



BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL

## Curriculum Policy

This is a Senior School policy.

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| <b>Action</b> | <b>Responsibility</b>        | <b>Date</b>    |
|---------------|------------------------------|----------------|
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## **1. Introduction**

Barnard Castle School seeks to ensure that every student reaches his or her academic potential by offering challenging, enjoyable and exciting lessons delivered by passionate, informed and dynamic teachers. Students are helped by tutors to identify realistic and ambitious targets for both the fulfilment of potential and the achievement of personal goals.

We are all learners, and are thus receptive to new ideas. Our teachers strive to meet the needs of all students, including the able, gifted and talented and those who have specific learning difficulties, or those who speak English as an additional language. We want classrooms to be active learning environments where young people collaborate in and share their learning experiences.

Through the curriculum, particularly the Sixth Form curriculum and curricular-enrichment programme, Personal Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCEE), conferences and seminars, educational visits and the activities' programme, we will further a reputation for being a centre of excellence and innovation, and one which prepares our students effectively for higher education and the world beyond. In addition, all students are challenged to think through ideas presented in regular Chapel assemblies and services.

## **2. Aims**

Barnard Castle School aims to:

- Promote the value of application, perseverance, initiative, independent thought and co-operation;
- Create an environment in which wellbeing is at the forefront of daily dialogue, and in which strategies are taught so pupils and teachers develop long lasting physical and mental health;
- Offer a broad curriculum in order to achieve knowledge, enjoyment of learning, and the acquisition of skills necessary to be responsible members of society;
- Encourage academic enrichment and the development of curiosity, teaching how, rather than what, to think;
- Ensure that each child fulfils their academic potential at each stage of their education;
- Promote a community which values honesty, mutual respect, enjoyment, service and good citizenship, placing an emphasis on leadership;
- Prepare children for the next stage in their lives, whatever that may be.

## **3. Academic structure**

The School receives students into Year 7 not only from the Prep School but also a large number of other prep schools and primary schools. As a result, a considerable amount of work is undertaken at the start of Year 7 to bring children to the same common learning points.

The Senior School curriculum offers a breadth of study in the early years which blends the traditional with a forward-looking approach to education. It is structured round the central core with an increasingly wide variety of options as students progress through the School. This allows all students to develop their strengths and interests without having to specialise too soon. A programme of Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education is offered to broaden students' views on contemporary issues, and to engender tolerance and respect for the opinions of others. The school has a strong track record of

success in supporting students with specific learning difficulties and has a dedicated Academic Support department, which includes staff with specialisms in supporting both literacy and numeracy (see 5. below and the separate Academic Support policy).

The weekly timetable comprises 49 periods; 47 of these are devoted to academic or Games lessons, one is a whole-school assembly (Monday Period 1) and one is a PSHCEE lesson in tutor groups (Wednesday Period 1). There are nine 40 (or 35) minute lessons each week day and four lessons on Saturdays. There are five periods of Games per week across each Year group.

### **Years 7 to 9**

Prep School subject coordinators and the Senior School Heads of Departments communicate to ensure, wherever possible, unnecessary overlap of the curriculum does not occur.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, the policy is to prioritise, with four to six periods each week, the core subjects like Mathematics, English, Modern Foreign Languages and Sciences, with most other subjects having two periods each per week.

A top set in Classics has a third weekly period in Years 8 and 9 to facilitate continuing exposure to linguistic Latin. Approximately 14 subjects are followed (see the Curriculum Summary document). In Years 7 and 8, pupils are given experience of three modern languages: French, Spanish and German. The overwhelming majority continue with French and one of the other languages in Year 9. The small number of pupils who do not follow a second modern foreign language course in Year 9 may be offered extra English and Mathematics help via specialist teachers in the Academic Support department.

Pupils are taught practical skills in information technology and computing as a normal and fundamental part of their Computer Science curriculum throughout Years 7 to 9. This leads to an IC3 Digital Literacy Certification.

Pupils from Years 7 and 8 take part in an off-timetable Multidisciplinary Project Week during the Trinity Term, where they work together in mixed teams on a variety of self-directed, independent learning projects linked by a common theme. In recent years, they have worked on projects based in emergency response to a natural disaster as well as designing their own schools. Teams present their work to a panel of teachers and governors at a final celebration event and prizes are awarded for the best work.

### **Years 10 and 11 (please see GCSE curriculum booklet)**

All subjects have an equal time allocation of four periods per week. The majority of students sit ten GCSEs or IGCSEs. This includes seven core subjects: English (Language and Literature), Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics and either one or two Modern Foreign Languages. Three options subjects are chosen from the remaining departments: Art, Business Studies, Classics (Classics or Latin), IGCSE Computer Science or Cambridge National Creative iMedia, Design Technology, Drama, Geography, IGCSE History, Music, Physical Education and Religious Studies. It is a feature of the options system that choices at GCSE generally do not preclude students from taking up different options at A Level but this is not always the case.

