

# The New School at West Heath

## Policy on The Curriculum

### Introduction

One of the principles underlying The New School at West Heath's approach is the belief that students' self-esteem, confidence, and emotional stability can be greatly improved through academic achievement. Students are encouraged and supported to achieve in terms that **they** recognise as success. We endeavour to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and within that the full National Curriculum with the exception of Technology, which we plan to introduce during the academic year 2000/2001. In addition we provide a range of additional subjects which are of particular interest or relevance to our students. As the School grows, the Curriculum will continue to be a major area for development. The underlying belief that governs developments is that learning should be useful, relevant and enjoyable. We aim to deliver the curriculum in a way that has student credibility as well as satisfying the relevant requirements.

### Aims & Objectives

#### (1) The Hidden Curriculum

- To develop an awareness within each individual that they are unique, special and have strengths and talents which should be developed and nurtured to prepare them for the future.
- To develop an awareness in our students of their difficulties and strategies to overcome problems which may occur in the future.
- To encourage an atmosphere of mutual support where students are sympathetic to each other and stronger through the unity of the group.
- To help our students develop an appetite for learning which will remain with them when they leave.

#### (2) The Visible Curriculum

- To provide all students with a broad, balanced, and differentiated curriculum in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum and their individual needs.
- To assist students, through the curriculum, to explore their own abilities and to achieve success in their own eyes, raising their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation, and enabling them to cope better with difficulties in other areas of their lives.
- To equip all students with the skills, qualifications, emotional strength, and self-confidence required for the transition from the School to the next phase of their lives, be it re-integration to a mainstream school, college, or work.

### Strategies

#### (1) Groups, Options, and Timetable:

- Students are grouped within the School according to National Curriculum Key Stages and years. Occasionally and temporarily students may be placed in a year

group above or below their chronological age. Students are grouped within their National Curriculum year according to a blend of academic and social considerations. In Key Stage 3 more weight is given to social considerations. In Key Stage 4 where students are preparing for GCSE examinations more weight is given to the academic.

- Students in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) are taught: English (including Drama), Maths, Science, Art, Careers, French and Spanish, Food, Textiles, Humanities (History, Geography, RE), Information Technology, Physical Education, (including swimming and horse riding) Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) including citizenship and parenting.
- Students in Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) are taught: English Maths, Science Single GCSE, Careers, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), Physical Education, and may select four from the following options: Art, Child Development, Dance, Drama, English Literature, Food, Humanities, IT (Office Applications), Media Studies, Music, Physical Education, Sociology and Textiles.
- The timetable has 7 x 45-minute periods each morning and 3 x 40 minute each afternoon totalling 25 hours per week. An analysis of the allocations of time is as follows:

KEY STAGE 3	Periods		
Subject	Y7	Y8	Y9
English	5	5	5
Maths	5	5	5
Science	4	4	4
Self Science	1	1	1
Careers & Citizenship	1	1	1
PE	4	4	4
Swimming	1	1	1
Technology	2	2	2
Modern Foreign Languages	1	1	1
IT	1	1	1
Humanities	2	2	2
Art	2	2	2
Technology	2	2	2
Library	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1
Food	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

KEY STAGE 4	
Subject	Periods
English	5
Maths	5
Science	4
PE / Dance	4
Self Science	2
Citizenship	2
Swimming	1
<b>13 OPTIONS: Choice of 4</b>	
Modern Foreign Languages	3
IT	3
Office applications	3
Music	3
Textiles	3
History	3
Art	3
Food	3
English Lit Option	3
Drama	3
Child Development	3
PE GCSE	3
Graphics	3
Media studies	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

- The school believes it is important to offer students a curriculum which is broad and balanced. A decision to give a total of 40% time to the core subjects is deliberate and allows us to offer a greater number of options in Key Stage 4 as well as 2 lessons of PSHE and 1 lesson of IT per week throughout school. In order to optimise the options available in Key Stage 4, Years 10 and 11 are combined. Student preferences for option subjects are sought and they are offered as choices from groups of 3 each containing an academic, a practical and a creative subject. This enables us to give most students at least 3 out of their top 4 choices.
- Modern Foreign Languages is taught as an option in Year 10 and Year 11 because experience has shown that there is a great deal of resistance to this subject in Key Stage 4. This presents particular challenges for the language department to deliver both GCSE and Certificate courses to the same group. It is envisaged that in time a second option group will be possible. The possibility of returning MFL to the compulsory curriculum will be reviewed annually.
- All the courses offered at Key Stage 4 lead to GCSE or Certificate of Achievement examinations.

