



# The Abbey

The independent school for girls aged 3-18.

## Curriculum Policy

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### The Abbey School, Reading



17 Kendrick Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5DZ  
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Registered Charity No 309115. The Abbey School exists to educate academically able girls.



## Introduction

The Abbey School has a firmly established academic tradition founded on Christian principles and provides full-time education for pupils aged 3 to 18 years. It offers a rich experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, spiritual and moral, physical, aesthetic and creative education.

The Abbey School offers a broad and balanced curriculum, going well beyond the National Curriculum, embracing the best of the traditional and the modern and allowing pupils increasingly to personalise their studies as they progress through the school.

The curriculum is subject to regular review under the direction of the Head and the Executive Board, in discussion at academic meetings and in consultation with governors through the Leadership in Girls' Education Committee.

## Aims

We seek to provide an academically challenging environment which is vibrant and stimulating. We have high expectations and ensure we provide appropriate support and challenge to encourage each girl to achieve her full potential.

We favour a creative and problem-solving approach and aim to develop curiosity, a love of learning and confidence in independent thinking.

We place high value on the learning which takes place outside the classroom and encourage all our girls to participate fully in the extensive extra-curricular programme. Our Abbey Learner Profile articulates the broader learning characteristics which we seek to develop.

## Junior School Overview (including Early Years Foundation Stage)

We believe that the acquisition of factual knowledge goes hand in hand with creativity, problem-solving and analysis, that knowledge and skills are intertwined – 'discovery favours the well-prepared mind' (after Louis Pasteur). Equally, we recognise that much learning takes place outside the classroom and place value on this extra-curricular/hidden curriculum in which we encourage all girls to participate.

Broadly speaking, whilst we incorporate much of the National Curriculum (and all the EYFS curriculum), we aim to enrich, stretch and challenge our girls well beyond this. This means that where possible we will be covering objectives at a higher level than the national expectations and, more importantly, will be adding breadth and depth. Thus our curriculum is based on the 6 components in the diagram below and cross-curricular links are made as appropriate. We may often include topics that differ from those in the NC and we may vary these from year to year. There is a progression from integrated topic-based learning up to UI, through to more discrete subjects by Upper Juniors. This is mirrored by an increase in specialist teaching.

Our aims in delivering the curriculum are:

- To instil in the girls a life-long love of learning and support them in becoming self-aware learners
- To enable each girl to achieve the highest possible academic success of which she is capable
- To ensure curriculum breadth by offering rich and diverse opportunities within the timetable and beyond
- To provide an holistic educational experience combining age appropriate expertise with specialist subject knowledge

- To provide further extra-curricular opportunities

At the end of their time at the Junior School we expect the girls:

- To be confident, flexible and resilient learners who are able to work both independently and cooperatively;
- To be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively;
- To take a pride in their achievements and to have a desire to succeed;
- To be polite, balanced and well-rounded individuals;
- To show respect to all, being mindful of other cultures.

## Junior School Roles

The Head and Assistant Heads, along with the Director of Curriculum and Planning, are responsible for ensuring that the overall curriculum experience is rich, broad and balanced.

An Assistant Head is responsible for the consultation, planning and writing of timetables to ensure that teachers have appropriate timetables, given their strengths and responsibilities.

All teachers are responsible for the quality of their own teaching, regularly reflecting upon their practice and sharing ideas with one another. Subject co-ordinators are responsible for leading their subject and overseeing the delivery of high quality experiences in their curriculum area, in collaboration with the Assistant Heads and the Director of Curriculum and Planning.

