teachers will provide feedback in different ways such as error correction, uplevelling, aspiration, etc and if a student receives the same feedback from different teachers, it adds power, while different feedback from different teachers provides breadth. We further believe that school is a special place where youngsters can spend quality time with the older, wiser generation and so it may support teenagers' mental health generally to see that all adults are also different: some shy, some gregarious, some confident, etc; no personality is 'normal'.

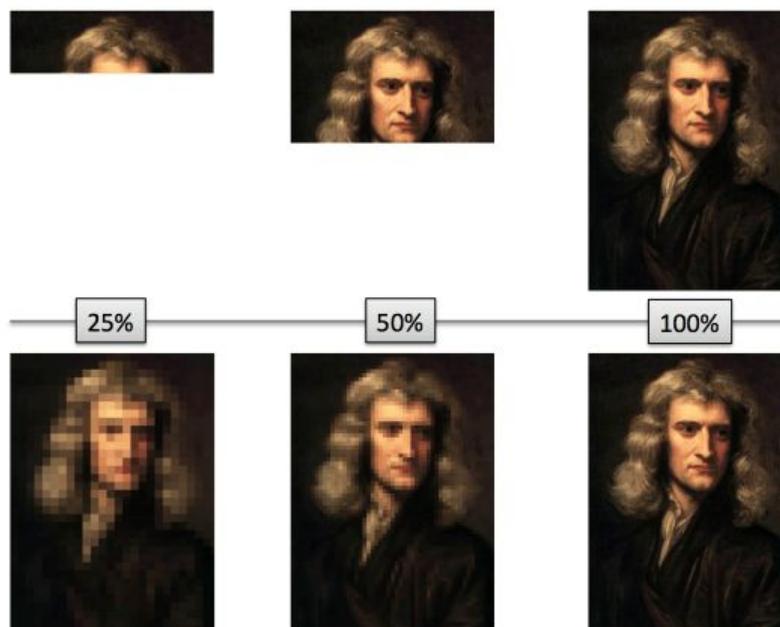
Evidence base for curriculum design (beginnings)

Curriculum design is based on an ever more apt combination of research evidence, the professional intuitions of teachers and academic managers, and our individual and collective experiences of what works best in our school for the improved outcomes of our particular students. The beginnings of our evidence base is being collected in this policy.

We take care to remember that evidence is not proof and that an over-reliance on evidence can stifle creative, innovative, inspiring teaching, and especially so when considering the complex, adaptive, dynamic nature of language acquisition and the subtleties of student motivation.

In general, we aim to provide circumstances consistent with better acquisition (implicit knowledge gains) just as much - if not more - than learning (explicit knowledge). We do not simplistically expect progress to be smooth, overly structured or predicated on the putative benefits of CEFR (etc)-levelled instruction when such levelling was originally intended rather for assessment than course design and certainly goes very little distance in describing acquisitional sequences.

Baseline vs. Progressive



Rod Ellis (2009), *Principles of Instructed Second Language Learning*¹ provides an overview of the importance of elements such as extensive comprehensible input (Book Club, Guided Research Projects, etc), the view of grammatical competence as an emergent property of input that is best taught along a learner's built-in syllabus (Embedded Grammar lessons), formulaic expressions (Learner Portfolios), implicit knowledge (Progress Testing), etc as well as of the limited usefulness of course books in limited numbers of lessons. Dornyei (cited in Ellis), of course, raises questions about the use of course books when it comes to keeping students motivated.

Carmen Munoz (ed.) (2012): *Intensive Exposure Experiences in Second Language Learning, Multilingual Matters*. Summarised in *Applied Linguistics*, Volume 35, Issue 5, 1 December 2014, Pages 615–617, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu029>:

Munoz summarises the evidence suggesting that improvements in proficiency on intensive short-stay courses cannot be properly measured within the time of the programme itself, but

¹ Available in full at http://asian-efl-journal.com/sept_05_re.pdf

that by looking at students' results even years later, improvements may be seen and therefore we might conclude that the true benefits of short-stay courses extend well beyond the time of the course itself. She further suggests that, rather than concentrating exclusively on language and progress from week to week, such courses most benefit students when they provide memorable, social experiences; this is reflected in our rewriting of lessons as 'events', building in whole-school conversation, etc albeit while continuing to monitor weekly progress.