At least once every half term, an afternoon of non-examination practical or team building activities is organised in order to provide an opportunity for other types of achievement. Typical examples are shown in the table below

Afternoon +
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Singing
Gardening
Golf
Biking
Film Making
Constructions
Drama
Duke of Edinburgh Award
Robotics

## **(2) Planning & Co-ordination**

- Planning is the responsibility of a member of the teaching staff directed by the Head of Education. Some additional constraints are involved in working with part-time staff. Occasionally this results in the same subject twice on the same day. In this case staff are encouraged to offer 2 contrasting lessons with different activities and styles of teaching if possible.
- Most lessons are singles because it is felt that 40/45 minutes is a reasonable length of time to sustain concentration. At the request of some practical subjects (Food and Science), some double lessons have been included.
- Staff are encouraged to identify opportunities for cross-curricular themes. This is an area for on-going development. The school's recommended pro forma for Schemes of Work has a section entitled "Opportunities for Cross-Curricular Themes" and a co-ordinator has been appointed to develop this.
- At the end of the summer term a cross- curricular week is planned during which the normal timetable and student groups will be suspended.
- The Head of Education supervises planning. Guidance is provided as to what must be contained within the planning documents. There is a recommended format for Schemes of Work which is used by most teachers. Where a published scheme is adopted (as in Maths or Science) which provides documentation it is sufficient that the teacher demonstrates that the school's planning requirements are satisfied by those published and additional elements are provided for it to do so. Documentation is reviewed annually.
- There are separate policies for PSHE and Sex Education (q.v.)

## **(3) Literacy Support**

- Some of the students referred to the school have literacy needs that seriously affect their ability to access the curriculum. Invariably their difficulties and frustrations with language have contributed to their emotional problems. Characteristically they have low self-esteem, feel frustrated and are often tired through having to concentrate more than their peers. Some have a negative attitude towards the curriculum.
- All students entering the school are given a WRAT test to identify any needs. Those who have a reading age of more than 3 years below their chronological age receive a tailored programme to improve their literacy. Typically this involves a

regular one-to-one lesson with a trained literacy support assistant under the supervision of the Head of English who has a qualification from the Dyslexia Institute. The department is equipped with two computers and CD-ROM with specialist software and implements a multi-sensory phonic approach. Integral to delivery of literacy teaching is the personal encouragement and support available during these sessions. Students progress is tracked and independence encouraged. Literacy support teacher also provides information for other teachers about the literacy needs of various students advising on appropriate methods in staff meetings and staff training days. There is an ongoing programme of INSET and awareness raising of the particular needs of these students and the Literacy support Dept provide guidance and support to staff.

#### **(4) Differentiation:**

There is a separate policy on differentiation (q.v.)

#### **(5) Teaching Styles & Techniques:**

- Although we hold academic achievement very highly, it should always be remembered that the students would not be here if this was the primary focus of concern. Teachers should remember to teach children not subjects. Academic achievement is one of the tools we use to repair damaged lives.
- The New School at West Heath does not specify teaching styles; each member of staff is encouraged and supported to discover a style with which he/she is comfortable, which is effective in promoting students' learning and achievement, and which is in line with the aims and ethos of the School. Inset training is provided in a variety of Behaviour Management strategies, teaching/learning styles, etc. The effectiveness of a teacher's individual style within the environment of the School usually forms part of the discussion during Appraisal. (See Staff Development and Appraisal policies.)
- In line with The New School at West Heath's Behaviour Management Policy's focus on "Prevention", there are certain expected standards for lessons:
  - 1) All staff are expected to be ready on time and in the classroom to receive each class with a lesson prepared which achieves balance, pace, and differentiation.
  - 2) Staff are aware of the individual personalities, learning styles, and problems of the students as well as the social dynamics within each teaching group (from baseline assessments and group reviews at staff meetings) and are expected to take them into account in the planning and delivery of lessons.
  - 3) Each lesson has an introduction and conclusion and starts and finishes on time. Homework is assigned regularly in each subject in line with the subject policies and the overall School Homework Policy.
  - 3) Behavioural problems are anticipated (as far as is possible) and defused as quickly as possible when they arise using the agreed strategies. (See Behaviour Management Policy.)
- Teachers are also expected to foster self-esteem and motivation through recognising and rewarding all achievement using discretionary rewards as

described in the Behaviour Management Policy and to provide opportunities for all students to achieve in every lesson.

## **(6) Assessment, Recording, and Reporting:**

There is a separate policy on Assessment, Recording, and Reporting

## **Staffing & Resources**

- All members of the teaching staff at The New School at West Heath are specialist subject teachers, many with great experience of teaching their subjects in mainstream schools. They are expected to keep up-to-date with all developments in their subjects through seminars and conferences offered by QCA, KCSA, and the GCSE examination boards as well as monitoring and absorbing developments in the teaching of EBD children. (See Staff Development Policy).
- Learning Support Assistants are used to assist the subject teachers whenever possible in delivering a broad, balanced curriculum, differentiated for each individual teaching group and student. In addition to supporting individual students with specific learning or behavioural needs, Classroom Assistants support the work of teachers in practical lessons, project work, and on outings. (See Classroom Assistant manual and Staff Development policy).

## **External Links**

Parents are involved in the choices of options when students move to KS4. The Kent Education Business Partnership is involved in the work placement programme. The school has occasional visits from our local community police officer, the school nurse, citizens advice bureau and various visiting speakers.

External facilities are used for Golf.

Most subjects incorporate educational visits into their schemes of work. See separate subject policies.

<b>Curriculum</b>	
<b>This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:</b> Assessment, Recording & Reporting, Differentiation, Marking, Subject Policies	
<b>Appendices:</b>	
<b>Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of:</b> The Senior Leadership Team	
<b>Lead responsibility:</b>	Vice Principal - Education
<b>Relevant Legislation:</b>	The National Curriculum
<b>Approved by:</b> S.S. Committee	<b>Date approved:</b> 09:2004
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