### **Years 12 and 13 (please see Sixth Form curriculum booklet)**

All subjects are given eight (and very occasionally nine) lessons per week each. The majority of students study at least three subjects, but many will study a fourth. In addition, those in the Sixth Form have the opportunity to undertake the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and engage in a wide-ranging Sixth Form monitors and committee

programme. Most available subjects are A Levels; however, from September 2018 we have also offered Level 3 BTEC Sport, with students choosing to undertake courses under this qualification equivalent to one, two or three A Levels. Physics is available as a Pre-U, and ICT as a Cambridge Technical qualification.

Changes to the curriculum for any year group, exam group or ability group result from detailed discussions and are influenced significantly by the ability and achievement profiles of those students involved and academic results. Examples of such occasions are the introduction of IGCSE, Pre-U Physics, and the top group of mathematicians in Year 11 taking IGCSE Mathematics six months early.

Education policy relating to the curriculum is the business of discussion in Heads of Departments' Meetings and meetings of the Academic Policy Group, chaired by the Deputy Head (Academic), and agreement by the Senior Management Team. The Governors are informed of curricular change by the Deputy Head (Academic) and his/her counterpart in the Prep School, at Governors' Education and Welfare Committee Meetings, chaired by the Chairman of Governors.

### **Overall perspective**

The School is a mixed community of boys and girls, boarding and day, domestic and foreign but we consciously maintain a balance. It is important therefore that we respond positively to the challenge of providing a differentiated curriculum as necessary. The role of the tutor is of critical importance both in terms of advising and mentoring students' choices of subjects at options time and advising on the number of subjects to be studied. Tutors are also critically important in both the assessment and reporting processes; their advice and help, and liaison with parents is important to our system of promoting choice.

### **Target setting and assessment**

The School has moved in recent years to encourage all students, with the advice and help of their teachers and tutors, to set targets against which they, their parents and the School can measure and assess performance. MidYIS and ALIS data are used by teachers and tutors to advise students and their parents; there are target setting meetings between tutees and tutors at the start of each half term.

## **4. A broad education**

The School provides the opportunity for all students to broaden their education by being involved in:

a) **PSHCEE**: each student has one lesson each week with their tutor and teachers follow a detailed syllabus ("The Barnard Castle School PSHCEE Journey") which has been drawn up by the Head of Department. The topics covered are wide-ranging, and include relationships, sexuality and sex education, puberty, bullying, healthy lifestyle choices, coping with loss and change, substance use and misuse, online safety and social media, society, government and politics, Human Rights, diversity, ethical consumerism, money matters, harassment and exploitation, extremism, stress and anxiety, mental and emotional health and resilience. Revision techniques are introduced and discussed in Year 11 and Careers advice and topics are woven throughout (see 4(g) below). Even though this is not an examination course, it is considered to be a crucially important part of our School curriculum.

b) **Independent Study**: students in Years 7 to 11 will have between one and four Independent Study lessons every week. These are supervised by a member of staff, often take place in the Library, but are not structured like mainstream curriculum lessons.

Students are encouraged to direct their own learning in these periods and may choose to do prep, independent research, reading, artwork or music practice. The introduction of Independent Study periods has been instrumental in engendering a culture of independent study and self-reflection. Tutors regularly discuss the use of these periods with their tutees.

c) **Chapel and Assemblies:** students attend chapel three times a week. Each Year group will have an Assembly each week led by either the Headmaster or Deputy Head, or another member of staff or students. Assemblies will cover a variety of important topics and the nature and title of each will be determined by current affairs, the identification of important matters of School business or school life which need to be addressed in detail, or matters which may be cultural, social, political or economic in nature. Daily Chapel meanwhile promotes immersion without coercion into the Christian Foundation of the School so that students are put in contact with the scriptural, liturgical and hymnodic heritage which underpins much of Western thought.

d) **Extra-curricular activities:** outside the formal curriculum, the School is proud of its extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. This contributes significantly to the broad and balanced nature of the curriculum. In the period 4.10pm to 5.00pm daily, students may choose to follow activities of their choice, to include attendance at subject clinics or additional teaching clinics, and Department activities and societies. Through charitable activities and participation in the Charity Committee, and its initiatives, students' awareness of global and humanitarian issues is also enhanced.

e) **Educational visits:** the School offers regular curricular educational visits; boys and girls are stimulated by discovering for themselves more about the topics they have considered and learnt in class. These include visits as diverse as a Religious Studies trip to the Holocaust Centre, younger students visiting the Life Centre in Newcastle, and Art students visiting the Bowes Museum. Other non-compulsory trips often venture further afield, for example a Classics trip to Greece or Rome and a Geography trip to Iceland.

f) **Specific events:** the School also runs its own education sessions, including the Sixth Form Brain Day and Industry Day.

