



Downe House

## CURRICULUM POLICY

### 1.0 Purpose: Aims and Principles

Downe House aims to provide girls with an excellent holistic education. Since the School's establishment in 1907, its pupils have followed a curriculum which seeks to develop a love of learning and independent thought. Downe House is an environment where questioning, academic risk taking, divergent thinking and the freedom to learn from mistakes are all encouraged. The curriculum nurtures high aspirations and aims to prepare girls for the opportunities and challenges of the Twenty-First Century.

The Downe House curriculum should be seen in its broadest sense as an entire learning experience. This includes formal lessons as well as regular school events, daily routines and learning opportunities that take place outside the classroom.

Within the framework of a broad and balanced education for each girl, the Downe House curriculum places emphasis on the needs of the individual. The curriculum allows for a high level of personalisation, so that each girl can focus on her strengths, and weaknesses, develop specialisms, focus on existing interests and discover new passions. The curriculum is designed to allow each girl to:

- develop her capacity as a successful learner in order to achieve the best possible academic qualifications and standards, regardless of her ability;
- develop individual confidence as a young woman in order to live a safe, healthy and fulfilling life;
- become a responsible citizen, in a local, national and international context, who has respect for fundamental British values and can make a positive contribution to society.

Downe House aims to create a learning environment which enables the girls to strive for the highest academic results. In determining each girl's 'potential' the School bases its judgements first and foremost on knowledge of the girl as person, in addition to making careful use of available baseline data and value-added assessments. The girl is encouraged to aim high through a judicious mixture of appropriate challenge and support.

Ultimately, to enable girls to achieve a place on the Higher Education course of their choice, as well as equip them for a future career, they are prepared for any appropriate national assessments and public examinations, given impartial careers advice and guidance, and directed towards relevant work shadowing opportunities where appropriate.

Within all subject areas great emphasis is placed on developing the girls' intellectual curiosity and skills of evaluation resilience and critical analysis. Originality and independence of thought are greatly valued.

## 2.0 Procedure

2.1 A broad and balanced education for every girl is provided as follows:

- language and communication;
- mathematical studies and applications;
- scientific studies and applications;
- social, political, economic and environmental studies;
- information communication technology studies and applications;
- digital literacy;
- technological activities and applications;
- creative activities and applications;
- physical education; and
- religious and moral education.

The Downe House publications: *Upper Fourth Choices (creative subjects and languages)*, *GCSE Subjects and Options* and the *Sixth Form Options Booklet* provide a detailed summary of the nature and scope of the School's courses.

The School also recognises and encourages cross-curricular developments which reflect the interdisciplinary nature of many areas of study.

2.2 Downe House aims to develop successful learners who:

- are inducted into the essential knowledge, skills and discourse of subject disciplines and are able to develop specialisms appropriate to aptitude;
- can appreciate human achievement in the fields of languages, mathematics, science, technology, humanities, physical and aesthetic pursuits and creative and expressive arts, and to experience a sense of personal achievement in these fields during their time at school;
- are able to link areas of knowledge in a spirit of enquiry;
- are able to pursue courses appropriate for their stage of learning and particular abilities in order to achieve their personal best, in lessons which differentiate for student need;
- are able to learn independently and with others;
- can acquire the study skills and self-knowledge necessary to realise their learning potential, and are motivated to achieve the best they can, now and in the future;
- are creative, resourceful and able to solve problems.

2.3 Downe House aims to develop confidence in each girl by:

- placing emphasis on courage and compassion when dealing with, and relating to, others;
- encouraging positive and resilient responses to the opportunities, challenges and responsibilities of adult life;
- encouraging the development of an active and healthy lifestyle and a sense of wellbeing
- developing the capacity to evaluate risk, take managed risks and stay safe;

- developing secure values and principles to distinguish right from wrong;
- providing opportunities to be articulate and confident participants in local, national and international communities
- providing opportunities for girls to be independent, show initiative and organise themselves;
- encouraging girls to embrace new challenges in order to highlight the inspiring nature of the world and human achievement.