David Didau (2014): *The Secret of Literacy*, *Independent Thinking Press*, Cornwall, UK and
David Didau (2015): *What if everything you knew about education was wrong?*, *Crown House Publishing Limited*, Cornwall, UK.

Didau summarises the arguments and evidence for greatly extending the scope of literacy policies throughout school life and that they might include accuracy and oracy; his ideas have influenced our thinking on going beyond language towards the teaching of 'academic literacy' in English, not as a bolt-on, but in an embedded way throughout the entire week. Didau states (p5):

I've seen scores of literacy coordinators [...] work their socks off producing [...materials...] which no bugger ever uses. [...] Much better to shift the emphasis onto equipping teachers (and therefore pupils) to do it for themselves.

By providing extensive guidance and resource banks for teachers in a hyperlinked timetable, we are encouraging our teachers to do exactly this and our students to move towards autonomy.

Daniel Willingham (2009): *Why Don't Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions about how the Brain Works and What It Means for the Classroom*, *Wiley*, San Francisco, USA and

Daniel Willingham (2017): *The Reading Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Understanding how the Mind Reads*, *Jossey-Bass (Wiley)*, San Francisco, USA.

Willingham provides a wealth of evidence on feedback styles, learn-forget-test cycles and task design that have influenced our decisions on the spacing of different lessons throughout the week as well of tasks within lessons; on test format, lesson planning proformas and our methodology of 'elaborative recreation of the stimulus'. The cognitive evidence base comes disproportionately from laboratory studies, however, and we always bear in mind the underlying importance of student motivation by encouraging teachers to be flexible in their approach.

Willingham's research body similarly suggests that [Teaching Content is Teaching Reading](#) and that reading test results are more tightly correlated with general knowledge than reading skills.

John Hattie's (2018) [250 Influences on Learning](#) is currently under review.

Lourdes Ortega summarises the (lack of consistent) research findings on the positive impacts of feedback at Notre Dame University, 2012: <https://vimeo.com/39789492>. The principles presented justify lessons such as Cultural Calendar Journalism, as well as the school Assessment, Marking & Feedback Policy.

Understanding pupils' backgrounds & ambitions

There are few definitions of a 'typical' pupil who comes to us, though many have had a highly privileged childhood. This means they may have benefited from very solid academic foundations indeed, but may equally mean they have avoided them almost completely; relatively few fall in the middle ground. The same is often true of self-discipline and work ethic: they are either low and needing engendered, or pupils need to employ what they already have towards excellence.

It is not uncommon that a pupil with such a background lacks motivation: they may have been coasting bored at the top of their classes, or may not feel that academic progress will benefit them; they may be desperately hungry for true challenge, or may never have experienced the joys of learning interesting and challenging things; they may see little chance of ever outperforming their parents either financially, academically or professionally, or may be so far beyond that already that they need other pursuits; they may be dealing with very high expectations from school and/or parents, or may never have had real expectations applied to them.

Coming from different cultures and countries can mean coming from a very different education system, and not uncommonly one that values rote learning in large, didactic classrooms with low expectations for stimulating curiosity or self-managing independent study, and little interest in extra-curricular school life. Subject choices and career direction may be guided towards studying business and/or working in the family firm with little input from the pupil. With its intellectual, ethical and existential content, the Intensive Academic Literacy programme in particular seeks to address these by introducing students to the key components of a good UK education as described in our aims & ethos statement and guiding them towards autonomy before leaving us.

