

Longdean School



Curriculum Policy

Reviewed: October 2013
Ratified: October 2013
Next review: October 2015

Curriculum Policy

The Policy establishes:

- Guiding principles and values which shape and inform the curriculum
- A coherent curriculum organisation within which effective teaching and learning can take place
- A framework for curriculum development throughout the school
- The relationship of the Curriculum Policy to a range of associated policies
- The resources and services available to support teaching and learning
- Monitoring and evaluation in relation to the curriculum
- Monitoring and review of the policy

Section 1 – Principles and Values

In drawing up the Curriculum Policy, the Governing Body seeks to ensure that curriculum provision at Longdean School is informed and guided by the following set of principles and values:

- There are equal opportunities for all students irrespective of gender, race, religion, disability and class. (See policies on Equal Opportunities, Race Relations and Disability)
- Longdean School is an inclusive school and this is reflected in admissions to the school, the range of educational opportunities available, the nature of curriculum provision and the support for learning for those students with particular needs
- The School's inclusiveness is extended to provide open access to all school courses to all students who can benefit from them
- The curriculum framework provided builds on the curriculum experience of the primary school and is coherent from Year 7 to Year 13, ensuring strong routes for progression throughout the school
- The curriculum and its teaching are determined by strong values which are incorporated into what is taught and into the way it is taught. Fundamental to these values are qualities of trust, mutual respect, honesty and openness, aimed at securing the self-esteem and dignity of every member of the school community

- The curriculum provided is broadly based and balanced at each Key Stage. In Key Stage 3 there is a largely common curriculum which is differentiated to meet students' aptitudes and abilities based on four pathways. In Key Stage 4 students follow a recommended pathway which recognizes their different needs and interests, including courses provided with and by other institutions. At post-16, we aim to provide suitable progression routes on site for the majority of our Key Stage 4 students and to provide easy progression into other provision available through the Consortium and other local FE colleges. The school contributes to the Consortium, particularly in the areas where it has strengths
- In making varied and flexible provision, the Governors wish to secure genuine parity of esteem for all students. All students are equally deserving of our care and support
- The curriculum is appropriately differentiated throughout to take account of the differing abilities, needs and interests of the students. Differentiation is manifest in teaching and learning strategies, grouping and seating arrangements, activities and resources and levels of support
- A key aspect of the curriculum at all key stages is in preparing pupils for transition to the next stage of their education and into the adult world
- Support for learning meets the needs of all students and comes partly through effective differentiation but also from access to alternative courses, Student Support provision in the form of one-to-one work or classroom support with SEN staff, or support from outside agencies
- The curriculum endeavours to meet statutory requirements and to adopt the best of appropriate new developments
- Raising achievement is at the heart of the curriculum provision and its implementation

Section 2 – Curriculum Organisation

Curriculum offer

The National Curriculum provides the backbone of the Longdean School curriculum with deviations for two purposes:

- To provide opportunity and experience beyond the National Curriculum
- To use the 1996 Education Act (363 section) and more recent increases in flexibility to make alternative provision to meet a wider range of individual students' needs

A 'one size fits all' curriculum does not meet the needs of our students and increased flexibility in the legislative framework allows us to move towards a personalised curriculum to meet the individual needs of all students. Whilst we agree that students should receive a broad, balanced curriculum, we must be flexible enough to adapt the curriculum for students to maximize their chance for success and to allow them to specialise, to a degree, in order to capitalise on their strengths or interests.

This tests our ability to design and organise the curriculum and there are financial and other resource constraints to balance against student needs. The challenge is to provide the best possible provision that we can for every student within the resources available.

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 and 8)

All students follow a core curriculum of English, Mathematics, Science, PE, Social Sciences, (RE and Citizenship), Technology, ICT, Geography, History and Creative Arts, (Art, Music and Drama). Students in pathways W, X and Y also learn a Modern Foreign Language (French or German). Students in the Z pathway follow an enhanced Literacy and Numberacy course. All students follow a competency curriculum, consisting of Opening Minds cross-curricular English, Geography, History and RE, with an emphasis on Literacy), Future Skills cross-curricular Maths, Science, ICT and Technology) and the Resilience Programme. The PLTS are delivered and assessed through this curriculum.