2.4 Downe House aims to develop responsible citizens who:

- respect fundamental British values and understand their significance in a local, national and international context;
- can participate as effective, respectful citizens within a global society;
- acquire an understanding of the social, economic and political issues of the world and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations;
- can challenge injustice, are committed to universal human rights, and can strive to live peaceably with others;
- understand the complex human interaction with, and dependence upon, the local, national and global environment, and develop a caring and responsible attitude towards these contexts;

### 3.0 Curriculum Delivery

The Downe House curriculum should be seen in its widest sense as an entire planned learning experience for each girl. This includes formal lessons and events, daily routines and learning opportunities that exist outside the classroom. Although the majority of girls' formal learning experiences take place in subject based lessons, the curriculum also includes all activities that take place "outside" the framework of the timetabled day/week. These include, but are not limited to, evening activities and lectures, whole school and year assemblies, House activities, opportunities for leadership within the school community, School Council and Chapel services. Aspects of the curriculum are sometimes delivered via "suspension" models where conventional lessons are suspended in favour of "thematic days" for particular year groups. Additionally, all departments take into account the cross-curricular dimensions below and incorporate them into their subjects and skills delivery.

**3.1 Literacy across the curriculum:** We aim for all girls to become literate and articulate communicators. In all subjects, girls should be taught to express themselves correctly and appropriately on paper and orally, and to read accurately and with understanding. Girls should be taught to recognise and use Standard English. In writing, they should be taught to use correct spelling and punctuation and follow grammatical conventions. They should also be taught to organise their writing in logical and coherent forms. In speaking, girls should be taught to use language precisely and cogently. They should be taught to listen to others, and to respond and build on their ideas and views constructively. In reading, they should be taught strategies to help them read with understanding, to locate and use information, to follow a process or argument and summarise, and to synthesise and adapt what they learn from their reading. They should be specifically taught strategies to aid revision, including how to retain information long term for depth of understanding.

**3.2 Numeracy across the curriculum:** Similarly, all subjects are responsible, where appropriate, for developing girls' numeracy when opportunities arise during the course of

the lesson. This can be done through asking students to use mental mathematics, basic mathematical formulae, tables and graphs to present data, and estimates and calculations.

**3.3 Use of ICT across the curriculum:** In addition to the Key Stage 3 ICT lessons, girls in all Key Stages should be given opportunities to apply and develop their ICT capability through the use of ICT tools to support their learning in all subjects. All girls have access to computers and an increasing number have their own computing and smart devices. The wireless campus at Downe House means all pupils have the freedom to use ICT in a variety of contexts on a daily basis. Safe use of ICT is an integral part of the curriculum and all girls are taught to use ICT safely in terms of social media and the use of the Internet.

**3.4 The “Prevent Duty” across the curriculum:** Downe House recognises the importance of placing emphasis on fundamental British values in the curriculum. These values reflect the ethos of the school and all members of the community have a role to play in delivering the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. All subject areas, and all non-teaching staff, are responsible for promoting these values when opportunities arise.

**3.5 Health and Safety across the curriculum:** All subjects have a duty to ensure appropriate compliance with Health and Safety guidelines. In addition to this duty, specific responsibilities lie with Science, Design and Technology, Drama, Information and Communication Technology, Art and Design, and Physical Education. When working with tools, equipment and materials, in practical activities and in different environments, including those that are unfamiliar, pupils should be taught:

- about hazards, risks and risk control.
- to recognise hazards, assess consequent risks and take steps to control the risks to themselves and others.
- to use information to assess the immediate and cumulative risks.
- to manage their environment to ensure the Health and Safety of themselves and others.
- to explain the steps they take to control risks.

Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural aspects of the curriculum are delivered via the content included in department schemes of work, through the programme of lectures and through other planned learning opportunities in the school.