As non-native speakers, almost all students have general proficiency and reading ages in English below national UK averages, sometimes by only a few months for high-achieving students, but not uncommonly reading ages are those of 7-8-year-olds on arrival (we usually manage at least a few years' progress in a few months, though). Students might also have no or very little subject background in maths and the sciences, and may grossly underestimate the rigour of formal exams. We aim to turn as much of this around as we can in a very short time.

Some pupils' ambitions may involve simply following family wishes to the letter, getting essential core qualifications, or passing the entry tests and meeting the other requirements of their next destinations; others may want to improve their English and core academic skills generally; others may come to us to revitalise their enthusiasm for education generally; others to attain the maximum possible in what they are already strong and explore a variety of otherwise unlikely options. In all cases we are a stepping stone: sometimes closing the lexical and academic literacy gaps between a pupil's history and their future as quickly as possible, sometimes helping them excel to the highest levels or along explorative trajectories.

Assessment & exams

See also our [Assessment, Marking & Feedback Policy](#).

Pupils on an Intensive Academic Literacy programme are placed by language level, age, gender and the cultural mix of the class, with consideration also given to academic backgrounds and ambitions, etc. The rationale for considering all these factors relates to the maturity of students playing a role in the nature of the topics discussed, our aim of encouraging intercultural mixing and use of English between different L2 speakers, and the format of lessons playing relatively easily to personalisation and differentiation. Where the language-level split in a class organised by age and nationality mix would be too great, students are moved and classes thereby adjusted.

Intensive Exam Skills classes typically follow a high-low split at approximately CEFR B2 depending on the exam and the students in school.

Most pupils do weekly summative progress tests for general language proficiency as well as formatively assessed book club presentations, project presentations, writing and discussion lessons, etc. The school also uses the ReadTheory online platform to track literacy progress and pupils can earn ClassDojo points for good work. Certificates are awarded each Friday for good attitudes and behaviours, and at the end of the course a certificate with grades and comments. Students on Intensive Exam Skills or subject exam preparation programmes may take other regular progress tests and formal final exams depending on progress.

Reports and updates to parents and a close relationship between our residence and academic teams ensure that we are all working together in the best interests of each pupil, whilst regular certificates and awards ensure that progress and excellence are rewarded and motivation to succeed continues to grow.

The school is a registered exam centre for various exam boards and qualifications.

Teaching & learning resources

Choiceful resource banks and guidance documents describing a bounded selection of knowledge and skills outcomes for different lesson types allow teachers to properly respond to their pupils' backgrounds and ambitions. This provides parameters for content and outcomes appropriate to each course whilst allowing teachers' particular expertise, passion and creativity to come to the fore through a blend of traditional methodology and contemporary innovations.

Course books are of a good quality and from trusted publishers such as CUP, OUP, Pearson, MacMillan, etc. Hyperlinked online materials similarly come from such publishers' websites or those of their course books, or from other tried-and-tested reputable sites such as TED, the School of Life and the British Council. Where such materials are designed for second-language learning, they have been organised into resource banks for classes by approximate CEFR level, IELTS band range, etc. Native-level online resource are often also provided for challenge.

On Intensive Exam Skills courses, industry-standard course books graded by CEFR levels or IELTS bands are used to ensure coverage of exam-specific language and skills. There is,

however, both a large degree of flexibility expected of teachers in response to individuals as well as an incorporation of other lessons aimed at broadening students' general knowledge base. The latter comes in response to Willingham's research on the stronger correlations between reading test results and general knowledge, as opposed to reading skills. For a summary, see: <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/daniel-willingham/willingham-reading-is-not-a-sk.html> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiP-ijdxqEc>. The same research provides justification for some deviation from purely CEFR-leveled materials in other curriculum areas.

While certain lessons incorporate the use of technology, we try to keep it to a minimum and encourage responsible use of pupil's own technology to compensate somewhat for teenagers' approximately eight-to-twelve hours a day on average of screen time outside of lessons; we prefer a classroom atmosphere that emphasises human interaction as we feel it better develops empathy, more insightful thinking and sharing of ideas, and better social interactions.

