

Curriculum Policy



SUTTON VALENCE SCHOOL

Curriculum Policy

The curriculum at Sutton Valence is broad and balanced, offering all students the opportunity to study an extensive range of subjects appropriate to their age and ability. We cater for a wide range of academic aptitudes, so our curriculum is necessarily diverse and flexible. Lessons are taught by specialist teachers in a stimulating and challenging environment that is conducive to a positive, enjoyable learning experience for the students. Due to the changes to the structure of the week from September 2024, some students in the Fifth Form are following a legacy curriculum and this is explained within the body of this Policy.

Morning lessons are 55 minutes long, with three afternoon lessons of 50 minutes each. There are 34 periods per week including PE, games and activities which are timetabled during this time with most sports fixtures being on Saturday morning. We run a very extensive sporting programme and offer a comprehensive selection of clubs and societies to enrich the quality and breadth of the students' education; we timetable these to maximise the benefit to the students by ensuring an equitable spread of resources and specialist teaching staff.

The Digital Strategy means we use OneNote as repository for all schoolwork which includes students' work, electronic textbooks, teaching resources and on-line mark books.

The Lower School: First and Second Forms

Approximately half our students enter the First Form at the age of eleven; the majority come from our Prep School whilst the rest enroll from a diverse range of other feeder schools. Our junior curriculum is a broad and varied programme, where we aim to educate the whole child and provide them with experiences, inside and outside of the classroom that will develop the skills required for success at GCSE and beyond.

For the majority of their subjects, students are streamed into an A stream with two or three parallel mixed ability streams of about twenty students or fewer. In these classes, the students study Geography, History, Religious Studies, ICT, and Science. The exceptions are English, Mathematics where students are set by ability and Modern Foreign Languages where they are set according to language choice. The First, Second and Third Forms will study either Spanish or French. The development of leadership, teamwork and personal skills are promoted via the Junior Leadership Course and our PSHE programme. The First and Second Forms also study Art, Design and Technology, Drama and Music. The Third Form as a legacy, study two of the creative subjects of their choosing.

First and Second Form students have lessons in Online Safety and the Prevent Strategy as part of the curriculum.

The students are housed in separate accommodation to foster a sense of identity and purpose in a safe ~~yet challenging~~ environment. They are assigned to one of four Houses at this stage where they will remain until they leave the School.

Students with specific learning difficulties and overseas students requiring additional English lessons receive extra support as appropriate. We timetable specialist Learning Support teachers alongside English and Maths classes to allow us to get some of our less able students up to speed as quickly as possible. A special programme of activities for our gifted and talented scholars runs throughout all year groups. In addition to their timetabled classes, a large number of students, of

all ages, take Music and Drama lessons.

The Middle School: Third Form

We have a second, large intake of students at the age of thirteen from our local prep schools; these students are carefully mixed with those who have been with us for two years into an A stream, a B stream and three parallel mixed ability classes for most of their subjects. The exceptions are the same as for the younger years, namely Maths, English and Modern Languages. We introduce the CCF to the Third Form curriculum on Wednesday afternoons and teach the three science specialisms separately. In the Michaelmas Term students are taught for a 'Discovery Term' which will enable them to study exciting aspects of the different subjects in each of their timetabled lessons. The teachers have produced a curriculum which will not only prepare students for GCSE study but also really inspire and engage them. Students are also encouraged to complete their Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award through CCF.

From the start of the Lent Term of the Third Form, students will begin most of their GCSE courses. This will enable classes to complete the course content well before the start of the Summer Term in 2027 and offer plenty of opportunity for consolidation, examination technique practice and revision. By starting some GCSEs courses slightly early, we also allow students to have a taste of the subjects on offer and this will help them to decide which to continue, alongside the core subjects, into the Fourth Form. Some subjects will be started in September 2025 where applicable.