#### Careers Education and Guidance

This aspect of the curriculum offers impartial advice to all pupils and facilitates their ability to make informed choices in relation to a broad range of career options. The programme allows all pupils to achieve their potential. This is delivered via a range of lectures, talks, career specific workshops, the DH Links programme, the individual review meetings that take place between staff and pupils and careers lessons that form part of the PSHE programme.

At Key Stages 3 and 4 Downe House chooses to respond to the legal requirement in maintained schools to teach Religious Education and sex and relationships education, and to non-statutory guidelines to cover other aspects of Personal, Social and Health

Education (PSHE). Girls receive a weekly lesson in PSHE in both Key Stages. At Key Stage 4 girls may choose to pursue GCSE Religious Studies. Those who do not opt for this qualification receive one Religious Studies General lesson per week. All girls attend assemblies (whole school and year group assemblies) and House meetings each week. School services also take place in the School Chapel at least once a week for each year group. PSHE is delivered at Key Stage 5 through a programme of compulsory lectures and the enrichment programme.

Computing (regulatory in maintained schools from 2014) is taught across various modules of the weekly ICT lessons in Key Stage 3.

#### 4.0 Curriculum Plan

Subjects and timetable allocations vary across the three Key Stages. The timetable is based on 57 lessons per week. All lessons are 40 minutes long, many are taught in “double forties” which last 1 hour 20 minutes.

**4.1 Key Stage 3:** all girls follow a broad and balanced range of subjects and have curriculum time allocated to independent study (prep). All girls are treated as individuals and their individual curriculum is tailored to their particular interests and aptitudes. Some girls in Remove (Year 7) and LIV (Year 8), for example, will pursue additional languages such as Chinese, Spanish, German or Italian if they have particular linguistic skills and/or experiences. UIV girls have the option of choosing the Modern Foreign Languages they wish to study during this year. They also have the option of choosing whether to discontinue with Latin or to begin studying Classical Greek. All UIV girls study at least one modern or classical language. From September 2019 there will be choice in relation to creative subjects in UIV. Further details are found in the UIV options booklet. All subjects are taught in mixed ability groups apart from Mathematics, French, and Latin (LIV and UIV only).

**4.2 Key Stage 4:** all girls follow a broad and balanced range of subjects and have curriculum time allocated to independent study (prep). The number of hours of private study is determined by the number of options chosen. A number of girls will take GCSE Mathematics and/or French at the end of LV (Year 10). These girls may continue to study French (taking the DELF qualification). Many of those who have taken Mathematics early, study for a Level 2 Further Mathematics qualification in UV (Year 11). A minimum of two sciences must be studied at Key Stage 4. All girls study a minimum compulsory core of GCSE’s in Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, a modern foreign language, and humanities (History, Geography, and RS). At Key Stage 4 a range of languages is available i.e. French, Spanish, German, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Italian. DT is available as Resistant Materials Technology and Art and Design :- Textiles is also available. All subjects are taught in mixed ability groups apart from English, Mathematics, the Sciences, French and Latin.

The following table illustrates the options and number of lessons from Remove (Year 7) to UV (Year 11).

	Remove (7)	LIV (8)	UIV (9)	LV (10)	UV (11)
English	5	5	5	6	6
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5
Biology	2	2	2	4	4
Chemistry	2	2	2	4	4

Physics	2	2	2	4	4
French	4	3	3	4	4/3*
Language 1	-	-	4	4	4
Language 2	-	-	3	4	4
Latin	3	3	3	4	4
Classical Greek	1	1	4	4	4
RS	2	2	2	4	4
RS General	-	-	-	1	1
Geography	2	2	2	4	4
History	2	2	2	4	4
Current Affairs	1	1	-	-	-
Art	2	2	2	4	4
DT	3	3	2	4	4
Cookery General	-	-	-	2	2
Computing	2	2	2	4	4
Music	1	1	1	4	4
Drama	1	1	1	4	4
Sport	8	6	6	4	4
PSHE	1	1	1	1	1