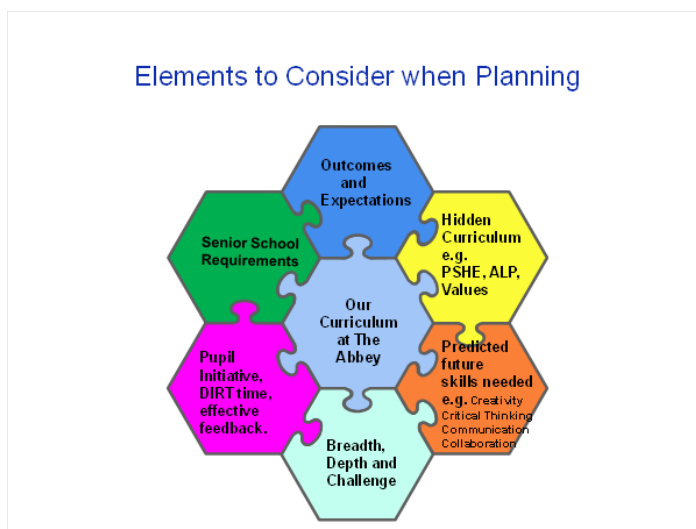
The Assistant Heads monitor the curriculum in Reception, Preparatory and Nursery, supported by the Head of the Junior School.

## Junior School Development & Progression

Subject Coordinators prepare planning guidance each year which is shared with all staff and form input to the Junior School Development Plan. Curriculum matters are discussed regularly by the Junior School Leadership Team at their weekly meetings, as well as by the Learning Innovation Group. Guidelines are reviewed annually or more frequently if the need arises. We view curriculum development as ongoing rather than static.

## Junior School Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the 6 components in the diagram below and cross-curricular links are made as appropriate.



In drawing up the academic timetable, we provide a combination of form teaching balanced by the use of specialist staff.

Nursery and Reception girls are taught by trained Early Years staff with specialist teaching for Music, Drama, French (in Reception) and PE, including Ballet. Each girl's form teacher has an overview of her development and maintains close communication with parents.

Girls in Key Stage 1 (Prep and Trans) spend the majority of their time with their form teacher. Prep and Trans have specialist teaching for Music and PE and Trans also have specialist teaching for Spanish and Drama.

More specialisation is introduced as the girls pass through Key Stage 2 (Lower I – Lower III) so that in the Upper Juniors the girls receive specialist teaching for several subjects. Specialist Science lessons for all girls begin in Lower I. Technology is integrated into lessons to enhance digital literacy, as well as learning and teaching throughout the school (in addition to timetabled Computing lessons for KS2).

Where possible, form teachers are able to timetable their own lessons for the week to give the best distribution of subjects. Time spent on each subject is fixed although adjustment may be made from week to week as long as the overall balance is maintained. Curriculum guidance is written by the Subject Coordinators and discussed with all teaching staff at INSET Meetings. It is documented for teachers in the current Planning Guidance. Guidelines are reviewed annually or more frequently if the need arises. We view curriculum development as ongoing rather than static.

## Early Years Curriculum

The curriculum for the girls in Nursery and Reception incorporates the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. It provides a secure foundation for later learning and ensures that girls acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to learning to access the curriculum at Key Stage 1 (Prep and Trans). Careful planning ensures that all aspects of the areas of learning are covered and that our curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. Time spent on each area varies according to the needs of the girls, whilst ensuring that the timetable is proactively planned and managed.

These areas are:

- Communication and Language
- Literacy
- Personal Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

Focus is also placed on the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning – Playing and Exploring, Active Learning, Creating and Thinking Critically. These characteristics of learning are complementary to our Abbey Learner Profile (ALP).

## **Key Stage 1 &2 (Prep to LIII)**

The girls follow a broad curriculum which includes Maths, English, Science, Topic/Humanities, RE, Computing, MFL, PE, Music, Drama, PSHE, Art, Design Technology and Well-Being. The allocation of lesson time varies slightly from year group to year group. All girls take all subjects

### **Junior School Cross-Curricular Links**

Teaching teams review their curriculum overviews at least yearly in order to identify where cross curricular links can be made. Cross-curricular links are also organic in the sense that current affairs or world events may also be linked to curriculum content.

### **Junior School Use of the Library**

The library has a wide selection of books covering all curriculum areas and computers with internet access for individual research. Girls are encouraged to use the library and its resources. The librarian runs the library, assists staff and girls in choosing books to support curriculum learning and helps deliver guided reading or library research skills to pupils. Each class from Trans upwards has a timetabled library slot where a group visits the library on rotation.