Key Stage 4

All students follow a 3-year core curriculum consisting of English, Maths, Science, ICT, PE and Social Sciences. Students in pathways W and X continue to learn a Modern Foreign Language, (French or German). Students in W pathway study triple Science. Students are able to choose 3 option subjects which are studied and examined after one year. The option classes may be mixed-year group. They choose from a wide range of GCSE and BTEC courses, with guidance from senior staff. Students in pathways W and X have to choose either Geography or History as one of their options, in order to follow an EBACC programme. Students in the Z pathway are able to choose a vocational college course during years 10 and 11, travelling at the local college for one day per week.

Key Stage 5

Membership of the East Dacorum Consortium provides the framework for our provision at 16+. The Consortium rationale is to provide the range of courses on multiple sites. The school has made a strong contribution to the Consortium provision at both Level 3 ie AS/A Level or equivalent, and provision at Level 2.

Setting policy and arrangements

The key determining factors in deciding on setting arrangements are:

- The need to provide effective differentiation and to match the curriculum to students' needs and abilities, setting being one of a number of possible mechanisms for doing this
- The wishes of a department to organise their teaching in a particular way
- The resources available within a department and the collaborative arrangements with other departments that will make a particular arrangement feasible

Options choice and guidance

The curriculum flexibility outlined above emphasises the need for effective and impartial advice for students in their choice of optional courses at each stage of their school career. This should follow the guidelines in the Hertfordshire protocol and the good practice outlined in the QCA publication "Informing Student Choices". All students are given IAG in interviews with either Connexions or senior staff or both.

Review arrangements

The curriculum will be reviewed annually. This will allow adequate preparation time to implement changes for the following September. There may be occasions when late changes in legislation or funding levels may necessitate later changes.

Staffing arrangements

Staffing should be reviewed annually in the light of planned curriculum changes and a parallel needs analysis. The results will guide the recruitment of staff in the Spring and Summer period. Where staff specialisms do not completely match curriculum need, arrangements will need to be negotiated to cover the discrepancy; this might involve staff teaching second subjects, restrictions on the availability of places on courses or, in an extreme case, the postponement of a planned curriculum change.

Homework

From September 2008, there will be change in policy. In KS3 Maths and Modern Foreign Languages will set homework once a week, Science and English once per fortnight, whilst all other subjects will set it once per year in the form of a three week project for which the PLTs will be assessed.

In KS4, homework will be set as and when required and will focus on coursework, past papers and revision.

Section 3 – Curriculum Development

Curriculum developments may originate from:-

- Legislative changes
- School policy changes
- Government or county initiatives
- Qualification changes
- Identified gaps in provision
- Consortium review processes
- Improvements identified in department improvement plans
- The need to improve the quality of provision
- Suggestions from parents, School Council, staff members or governors

All significant changes will need to be approved by SLT and major changes by the Governors' Curriculum Committee. Prior to such approval, the feasibility of proposals will need to be explored and outline implementation plans, developed with the Headteacher and any other relevant senior members of staff. Part of this planning is analysis that includes staffing, accommodation, training, start-up and running costs, viability and student recruitment.

Once approval has been given, it will be the responsibility of SLT to ensure provision of the identified resources and of the relevant department to ensure the effective implementation.

Section 4 – Associated Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with school policies on

- Assessment, Recording and Reporting
- Learning and Teaching
- Behaviour for Learning
- Equal Opportunities
- Race Relations
- Special Needs
- Gifted & Talented
- Maths & Computing College status

It should also be read in the context of Dacorum 14-19 Education Collaboration agreements and protocols and relevant legislation and also East Dacorum 16-19 Partnership.

Section 5 – Resources and Services

Resources and budgeting

- It is the responsibility of SLT and the relevant governor committees to ensure the provision of teaching spaces, facilities, equipment and suitably qualified and experienced staff for each subject and curriculum area as far as is possible within the school's overall resources.