\* Girls who take GCSE French early and continue with DELF French/other enrichment courses do 3 lessons in the UV

**4.3 Key Stage 5:** all girls follow a broad and balanced range of subjects and have curriculum time allocated to independent study (prep). The number of hours of private study is determined by the number of options chosen. The majority of girls study for three A Levels over two years. There is the option to study an AS Level in a range of subjects or to study for four A Levels. LVI (Year 12) girls must follow the compulsory Higher Education and Research Skills (H.E.R.S.) for the first half term of LVI. This can lead to the option to take an EPQ. All subjects are taught in mixed ability groups, apart from Mathematics, and each subject has 8 lessons per week.

**4.4 Curriculum extension and enrichment:** Girls in all year groups have a range of curriculum opportunities which underpin and extend the timetabled curriculum. This is seen as an integral part of the overall Downe House curriculum rather than an addition. The table below is not an exhaustive list of the wide range of opportunities available in this aspect of the curriculum, but it serves as a useful outline of some of the features of this part of the curriculum framework.

Year Group								
Remove Year 7	PSHE (through lessons and lectures)	Private reading	Current Affairs	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Involvement in charity work		Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	
LIV Year 8	PSHE (through lessons and lectures)	Private reading	Current Affairs	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Involvement in charity work		Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of	

							ICT	
UIV Year 9	PSHE (through lessons and lectures)	Private reading		Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Involvement in charity work		Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	
LV Year 10	PSHE (through lessons and lectures)	Private reading	Involvement in charity work	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Bronze D of E	Work Shadowing	Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	The Elective Programme
UV Year 11	PSHE (through lessons and lectures)	Private reading	Involvement in charity work	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Work Shadowing		Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	The Elective Programme
LVI Year 12	PSHE (through lectures)	H.E.R.S. and Extended Project	Work Shadowing	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Community Service Involvement in charity work	Gold D of E	Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	
UVI Year 13	PSHE (through lectures)	Extended Project	Work Shadowing	Study Skills through the Elevate Education programme	Community Service Involvement in charity work		Safe use of social media, the Internet and other aspects of ICT	

## 5.0 Implementation

Overall responsibility to the Headmistress for the delivery of the formal aims and objectives of the School Curriculum Policy lies with the Academic Deputy. It is the duty of each Head of Department (Academic) or Subject Leader to lead and manage the delivery of these within the classroom. Details of all relevant Schemes of Work and relevant procedures are documented in *Departmental Handbooks*. It falls upon all members of staff within the School community, under the direction of the Headmistress and Leadership Team, to foster the skills, values and attitudes promoted by the School's curriculum.

## 6.0 Other relevant documentation

In addition to the reference detailed above, the Curriculum Policy should be read in conjunction with *Downe House's Mission Statement* and the *School Development Plan*. The School's *Feedback Procedures and Guidelines, Assessment, Reporting, Differentiation, Learning Skills, Baseline Data and Value Added, Pastoral, PSHE and Extra-Curricular Policies, UIV, GCSE and Sixth Form Options Booklets* are also of particular relevance.

## Review

The Curriculum Policy will be reviewed annually by the Academic Deputy with recommendations for approval made to the Headmistress.

## Revision History:

Review Date: September 2020 – Academic Deputy

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Requested By
	02.01.15	Reviewed	Mark Hill
	10.11.15	Reviewed	Mark Hill
	28.09.16	Amended	Mark Hill
	November 2016	Reviewed – No Changes	Mark Hill
	February 2017	Amendment highlighted in red	Mark Hill
	November 2017	Reviewed – No Changes	Mark Hill
	September 2018	Amendment highlighted in yellow	Mark Hill
	February 2019	Amendments to: 1.0 2.1 2.3 4.1 and 4.2	Mark Hill
	September 2019	Reviewed	Mark Hill

Review Leader: Academic Deputy  
Reviewed: September 2019  
Next Review: September 2020