### **Junior School Use of ICT**

Our pupils become familiar with an array of digital technologies, develop transferable skills and understanding which allows them to move between hardware and software with confidence. Girls are given opportunities to develop their digital capability by developing a set of skills and using tools to support their learning across the whole width of the curriculum and within lessons. The integration of digital devices provides an exciting opportunity to invigorate learning and teaching.

## **Senior School Curriculum Content and Delivery**

*GCSE is used throughout this document although International GCSE may be offered in some subjects.*

The curriculum is taught by subject specialists throughout the Senior School ensuring students receive the best possible learning experience.

Biology, Chemistry and Physics are taught in specialist laboratories and dedicated rooms are also used for Textiles and Food Technology, Art, Drama, Music and Computer Science. Most subjects have subject areas on the school site and most lessons are taught within these areas.

French, German, Chinese and Spanish are offered at GCSE level and are often delivered by native speakers. Additionally Italian is available in the Sixth Form as part of the IB Diploma.

Students' ICT skills are strong and Computer Science is taught rather than ICT in UIII and LIV and as an option in UIV. At KS4 Computer Science is an optional GCSE subject available for those who wish to further specialise.

Philosophy of Religion is delivered as a core subject from UIII to LV and encompasses the exploration and understanding of a variety of faiths against a Christian background. The GCSE (Religious Studies - Philosophy and Christian Ethics) is taken in the summer of LV.

The Skills 4 Life programme encompasses PSHE, Citizenship and Careers and is delivered by the form tutors, specialist teachers and outside speakers throughout the school in a dedicated period once a week. More detail on this programme can be found at the end of this document.

Physical Education is a core subject throughout the Senior School and a wide range of indoor and outdoor, team and individual sports are taught with an emphasis on personal health and fitness.

The school also has an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities which extend and complement the timetabled curriculum. Subject departments run clubs in either a lunchtime or twilight slot and there is an especially wide variety of drama, sport and music activities available.

## Senior School Curriculum by Year Groups:

### Key Stage 3

The school's aim at Key Stage 3 is to offer a broad and balanced curriculum together with an excellent grounding in the core subjects. The students are introduced to a wide range of subjects from which they can then choose their GCSE options for Key Stage 4. All students receive grounding in Art, Music, Drama, Computer Science and the Technologies which they can then pursue to GCSE or at one of the many extra-curricular activities.

**All Upper III** (Year 7) students follow the same course of study and are generally taught in their form groups. The exceptions to this are Mathematics and French where there is some informal grouping, Computer Science which is taught in smaller groups and Textiles Technology and Food Technology which is delivered as a carousel in half form groups. Biology, Chemistry and Physics are taught as separate subjects in dedicated laboratories. Specialist teachers deliver the curriculum in all subject areas.

**In Lower IV** (Year 8) a second modern foreign language is introduced giving three languages in total. In addition to French and Latin the students can choose between German and Spanish. More formal setting, based on UIII results, is introduced in Mathematics and French and, later in the year, in German and Spanish.

Food Technology continues as a club and is offered at lunchtimes with many students entering the Young Chef competition. Drama is currently offered in a carousel with Computer Science. All subjects continue to be taught by subject specialists.

**In Upper IV** (Year 9) students can further personalise their curriculum by choosing three subjects from Latin, Art, Music, Computer Science, Food Technology and Textiles Technology. For each of these chosen subjects they will have a double lesson per week for the full year. Drama and Poetry are taught in a carousel throughout the year. All students embark on the Philosophy of Religion GCSE course, taking the GCSE examinations in the summer of their LV year. Mathematics and Languages continue to be set. English is timetabled across the year with one more groups than forms and an element of setting. Science is being taught in six groups again allowing some setting. The number of teaching groups may vary from year to year depending upon year group sizes.