Most students will study for nine GCSE subjects and top set mathematicians will gain one more (and a few take additional GCSEs out of the main curriculum). A stream mathematicians are given the opportunity to study for GCSE Further Mathematics alongside IGCSE Mathematics. Students who receive Learning Support within the curriculum work towards eight GCSEs whilst those who choose CCF on a Wednesday afternoon will take a Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) CVQO leadership qualification. Some of the GCSEs we offer are IGCSE qualifications and these have been chosen very deliberately by our Heads of Department because of the course content. They have exactly the same academic value as GCSEs. ~~We offer one Btec course in Applied Science. This covers all three sciences but includes coursework and is graded from one to nine.~~

The Middle School: Fourth and Fifth Forms

It is the firm policy of the School that a bespoke programme of subjects should be studied to GCSE which play to students' strengths and enjoyment and enables them to pursue either a traditional, baccalaureate-style curriculum or a curriculum which enables students to specialise, whilst also having a wide range of choice. We can accommodate those who would like to take three sciences just as easily as our linguists; those who want three humanities; our creative students and those who may need a very bespoke curriculum. This individualised approach enables us to support each student. Students choose their options following conversations with parents, tutors and students. Those students who need a very bespoke curriculum due to their special educational needs will be advised by the Deputy Head (Academic), the Deputy Head in charge of the middle school and the Head of SEN. English, Mathematics, at least one Science subject either Biology, Physics or Chemistry or legacy BTech (in the Fifth Form) or double award, and ICT lessons are compulsory for the legacy Fifth Form.

The options taken by the current Fourth Form are:

Art and Design
Drama
French
Media Studies
Photography
Spanish

Design and Technology
Religious Studies
History
Geography
ICT
Music

On Wednesday afternoons, in the final option block, approximately half of the Fourth Form will opt to continue in the CCF. The remainder of the year group can opt for academic subjects giving all our students considerable scope to tailor their timetables to their talents and aspirations.

The Sixth Form: Upper and Lower Sixth

The School follows the HMC recommended scheme of study with the majority of students taking three subjects for A Level. Those students who choose Further Maths may take four A Levels.

Students are asked to express their subject preferences before the option blocks are constructed so that as many combinations of subjects are offered as possible; the School aims to run any course that is economically viable. This gives a great deal of flexibility and does not restrict subject combinations unduly.

The following subjects are offered at A Level:

Art and Design	Biology
Business Studies	Cambridge Technical Sport
Cambridge Technical Information Technology	
Economics B	Chemistry
Design and Technology	English Literature
Film Studies	French
Geography	History
Mathematics	Mathematics (Further)
Media Studies	Music
Photography	Physical Education
Physics	Psychology
Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics	Spanish
Theatre Studies	

In addition to their A levels, students also have the opportunity to add to their curriculum by choosing the Crest Award. An enrichment programme adds breadth and interest to individual programmes. In addition, there are many lectures and other activities of an academic nature to enhance and broaden students' Sixth Form experience. Students are also able to opt to take the Extended Project in the Lower Sixth which is usually completed in the Upper Sixth. The CISI Finance level 2 qualification is also offered. The EPQ is delivered by a team of experienced supervisors and the EPQ Coordinator. Students applying for Oxbridge are monitored and supported by the Head of Academic Enrichment and departments and interview practices are provided as appropriate. All students receive extensive careers guidance throughout the two years of study. In addition, we also have a subscription to UniFrog allowing students to access information and support for university and further study.

The Whole School

All students receive PSHE delivered weekly and teaching involves the use of a variety of dedicated resources provided by the Assistant Head, Wellbeing. Topics covered are wide including sexting; anti bullying; self-esteem and self-image and anti-bullying. Outside speakers come in to talk to all year groups on a variety of topics in the PSHE curriculum. The First to Lower Sixth Form Students have a dedicated PSHE lesson once a week. The Upper Sixth receive PSHE content through the Wednesday afternoon programme.

Further information

There is a series of online booklets to help students and their parents understand how our curriculum operates throughout the School; these are available as downloadable PDFs which can be accessed through our website.

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Academic Enrichment Policy

Sutton Valence School has a number of students who are capable of performing above average academically, and it also has a group of students who are exceptionally academically able. The School is committed to helping all students reach their academic potential, whatever their ability, but it is recognised that academically able students have distinct needs that require addressing within the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in pastoral work and on a whole-school planning basis. This policy outlines identification, support and monitoring of provision for these students.

