



WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL

CURRICULUM POLICY

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POLICY ON CURRICULUM

Introduction

Westminster offers a broad, liberal education where pupils are taught to think, discuss, challenge and debate. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and tackle problems both individually and collaboratively. Academic departments are given considerable autonomy in choosing which examination boards and syllabuses to follow, but whilst in all subjects the relevant specification will be taught, this will not be allowed to be a straitjacket.

Westminster is committed to developing speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills where opportunities exist across the curriculum. Teachers will seek to enrich their lessons; the intention being to make learning an enjoyable experience so that pupils approach lessons with enthusiasm rather than as a means to an end.

We aim for pupils to leave Westminster with a love of learning and able to make a positive contribution to society and the community at large. All pupils are catered for by teachers differentiating their lessons and supporting pupils as individuals both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils with SEND and EAL are fully supported both with specific teaching strategies and through the Study Skills department. The curriculum, plan and schemes of work take proper account of the needs of all pupils, in terms of ability, need and aptitudes.

Lower School Curriculum

All boys who arrive in the Fifth Form follow a common curriculum appropriate to their age, aptitude and ability. No subject choices need to be made before arriving at the School. Subjects studied at this stage include English, Mathematics, Sciences, French, Latin, Ancient Greek, Geography, History, Philosophy and Religion, Art, Computer Science, Drama, Music and PE. The study of one modern and two ancient languages not only offers an introduction to Western European culture but also provides a formal and transferable basis for the future acquisition of any other language. Science is taught as three separate subjects, as well as an Extension Science course, and all boys study introductory courses in Computer Science, Product Design and Electronics.

For their next two years, the Lower Shell and Upper Shell, boys will prepare for 10 or 11 GCSEs or IGCSEs, including Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, French and at least two of the three Sciences (the Science courses are designed so that all pupils will have achieved scientific literacy by the end of the Lower Shell). Otherwise the system of choice open to them is very flexible and at this stage pupils can begin a second Modern Language (German, Mandarin, Russian or Spanish), building on the firm linguistic basis of French and Latin. Boys are required to take one or two practical / creative subjects, choosing from Art, Computer Science, Drama, Electronics, Product Design and Music. The aim is that classes should not, or very rarely, exceed 22 in number, and should be smaller wherever possible.

Fifth Form and Lower Shell pupils join at least two Lower School Activities: a varied programme, ranging from languages such as Modern Greek, Italian and Japanese, through additional sports to music or classic films.

Upper School Curriculum

The Upper School curriculum is designed to satisfy requirements both of depth and of breadth in a co-educational environment.

All Sixth Form pupils follow 4 A Level or Pre-U courses in the formal timetable (“in block”). Of these, the majority will continue with these subjects in the Remove and complete four qualifications (A Levels and / or Pre-U). A wide range of subjects will be offered making a wide variety of subject combinations possible. The School aims to be as flexible as it can in meeting the wishes and needs of individual pupils.

While pupils will be able to mix and match the Arts and the Sciences if they wish, this is by no means the requirement or advice and many are expected to follow a fairly specialized route; pupils are encouraged to play to their interests and strengths, and the only recommendation given to pupils is to seek some sort of coherence and to bear in mind the options they are opening up or closing down in applications to universities or future careers. In many subjects, pupils have the opportunity to produce extended independent research essays or investigations, some of which are an integral part of examination board specifications. In all subjects, examination board specifications will be seen as forming only a part of the core delivery.

A General Options and Cultural Perspectives programme of three cycles of eight-week single-period courses is offered alongside the specialist A Level or Pre-U teaching in the Sixth Form. Cultural Perspectives introduce pupils to a range of cultural, ethical and sociological topics, and include essay writing opportunities at two points in the year. General Options comprise a series of courses on a huge variety of topics, including a number aimed at supporting pupils’ wellbeing. Pupils can also choose to pursue a further qualification in these lessons including Electronics and Spanish AS.

An additional and extremely valuable feature for both the Sixth Form and the Remove is the John Locke Society, where the entire Upper School is taken out of lessons for one period around four times per term so that they can attend a talk by a visiting speaker who might be a politician, journalist, author, sportsman, industrialist or religious leader. Our central London location gives us ready access to distinguished visitors of many kinds, a benefit which is also productively exploited by the numerous departmental societies.