### Key Stage 4

#### **Lower V (Year 10) and Upper V (Year 11):**

A large range of subjects are available for GCSE allowing students to personalise their curriculum to reflect their strengths and talents. The GCSE core includes English Language and Literature,

Mathematics, a Modern Foreign Language and Philosophy of Religion. In addition all the students continue to participate in Physical Education and Skills 4 Life lessons. Students have three lessons each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The decision whether a student will be entered for Double or Triple award GCSE Science is made at the end of LV.

There is the opportunity to specialise in Classics and a number of students opt to study Classical Greek subject to already studying Latin. These students often continue their interest into the sixth form, some winning places at Oxford and Cambridge. Similarly, many students choose to take two languages at GCSE, generally French and German, French and Spanish or one of French, German or Spanish with Latin. Mandarin Chinese may be taken by those committed to language study and is sometimes timetabled in lunchtime or twilight sessions.

Girls are encouraged to choose a broad range of subjects that complement their interests and talents.

The Philosophy of Religion GCSE is taken in the summer of LV which allows the time for an Enrichment course to be timetabled in UV. This course is designed to expand the students' knowledge and understanding of the world around them and is delivered by invited internal and external speakers. Topics typically include world literature and music, the situation in the Middle East, life as an MP, the plight of refugees and the problems and opportunities of globalisation.

Students may take 10 or 11 GCSE subjects from the list below:

Core	Options
English Language	Art
English Literature	Computer Science
Mathematics	Drama
Science; Biology, Chemistry, Physics (Double or Triple Award)	Food Technology
Philosophy of Religion (taken in LV)	French (for dual linguists)
One Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)	Geography
	Greek
	History
	Latin
	Music
	Physical Education
	Textiles Technology

### Sixth Form

Students in the Sixth Form can choose between two programmes of study - the International Baccalaureate Diploma or A Levels. Those who wish to specialise in a particular subject area may choose to study A Levels; those who would like to keep a broader range of subjects through the Sixth Form may opt for the IB Diploma.

With either programme students have:

- Wide choice of subjects
- Specialist teaching
- Small groups
- Access to sport and/or fitness sessions
- Skills 4 Life

Although the Creativity Action and Service (CAS) element of the IB programme formalises the need for extra-curricular activities a very similar access to these activities is available to A Level students. Whatever their programme of study the majority of the Sixth Form students take part in one or more of the following (among other activities):

- The Young Enterprise Scheme
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award

- Volunteering
- The School Officer programme
- House Activities & Competitions
- School sports teams
- Choir
- Debating and European Youth Parliament
- Orchestra and other instrumental groups
- The School Production

## A Level

A Levels are a tried and tested route to University that allows the student to specialise in subjects that appeal to them and in which they can excel. Students generally choose 4 A level subjects (or 5 if studying Further Mathematics) from the list below.

Art & Design	French
Ancient Greek (only with Latin)	Further Mathematics
Biology	Geography
Chemistry	German
Critical Thinking	Greek
Computing	History
D & T Product Design (Textiles)	History of Art
Drama	Latin
Economics	Mathematics
English Language	Music
English Literature	Philosophy and Ethics
Food Technology	Spanish

The school aims to run every subject in the list above, even if only one or two students opt for it. In such a case the number of taught periods is reduced and directed private study is offered. Only one such special arrangement may be made per student.

Assessment at A Level is predominantly examination based, with practical endorsement for the Sciences. Examinations are taken in the summer of UVI. In the UVI most students will pursue 3 or 4 subjects to A2 level.