Definitions

There are many different definitions in use at the current time. ‘Gifted’ or ‘Able’ tend to be used for students who excel at one or more academic subjects, whereas ‘Talented’ tends to refer to students who are exceptional at specific skills in the creative arts or sport. The Art, Drama, Design and Technology, Music and Sport departments have strategies in place to support these talented students through their Scholarship schemes; this policy concentrates on students who have high learning potential in academic subjects. We refer to these students as ‘Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners’.

Identification of Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners

In general, Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are those students who have the potential to achieve significantly above average for a student in their year group. This may be in one or two subjects or across the board academically. As every student is unique, it is important that we use a range of strategies to identify these students. Many will be quantitative such as performance in baseline tests or grades on reports, but it is also important to use qualitative ‘clues’ to identify students who might be able but underachieving.

Currently there are three main points at which Academic Scholarships and Exhibitions are awarded by the Headmaster: at the start of the academic year in the First (Year 7), Third (Year 9) and Lower Sixth Forms (Year 12). Students who perform highly in the School’s Entrance Tests

are invited to interview for an Academic Scholarship with the Headmaster and Head of Academic Enrichment. For existing and new students entering the Sixth Form, the Headmaster may offer an Academic Scholarship or Exhibition based on the strength of their GCSE results. There are no set rubrics based on GCSE results, as the award of Scholarships is based on relative performance within a cohort.

At any other time of the School year, Heads of Department may well recommend students to the Headmaster for consideration for a Scholarship or Exhibitioner. The Headmaster may choose to appoint new Scholars or Exhibitioners in exceptional circumstances at any time of the School year.

The Head of Academic Enrichment is responsible for maintaining a list of all students who have been identified as Academic Scholars or Exhibitioners using one or more of the criteria listed above. The list will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, and names will be disseminated to teaching staff so that teachers are aware of who these students are.

Monitoring of Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners

The Head of Academic Enrichment is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners. This is based primarily on analysis of an individual's academic attainment, class effort and prep effort scores, relative to the wider cohort in the year group. Data is analysed six times throughout the academic year, and Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are expected to be at the top or very near the top of their cohort. We understand that those with an academic award will not necessarily be exceptionally strong across the whole curriculum and that academic performance can fluctuate to a degree during the course of a student's time at the School. Therefore, the aforementioned data analysis is balanced by a comprehensive understanding of the individual student. The Head of Academic Enrichment works closely with the Deputy Head Staff and Student Development, Deputy Head Academic, Heads of Department, Housemasters and Housemistresses and parents in order to support and encourage Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners.

Provision for Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners

There are three main strands to the provision for academically able students at Sutton Valence School:

- The organisation of the curriculum
- Provision within the classroom
- Provision beyond the classroom

The organisation of the curriculum

The curriculum at Sutton Valence School is organised in such a way as to allow all students, including the most academically able, the opportunity to pursue their interests and develop to their full potential. In some subjects (e.g. Mathematics), students are set by ability and the curriculum is accelerated allowing the most able to progress faster than the main cohort. However, in most subjects, students are taught in mixed-ability groups.

In the First to Third Forms, all students follow a broad and varied curriculum, including the study of languages. When selecting their GCSE subjects, the Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are supported with 1:1 conversations with the Head of Academic Enrichment in order to ensure their choices are suitably ambitious and preparatory for A Levels and university.

Provision within the classroom

Sutton Valence School sets high standards for all students. It is expected that all academic teaching staff set tasks that are appropriately challenging for each member of a class, differentiating to stretch the Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners.

Research suggests that the most able students can work:

- At a faster pace – reducing the need for unnecessary repetitious work;
- At a greater depth – capable of synoptic thought with regular higher order thinking;
- More broadly – capable of studying topics outside of the syllabi and making links across curriculum areas;
- Independently - with access to advice and support when needed.

All teachers are encouraged to employ a range of teaching and learning strategies to challenge and stretch Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners, including:

- Differentiation through outcome, pace, resource, independence or task;
- Flexible groupings with the most able students sometimes collaborating and sometimes taking key roles in mixed ability groups;
- Peer Teaching whereby the most able students, with adequate scaffolding, help to deliver the curriculum.