Broader Academic Study

Outside of the formal academic curriculum, a wealth of opportunity is offered to pupils of all year groups. Further languages may be studied (e.g.: Arabic, Italian and Japanese); music, drama, debating and journalism are all major features of School life; and there are many opportunities for education visits both in the UK and abroad covering academic, sporting, exploring and cultural activities.

Sport and Physical Education

All pupils participate in the Station (games) programme on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Some pupils will play competitive matches on Saturdays and other days of the week. There is a wide range of options on offer, particularly in the Upper School, with pupils choosing between competitive and non-competitive activities.

The Fifth Form additionally have an 85-minute PE lesson fortnightly.

Guidance and Careers

Tutors and Housemasters engage with the pupils' academic progress and decision-making on a frequent and regular basis, to ensure coherent and realistic choices are made for courses at (I)GCSE, A Level and Pre-U and that pupils are encouraged to fulfil their potential.

A structured programme of guidance for pupils runs throughout their time at the School. When subject choices are made, pupils are offered advice on how academic decisions might affect possible career paths. Pupils are encouraged to seek their own work experience placements, although the School is happy to provide support in assisting those who are finding this problematic. Contacts with Old Westminsters are a key component in developing career opportunities for pupils.

Talks on careers, UCAS and American universities are available to pupils and parents. Individual advice is provided by the Higher Education Team: Head of Higher Education, Guidance Adviser, UCAS Adviser and International Universities Adviser, supported by Housemasters and Tutors.

In all guidance care is taken to ensure that the information is presented to pupils in an impartial manner.

Wellbeing

All pupils are involved the Wellbeing programme which covers Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as well as physical health and mental wellbeing. This programme is overseen by the Head of Wellbeing. This programme encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act. These protected characteristics are:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Gender reassignment
- d. Marriage and civil partnership
- e. Pregnancy and maternity
- f. Race
- g. Religion or belief
- h. Sex
- i. Sexual orientation.

In the Fifth Form pupils attend weekly wellbeing lessons. For these sessions, pupils are split into half-classes (groups of ten) and follow a bespoke, age-appropriate syllabus. In the Sixth Form pupils take part in wellbeing sessions as part of the cultural perspectives programme.

All year groups also have a weekly tutorial and termly wellbeing lectures which follow a scheme of work developed and monitored by the Head of Wellbeing. Topics include gender issues, drugs, bereavement, leadership and coping with adversity.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) is at the heart of everything they do. Pupils attend services twice weekly in Westminster Abbey where a short sermon given by the chaplain, a member of staff or a visiting speaker, encourages them to reflect on a wide range of topical issues. Latin Prayers, a weekly service up School, also often includes a reflection or thought for the day, as well as a celebration of pupils' successes.

In addition to the whole school opportunities for SMSC, the nature of the Westminster classroom environment encourages pupils to explore a wide variety of ideas in the course of their work. The literature components of the humanities and languages courses tackle important themes, and the

religion and philosophy course in the Fifth Form introduces pupils to a wider range of ideas. Extension science classes tackle the application of science in society, for good and ill.

For all year groups, there is a programme of opportunities for pupils to be engaged in external community activities which goes beyond our formal Civic Engagement programme. Westminster expects every pupil to become involved in at least one significant activity or project in this area during their time at the School.

ICT

ICT skills at Westminster are primarily delivered through the main curriculum. Early in their time at the School, pupils are shown the use of school systems by their tutors. Pupils quickly become familiar with email, the intranet and Firefly (the School's VLE). Pupils then learn and develop their use of standard desktop programmes through their activities as part of the main curriculum: for example typing essays, analysing data in spreadsheets and preparing presentations.

Fundamental British Values

The School is committed to actively promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Activities promoting these values are embedded throughout school life. With our location close to Parliament and the Supreme Court, and with a highly diverse student body, we are in an excellent position to raise pupils' awareness of these values and their centrality to British identity.

All parts of the SMSC curriculum, including Abbey and Latin Prayers, actively promote Fundamental British Values. Classroom teachers delivering content which supports SMSC are committed to promoting fundamental British values actively throughout their teaching.

The Fifth Form formally study themes such as these in both Wellbeing lessons and the Philosophy and Religion course (particularly the Election Term course on Political Philosophy).

The Wellbeing programme of tutorials and termly lectures regularly includes aspects of Fundamental British Values as applied to topical discussions including examples such as the right to protest, the "Rhodes Must Fall" campaign and no-platforming.