## International Baccalaureate, IB

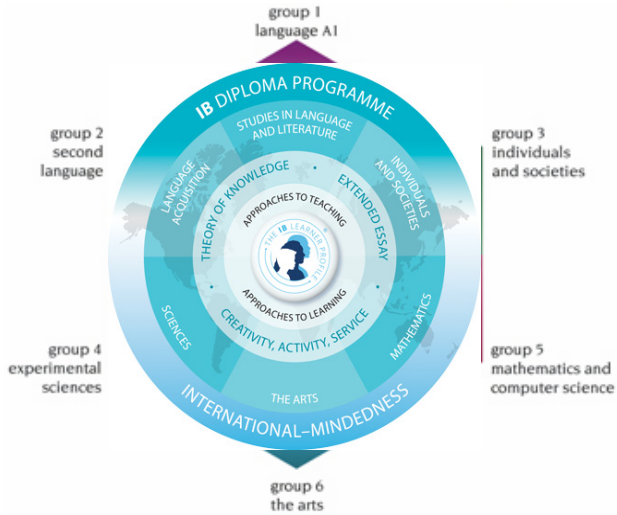
The IB Diploma is a well established international qualification that is recognised and respected throughout the world. It is accepted as an alternative qualification for entrance to all UK and world Universities. (For more information please visit [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org))

The Diploma Programme prepares students for university and is designed to encourage them to

- ask challenging questions
- learn how to learn
- develop a strong sense of their own identity and culture
- develop the ability to communicate with and understand people from other countries and culture.

Students study six subjects, three at standard level and three at higher, choosing one from each of the groups shown in the table below. They all study the core subject, Theory of Knowledge, which aims to unite all the subjects into one programme of study. The students will also complete a 4000 word essay on a subject of their choice and partake in a number of activities as part of Creativity, Action and Service. The Diploma as a whole is illustrated in the diagram below.





Group 1	English SL & HL
Group 2	French SL & HL German SL & HL Italian ab initio SL Latin SL & HL Spanish SL & HL
Group 3	History SL & HL Geography SL & HL Global Politics SL & HL Psychology SL & HL Economics SL & HL Business & Management SL & HL Philosophy SL & HL
Group 4	Biology SL & HL Chemistry SL & HL Physics SL & HL
Group 5	Mathematics SL & HL Mathematical Studies SL & HL
Group 6	Art SL & HL Theatre Studies SL & HL Music SL & HL Another subject from Group 2, 3 or 4

At the end of the two-year programme, students are assessed both internally and externally in ways that measure individual performance against stated objectives for each subject. In nearly all subjects at least some of the assessment is carried out internally by teachers, who mark individual pieces of work produced as part of a course of study. Examples include oral exercises in language subjects, projects, student portfolios, class presentations, practical laboratory work, mathematical investigations and artistic performance.

### Examinations

Internal examinations take place in the summer term of LVI and the Spring term of UVI with final examinations taken in every chosen subject in May or June of the UVI year.

### Senior School Skills 4 Life

The Skills 4 Life programme encompasses PSHE, Citizenship and Careers. It is timetabled weekly on a Wednesday and a detailed scheme of work, designed by the Head of Year, guides the staff and students through the schedule.

The Abbey School aims to provide a community for its students and staff in which learning flourishes and where pupils may reach the highest standards academically and personally. Skills 4 Life is a curriculum subject, delivered mostly by form tutors with occasional specialist and outside speakers, to ensure that a high standard of personal and social development is achieved by all students.

### Senior School Aims and Objectives of PSHE / Citizenship

1. To promote the development of self- awareness, self respect and self confidence;
2. To raise pupils' self- esteem;
3. To enable pupils to develop good study skills and library skills;
4. To enable pupils to make informed choices;
5. To help pupils develop skills of sensitivity and tolerance in their personal relationships;
6. To encourage awareness of other people's problems;
7. To develop listening skills;
8. To promote a corporate ambience within the form which is friendly, supportive and respectful of others;
9. To broaden pupils' outlook, exploring community and global issues.

### Careers

The Careers Department provides some taught lessons during the Skills 4 Life slot together with organised interview programmes and informal advice to students at different ages within the school, with particular emphasis on Years 9-13.

The vast majority of Abbey School students move on to Sixth Form study (A level or International Baccalaureate) and subsequently some form of higher education; thus the Careers Department concentrates on graduate career areas and Sixth Form entry and relevant subjects for such careers. However, the department is able to give advice about careers open to those with only GCSE or higher level qualifications as required.

<b>Authorised by</b>	resolution of the Governing Council
<b>Date</b>	September 2016

<b>Effective date of the policy</b>	September 2016
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