- Each subject department is provided with a formula-based “base budget” to provide for normal running expenses. The formula reflects the number of pupils taught, the number of lessons taught and the age of the pupils. Allowance is also made for the level of consumables used within the subject, eg exercise books, chemicals, fabric, etc, as opposed to re-usable items, eg textbooks, equipment.

Timetabling

- The timetable is a key enabling agent in delivering the curriculum.
- To provide suitable pupil groupings and time allocations within the constraints of staffing and budget will always be a challenge. It is the task of the timetable to provide the best mix of structures possible to enable effective curriculum delivery and to provide the most flexible student choice where appropriate. It is, nevertheless, the Art of the Possible and is essential that the inevitable compromises should not concentrate disadvantage on particular individuals, groups or subjects.

Staff

- The Assistant Head: Curriculum will be responsible for identifying the need for subject teaching as part of the curriculum planning for the following academic year.
- Recruitment of suitably qualified staff and experienced staff is the responsibility of the Headteacher in conjunction with other members of SLT and the Governing Body.

CPD

CPD needs will be identified through School and Department improvement Plans and through Performance Management and will be incorporated into the school’s CPD arrangements and budget

Section 6 – Monitoring and Evaluation

It will be the responsibility of SLT to monitor the operation of the policy as part of their general monitoring role. The major vehicles for doing so are itemized below:

Lesson observation

- All teaching staff will be observed teaching in accordance with the school’s monitoring and performance management arrangements
- Compliance with the Curriculum Policy will be checked as part of these observations

Work scrutiny

- Work scrutiny will be carried out regularly by SLT and by subject teams in accordance with the school’s monitoring arrangements

- Marking of work in accordance with the school's policy and the implementation of subject arrangements for ensuring students are aware of their progress and how to progress further will be checked as part of work scrutiny

Planner checks

- Planner checks should monitor the setting and reviewing of targets
- Student planner checks will be carried out weekly by form tutors for Years 7-11
- Year Heads and SLT will also carry out occasional random checks of planners

Examination Performance Analysis

- This will be carried out in the Autumn Term and will be a key component in forming department improvement plans. It may suggest curriculum changes

SLT Links

- Each subject and curriculum area will be assigned a link member of the School Leadership Team. Part of the SLT Link's role will be the monitoring of compliance with the Curriculum Policy

Parental Feedback

- Monitoring will take account of feedback from parents from both questionnaires and discussion with groups or individuals

Governor Visits

- Governors have agreed to make a minimum of two visits a year to the their link department and to write a report using the agreed pro forma

Section 7 – Curriculum Review

Frequency of review

- The curriculum will be kept under constant review
- Changes may be instigated by SLT or by subject leaders
- Changes will typically be provoked by various aspects as explained in section 3

Arrangements for review

- The arrangements for day and lesson times will be decided by the Governing Body, based on recommendations from SLT
- The overall structure of the curriculum, the allocation of time to subjects and timetable arrangements will be decided by SLT in consultation with relevant groups
- The detail of schemes of work will be agreed by subject teaching departments with the approval of the SLT Link and the Assistant Head: Curriculum
- Significant changes planned to any of these arrangements for the next academic year will be reported to the Curriculum Committee at their Autumn and/or Spring Term meeting

Staff Consultation

- Department Heads will provide the major route for staff consultation, in conjunction with their departmental teams, but comments will also be invited from individual members of staff

Parental Consultation

- Changes to the school day or week will be subject to statutory consultation.
- Parents will be given regular opportunities to comment on curriculum matters through the Governors' Annual Meeting for Parents and through surveys at Academic Review Days and other times

Student Consultation

- Students will be consulted about major changes through the School or Year Councils
- The Student Council will be able to represent student views and suggest changes affecting the curriculum as with other matters

Governor Consultation

- The main vehicle for consultation with governors will be the Curriculum Committee, though this may wish or need to gain approval from the full Governing Body for major changes or those required by legislation to have Governing Body approval