Teaching and learning resources are described in the guidance documents and resource banks provided to teachers in electronic hyperlinked format for ease of lesson preparation, but also include a range of resource books and coursebooks for each programme in the school library, several classrooms fitted with interactive whiteboards, portable projectors to share among other classrooms, several school laptops, several wirelessly networked printers and scanners, a large photocopier, etc. There are no limits placed on teachers for photocopying, printing, etc if used reasonably and stationery, etc is largely provided by the school.

SEND in the curriculum

The curriculum ensures appropriate access for those pupils with an EHC plan. Pupils with SEND are identified through health questionnaires and ongoing monitoring by staff, and the appropriacy of the curriculum as currently available may then be discussed by the SEND Coordinator and Academic Lead, and any action points decided, depending on the individual circumstances.

Student voice in the curriculum

Pupils are encouraged to provide feedback on academic provision through the continual, informal availability of all staff as emphasised at induction and around school; in entry, monthly and exit surveys; at informal morning tutor groups over breakfast; and in the suggestions box.

The Independent Schools Standards and Regulations

In accordance with the Independent Schools Standards and Regulations, the school curriculum:

- Offers pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education across the skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy as described below;
- Takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan, by placing pupils and monitoring progress as described above;
- Does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs by following exam-board syllabuses and schemes of work and using materials from trusted sources as described above;
- Includes a compulsory PSHE programme as described in the school's PSHE Policy;
- Actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs as described in our SMSC Policy;

and aims to ensure that principles are actively promoted which enable pupils to:

- Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Enable pupils to tell right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
- Enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- Further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- Encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
- Encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;

by providing good teaching practice guidelines to all teachers and monitoring their implementation through appraisals, student surveys, annual reviews, the weekly standing SLT meeting agenda, etc.

In addition, the administering of the curriculum:

- Precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject;
- Takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views while they are in attendance at the school, while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

The school curriculum is implemented in such a way that underlines the importance of certain aspects of these over others as being of greater relevance to and having greater potential impact on our typical pupil population, namely:

- In the lower percentiles for language ability, we consider pupils' general language acquisition to be the key facilitator of their gaining knowledge, understanding concepts and developing skills and attitudes. The need to support pupils' English levels to permit access to the content of exam courses and/or increase their ability to socialise with peers may temporarily override other concerns which are less immediately significant, such as subject exam results;
- Newbury Hall ensures experience in linguistic education through its EAL provision; linguistic variety is present in the curriculum by virtue of our EAL provision.
- To help ensure continuity of progress whatever educational background a pupil has come from, we encourage all teachers to inform the SLT immediately if they have any concerns about pupils being in the wrong class, and all residence and office staff to similarly report any concerns a pupil raises about the appropriateness of their classes at the earliest opportunity. Because we freely admit that we do not know the equivalences between the English and all other countries' educational systems, we discuss the matter of placement with each pupil, parent, agent or guardian before or upon arrival and put pupils through entry test(s) focused chiefly on English level. Because of such potential differences between language level and other skills such as maths, we may expect low initial results in some wordier subjects and yet outstanding results in others and do not preclude entering pupils for key-stage exams far earlier or later than may be typically expected for their age;
- We are sensitive about respecting, whilst not necessarily pandering to, the divergence that spiritual, moral, social, cultural, physical and creative education in England may entail from pupils' educational and cultural backgrounds and parents' wishes. We appreciate that international pupils will be almost undoubtedly less accustomed to such aspects of a curriculum than their native English peers and may need more convincing as to their benefits; therefore, we aim to include a significant focus on them during pupil induction and to engage each individual pupil in informal dialogue as to their benefits;
- We place an emphasis on encouraging pupils to become autonomous because of their typical previous educational experiences of and training in systems which place an equally if not more greatly disproportionate emphasis on passivity and dependence. Creating expectations of autonomy and eliciting the curiosity necessary to create self-motivated lifelong learners of such pupils is a particular challenge we face, and especially with those pupils who arrive with a pre-planned career path established on the principles of their native national and/or family cultures which can be very different from English norms;
- We seek to provide challenge and engagement at every opportunity without overwhelming pupils in the face of the already challenging language requirements, and with an understanding that for some pupils a 'silent period' of acculturation may take priority over academic and/or social challenges;
- Whilst providing impartial guidance on and experience of a wide variety of career paths (see our Careers Policy), we respect the wishes of parents and the vast majority - if not all - of our pupils that university entrance in the UK or USA is their main ambition;
- As a small international school, fostering both a strong sense of belonging to a single Newbury Hall community as well as respecting and exploring each other's cultural