Provision beyond the classroom

At Sutton Valence School we believe that learning happens both within and beyond the classroom. Academically able students should be actively encouraged by their tutors and teachers to engage actively with the many opportunities which are offered.

These include:

- Co-curricular clubs and activities: Students at Sutton Valence School benefit from a range of academic co-curricular clubs and extension activities. These are often driven by student interests and demand, and many Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners find these an excellent way of extending their learning or even teaching others about their specialist subjects.
- Projects and academic enrichment opportunities: The school is committed to providing all students with opportunities for independent learning, research and projects which go beyond the taught curriculum. This might be in the form of talks given to their peers (e.g. at weekly Fairley Talks), meetings with the Head of Academic Enrichment or through a more formal framework such as an EPQ or HPQ. Many Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners have a particular subject or topic that they are passionate about. Those in the First to Fourth Forms complete a piece of research during their summer holiday on a topic of their choice.
- Academic competitions: Many departments enter students for national academic competitions, public speaking and debating competitions or Mock Bar Trials. Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners often enjoy the challenge of going beyond the curriculum and competing against students from other schools. First to Third Form Scholars and Exhibitioners compete in the Macdonald Current Affairs Prize which requires them to write a topical analytical essay on current affairs. In the summer holiday before their Lower Sixth year, Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners compete in a Foundation Essay

Competition with other students from across our Foundation Schools. Sixth Form students routinely enjoy success in academic competitions run by university departments from across the UK and overseas.

- Trips and Lectures: All Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are given the opportunities to hear a diverse range of lectures as members of the Kingdon Society. The Kingdon Society Lectures are given termly by visiting academics or authors are intended to expose students to new fields of learning and inspire them to pursue their own areas of interest.
- Each year academic departments organise a vast number of trips, lectures, workshops and career advice sessions. Teachers should ensure that Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are encouraged to attend these, especially if in an area where they show particular ability. There is also the potential for flexibility here in terms of age range. For example, a geography teacher might encourage a particularly able Third Form student to attend a workshop or lecture aimed at older students.
- Oxbridge, Medicine, Veterinary Science and university guidance: Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners are often competing for places at elite institutions after their time in the Sixth Form. Therefore, the Head of Academic Enrichment and Head of Sixth Form work in tandem to support students with their applications, offering support sessions on Admissions Testing, Personal Statement guidance, work experience, and wider reading.

Academic Ambassadors

It is an expectation that Subject Ambassadors will be appointed because of their interest and enthusiasm for a subject. In the case of Art, Design and Technology, Drama and Sports' departments, these ambassadors may also be subject scholars. The role of the Subject Ambassadors may involve, but is not limited to, representing the relevant department at A-level and GCSE Information Evenings; the organisation and promotion of department competitions; the maintenance of department noticeboards; assisting with induction days for new pupils; work with SVPS and other feeder prep schools to promote the department and organise and deliver academic assemblies.

Students can only hold one ambassadorship and there should be a maximum of five subject ambassadors per subject.

Roles and responsibilities

Every member of the academic staff has a role in supporting academically able students, but some key responsibilities are outlined here.

Deputy Head Staff and Student Development

- Should work with the Heads of Department to ensure that all teaching staff have the skills, confidence and resources to support the most able students and where necessary to provide training opportunities so that they are confident employing strategies to stretch the Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners.

Head of Academic Enrichment

- Should organise and oversee the Kingdon Society Lecture series and Foundation Schools academic competitions and events.
- Should work with the Heads of Department and Housemasters and Housemistresses to monitor the provision for Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners across the school.

- Should use tracking data to monitor the progress of Academic Scholars and Exhibitioners and share this information with the relevant Heads of Department and the Academic Deputy Head.
- The Head of Academic Enrichment is responsible for oversight of the departmental Subject Ambassador programme. This involves ensuring Fourth and Lower Sixth Form students are appointed at the end of the Michaelmas Term (There will also be legacy students who were appointed in the 2022-2023 year.) The Head of Academic Enrichment's role will include half termly meetings with the Academic Ambassadors to reiterate expectations.

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