g) **Careers advice:** the school delivers a structured programme of careers advice via PSHCEE lessons, tutor time and drop-in sessions with the school Careers advisor. This starts from Year 7 and 8 where the focus is on self-evaluation of personal strengths and skills as well as on the fundamentals of the job market and employability skills. In Year 9, more specific careers information becomes available, students attend a careers interview and create an action plan of career-oriented targets and goals. In Years 10 and 11, the aim is on planning and deciding: students research their own needs regarding education, training, apprenticeships, jobs, volunteering and identify the best progression for them, recognising the transferable employability strengths and skills that they possess. They may volunteer to undertake and receive feedback from Morrisby indicator career testing and are advised on CV building, applications and interviews. Sixth Formers focus on being proactive in improving employability skills, making the most of support networks as well as researching and evaluating progression pathways via FE, HE or employment. The Sixth Form lecture programme of visiting speakers feeds into this, helping students reflect on aspiration, enterprise, resilience, various careers and the world of work and their role in it. An Employability Week within the Sixth Form programme is dedicated to developing employability skills further. Students take responsibility for finding work experience placements which are career-specific, or take advantage of the valuable enhancements provided by DofE, CCF and the Charity committee, as well as house and school leadership opportunities.

## **5. Academic Support lessons and Music lessons**

With students' knowledge and consent, and with the agreement of their parents, those students who receive academic support or individual specialist music tuition are withdrawn from classes for tuition. Those students receiving academic support lessons are withdrawn for a maximum of two lessons per week in those subjects whose omission at that time is thought to have least impact on the individual's overall education: often these are scheduled during Independent Study periods. Our policy considers that a child should not be withdrawn from a subject of particular pleasure. Please see the separate Academic Support (SEN) Policy document for further details of our SEN provision.

Those students receiving individual specialist music lessons are withdrawn according to a rota so they do not miss the same lessons each week; wherever possible, the student will be withdrawn from half of each of two consecutive lessons to increase the probability they will be able to make up the work missed in their own time.

## **6. Able, Gifted and Talented**

Departments identify and cater for AG&T pupils through differentiation within their own subject areas. A school-wide register of these pupils is kept centrally by the Enrichment Coordinator. Please refer to the separate document, "Able, Gifted and Talented at Barnard Castle School". There is also a dedicated programme for academic scholars (Years 9-11) and academic exhibitioners (Years 7-8), which was re-launched in September 2018.

## **7. English as an Additional Language**

The school accepts a small number pupils from overseas whose first language is not English. Some of these stay for a short time – perhaps one to two terms – while others remain here for longer and enter public exams, for example an IGCSE in English as a Second Language, or an IELTS qualification. Their level of ability in English is assessed on entry and a decision is made as to whether they join a mainstream English class or join the dedicated EAL set for each year group, taught by the EAL teacher. Full details of our EAL provision are available in a separate document, "English as an Additional Language (EAL) at Barnard Castle School".

## **8. The teaching staff**

The teaching staff is made up of well qualified, experienced graduates; the average length of tenure in School is ten years. In-service training and involvement in professional development and exam board marking are encouraged providing they do not detract from teachers' key responsibilities. The School has education and training partnerships with Durham University and Sunderland University Schools of Education and accepts Post-Graduate Certificate in Education students, typically with one two trainee teachers placed here per year.

## **9. Setting**

Entrance exam data, Key Stage 2 results, MidYIS data and previous school reports are all used at the start of Year 7 to assist in the setting of students. In Years 7 to 9, we set separately in Mathematics and English, and in the Sciences for Years 8 and 9. Students are provided with timetables at the start of each term. A full description of setting arrangements is made available to parents at the beginning of each academic year via the online Parent Portal – please refer to the separate setting letter document for an example. Parents and students are aware from timetables which sets they are in and who are their teachers. Set changes made during the course of the year are reported to parents by communication from the relevant Head of Department or the Deputy Head (Academic). In Years 10 and 11, we set separately in Mathematics, English, and the Sciences, and in Modern Foreign Languages when numbers permit. This allows for the most able to be stretched and the less able to be taught in suitably supportive environments.

## **10. Class sizes**

Class sizes are carefully regulated to ensure the optimum student to teacher ratio. A typical year group will have approximately 70 to 75 students in four classes or sets, though five sets occasionally appear in some subjects or in larger year groups.

## **11. Prep (Homework)**

There is a formal homework timetable for each Year group in Years 7 to 11, and this is available to parents on the online Parent Portal – please see the separate prep timetable document. Students will be set homework by subject teachers and this is recorded by students in their Planners.

## **12. Library and departmental libraries**

There is a well-resourced School Library and additionally, several departments also have departmental libraries. In addition, the ICT suites in the Sixth Form Centre, the two class teaching rooms for ICT and the open access ICT area in the Macfarlane building provide students with opportunities to promote independent learning and research. Work stations are networked and students are able to access the School intranet site, a shared directory for departmental work as well as their individual work areas.