



BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL

## Curriculum Policy

This is a Senior School Policy.

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Action	Responsibility	Date
Reviewed	Deputy Head (Academic) (MPC) Deputy Head (i/c Sixth Form) FEB	November 2022
Approved	Headmaster (ACJ)	November 2022
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## **1. Introduction**

Barnard Castle School seeks to ensure that every pupil reaches his or her academic potential by offering challenging, enjoyable and exciting lessons delivered by passionate, informed and dynamic teachers. Pupils 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 pupils, 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 pupils effectively for higher education and the world beyond. In addition, all pupils 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;
- Deliver a rich curriculum experience where diversity and inclusion is embedded long-term, presenting balanced narratives and ideologies, reflective of the contemporary world students exist within and will go on to influence and engage in;
- Encourage academic enrichment and the development of curiosity, teaching how, rather than what, to think;
- Ensure that each pupil 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 pupils for the next stage in their lives, whatever that may be.

## **3. Academic structure**

The School receives pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils progress through the School. This allows all pupils to develop their strengths and interests without having to specialise too

soon. A programme of Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education is offered via the Headspace Programme to broaden pupils' views on contemporary issues, to engender tolerance and respect for the opinions of others, and to engage in talking about these matters, as opposed to simply listening.

The School has a strong track record of success in supporting pupils 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 98 periods including activities from 4.10-5pm (and 3.25-5pm on Monday) in the two-week timetable. Aside from academic subject lessons, pupils also attend Headmaster's assembly, group tutor sessions, Congers/1:1 tutor discussion, House time and House Activity, Headspace, Service activities, the Barney Big Read and Activities. See the Curriculum Summary for further details.

### **Years 7 to 9**

Prep School subject coordinators and the Senior School Heads of Departments communicate to ensure, wherever possible, a broad but cohesive learning journey is followed.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, the policy is to prioritise, with eight periods per fortnight, the core subjects of Mathematics and English, while giving access to a broad range of subjects across the curriculum. Most other subjects have three periods per fortnight.

A top set in Classics has a fourth weekly period in Years 8 and 9 to facilitate continuing exposure to linguistic Latin. Approximately 16 subjects are followed (see the Curriculum Summary document). French is taught as a core modern language throughout. World of Languages and Languages of the World (WOLLOW) lessons are taught in Year 7 to foster an interest in language learning more generally.

Pupils have 4 Go lessons each fortnight. These sessions aim to give pupils the skills to be effective learners, careers information, and practice at effective speaking, listening and presenting to others.

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.

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 redesigning Barnard Castle High Street. 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 (for further information please see GCSE curriculum booklet)**

All subjects have an equal time allocation of six periods per fortnight, aside from English and Mathematics with eight periods. The majority of pupils 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, IGCSE

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 pupils from taking up different options at A Level but this is not always the case.

### **Years 12 and 13 (please see the online Sixth Form curriculum guides)**

All subjects are given seven lessons per week each. The majority of pupils study at least three subjects, but many will begin the A Level course with four subjects. 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 supra-curricular society programme, Prefect Application process and be part of the student-led Common Room. Most available subjects are A Levels; however, we also offer Level 3 BTEC Sport, with pupils choosing to undertake courses under this qualification equivalent to one or two A Levels. Digital Media is available as a Cambridge Technical qualification and the LIBF Certificate in Financial Studies has been introduced in 2022.

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 pupils involved and academic results. The top group of mathematicians in Year 11 sit an additional IGCSE Further Pure Mathematics qualification.

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 with 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 Chair of Governors.

### **Overall perspective**

The School is a mixed community of girls and boys, 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 pupils' 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 pupils, 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. All pupils have one-to-one target setting sessions with tutors, discussing targets linking to the four pillars of the Barney education: Well-Being, Character, Community and Wisdom. MidYIS, YELLIS and ALIS data can also be used by teachers and tutors to advise pupils and their parents; there are online meetings between parents and tutors each term.

### **4. A broad education**

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

a) **PSHCEE**: each pupil has two HeadSpace sessions each week, following the HeadSpace programme, which has been drawn up by the Head of Sixth Form and Deputy Head Pastoral. 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 throughout Senior School, 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:** pupils in Years 7 to 11 will have between one and six Independent Study lessons every fortnight. These are supervised by a member of staff but are not structured like mainstream curriculum lessons. Pupils are encouraged to direct their own learning in these periods and may choose to do prep, independent research, reading, artwork or music practice. They create a culture of independent study and self-reflection. Tutors regularly discuss the use of these periods with their tutees.

c) **Chapel and Assemblies:** pupils attend Chapel twice 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 pupils. 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. Congers (Chapel Singing Practice) meanwhile promotes immersion without coercion into the Christian Foundation of the School so that pupils 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 5pm daily, pupils may choose to follow activities of their choice, to include attendance at subject clinics or additional teaching clinics, and Department activities and societies. Through the Monday Service afternoon (3.25-5pm), prioritising charitable activities such as the participation in the Charity Committee and its initiatives, pupils' 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 pupils visiting the Life Centre in Newcastle, and Art pupils 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, assemblies, tutor time and drop-in sessions with the School Careers advisor. This starts in Key Stage 3, 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 Years 10 and 11, the aim is on planning and deciding: pupils 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. Year 11s are also encouraged to

complete a Student Application Form for Sixth Form entry, developing personal reflection and articulation for future application experience.

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 whole School 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. Industry Day, which sits within the Sixth Form programme, is dedicated to developing employability skills further. All Year 12s also take responsibility for finding career-specific work experience placements, additionally supported by School, in February. This is enhanced by the various opportunities provided by DofE, CCF and the Charity committee, as well as House and School leadership roles, ranging from the 22 societies and schemes, mostly student-led, to the more official positions within the Sixth Form Common Room and the Prefect Leadership Team. Our Year 12 Professional Confidence Course, a two week programme of workshops, culminating in the Grand Dinner, supports individual progress within professional presentation, complementing the above Post-18 Pathways provision.

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

With pupils' knowledge and consent, and with the agreement of their parents, those pupils who receive academic support or individual specialist music tuition are withdrawn from classes for tuition. Those pupils 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: where possible, these are scheduled during Independent Study periods. Our policy considers that a pupil 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 pupils receiving individual specialist music lessons are withdrawn according to a rota so they do not miss the same lessons each week; wherever possible, the pupil 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. Academic Enrichment**

Departments identify and cater for Able Gifted & Talented 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 Academic Enrichment Policy for further details. There are also dedicated programmes for academic scholars in three age bands (Years 7 and 8, Years 9 to 11 and Sixth Form).

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

The School accepts 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, an IELTS qualification, or a CEFR Cambridge English Certificate. 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. 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 between one and three 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 pupils. In Years 7 to 9, we set separately in Mathematics and English, and in the Sciences for Year 9. Pupils are provided with timetables at the start of each term. Parents and pupils are aware from timetables which sets they are in and who their teachers are. Set changes made during the course of the year are reported to parents by communication from the relevant Head of Department. In Years 10 and 11, we set separately in Mathematics, English, the Sciences and MFL (where there are more than 1 set). 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 pupil to teacher ratio. A typical year group will have approximately 70 to 80 pupils 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. Pupils will be set homework by subject teachers and this is recorded for pupils on Microsoft Teams.

### **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 pupils with opportunities to promote independent learning and research. Workstations are networked and pupils are able to access the School intranet site, a shared directory for departmental work as well as their individual work areas.