backgrounds are essential. In creating our sense of community, we are diligent not to undermine, but to embrace, pupils' origins;

- We recognise the role parents play in their child's education and make significant efforts to involve them at every opportunity, whilst respecting that parental *disengagement* may be a cultural difference the school faces.

Breadth of provision

Programmes are supported by appropriate schemes of work to facilitate progression through the school, to subsequent schools and/or to higher education or future careers. It is a core principle of Newbury Hall's pedagogic style that we tutor individuals rather than programmes as basic, access-granting language acquisition or core subject skills may often take priority. We aim to offer a broad range of opportunities and pupils may request tuition in any subject.

Linguistic

Lessons are taught in English and pupils have a variety of dedicated English lessons - see timetables - with some pupils taking IGCSE English-as-a-second language or IELTS exams. Literacy support is provided on a 1:1 basis as required.

Mathematical

Maths courses are offered to prepare for IGCSEs or A-levels as requested. Mathematical concepts can also be explored on economics, psychology, business studies, etc courses. Extra maths support or extension lessons are organised with individuals as required and supplementary resources such as essential maths skills materials are available.

Scientific

Science courses are offered to prepare for IGCSEs or A-levels as requested. A significant emphasis is placed on the enquiry nature of science lessons where observations and experiments help pupils construct, record and analyse their hypotheses, especially when pupils arrive with little or no prior experience. Similarly, scientific language and its use is a key focus of lessons.

Technological

Responsible use of ICT is actively promoted in many weekly lessons - see timetables. Specific courses such as art & design and computer science IGCSE preparation, for example, are offered as requested. Craft club, cookery classes and a DJ club are a feature of the PLACES programme.

Human and social

All English-as-a-second-language programmes offer content based heavily on human and social issues - see schemes of work. History, geography, etc are offered on request. See also the SMSC Policy and PSHE Policy for how such topics are incorporated in the curriculum.

Physical education

Pupils have dedicated time for physical activities as part of the PLACES programme, including individual and team sports. The school also has membership of a local gym and leisure centre which pupils may use in their free time and where they may join classes.

Aesthetic and creative

Art & design courses are available on request and pupils can organise music lessons through the PLACES programme, which also regularly offers an evening craft club, pyrography, board games, etc. English-as-a-second-language programmes include creative writing, presentations, drama, etc which may also involve the formatting and design of powerpoints, handouts, etc or stylised speech, body language, etc.

Speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy

See the school's Literacy, EAL & Language Policy.

Speaking and listening are substantial elements of all English-as-a-second-language programmes - see timetables and schemes of work. In other lessons they form a key part of EAL support.

Numeracy is supported through the offer of subjects such as maths, science, economics, business, psychology, accounting, etc.

Interdisciplinary links

Pupils are given the opportunity to investigate links between subjects in greater detail as described in subject schemes of work, during collapsed curriculum days (workshops, edutrips, etc) and in a wide variety of lessons on the Academic Literacy programme.

Progression and intervention

See the discussion of assessment & exams above and the school's Assessment, Marking & Feedback Policy. Pupils can also be moved between levels and courses with relative ease as required. Academic interventions can be performed through systems of learning support and literacy support as described in our annually reviewed document 'Quality of TLA - Systems'.

Signed:

Alex McNish
Head of School & Education
Date: 01.02.19