



Curriculum Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Assistant Heads Junior School Senior Deputy Head Senior School	September 2023
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governor Audit	September 2023
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Introduction

The Abbey School has a firmly established academic tradition and provides full-time education for students 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 students increasingly to personalise their studies as they progress through the school.

The Abbey School recognises the importance of ensuring full access to the curriculum for all students so that all students have the opportunity to learn and progress. The curriculum provides for the different ages, aptitudes and needs of all students within the Abbey context. Where appropriate, students receive extra support and special arrangements to cater for individual needs. This policy should be read in conjunction with the SEND Policy.

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 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 student 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 students 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.

At the Abbey School, our philosophy is underpinned by the globally recognised International Baccalaureate Primary Year Program (IB PYP). We deliver a dynamic, transdisciplinary curriculum that offers breadth and depth of learning, supporting and extending all students through inquiry-based learning, promoted by a conceptually driven framework. This allows for students to engage with high-level concepts using age-appropriate topics that have local and global relevance, and to take action through their learning. To complement this, we have developed our own bespoke Outcomes and Expectations that incorporates, and goes beyond, the National and EYFS Curriculum objectives, ensuring academic rigour.

Our aims in delivering this unique and child-centred curriculum are to

- Instil in students a life-long love of learning and support them in becoming self-aware learners
- Enable each student to achieve the highest possible academic success of which they are capable
- Ensure curriculum breadth by offering rich and diverse opportunities within the timetable and beyond
- Provide a holistic educational experience combining age appropriate expertise with specialist subject knowledge
- Provide further enrichment through wide-ranging extra-curricular opportunities

The IB Primary Years Programme



The PYP Programme of Inquiry is organised by the six transdisciplinary themes; Who we are; Where we are in place and time; How we organise ourselves; How the world works; How we express ourselves and Sharing the Planet. These themes are universal, timeless and broad in their application to allow for depth of inquiry. Each year group has a Central Idea and Lines of Inquiry per transdisciplinary theme that focus on a different aspect of the theme to ensure vertical alignment of the curriculum and use the key concepts to create horizontal balance within each year group. This is a transdisciplinary approach to learning that relies on the development of strong cross-curricular links across all areas of the curriculum where integration can be made authentically. At the heart of the PYP is the learner; supporting the development of their agency and inculcating taking action with their learning is central to the PYP. The role of the learner is articulated in the Learner Profile which forms an essential element of both the written and taught curriculum. The Approaches to Learning (ATLs) are the key skills all students need to develop in order to be successful life-long learners and broadly cover Thinking, Research, Social, Communication and Self Management skills, which are explicitly taught as part of the units of inquiry and are embedded across all subject areas.

The PYP implements a broad range of subject areas through integrated and stand alone inquiries that draw on both form tutor and specialist teacher expertise. Students have many opportunities to cultivate their curiosity both within timetabled classes and in co-curricular experiences that extend their learning both academically and personally, developing the whole child.

In the PYP, all teachers are considered teachers of language and technology, an approach which emphasises teaching with, about and through technology across all subject areas in addition to specialist Computing classes. One of the requirements of the PYP is that a language, in addition to the language of instruction, should be taught throughout the school. The rationale of this multi-language approach is to give students a deeper appreciation for languages and language acquisition and support them in becoming internationally-minded learners, a key tenet of the PYP.

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

- Be confident, flexible and resilient learners who are able to work both independently and cooperatively;
- Be able to express themselves creatively and imaginatively;

- Take a pride in their achievements and to have a desire to succeed;
- Be caring, balanced and well-rounded individuals;
- Show respect to all and to embody international-mindedness.

Junior School Roles

The Head and Assistant Heads are responsible for ensuring that the overall curriculum experience is rich, broad and balanced.

The PYP Coordinator oversees the planning, implementation and review of the Programme of Inquiry with all form tutors and specialist teachers. They are responsible for the implementation of the Standards and Practices of the IB to ensure the school can maintain its accreditation with the IB. The PYP Coordinator works closely with subject coordinators so the integrated and stand-alone inquiries are in line with IB expectations.

The Director of Studies 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.

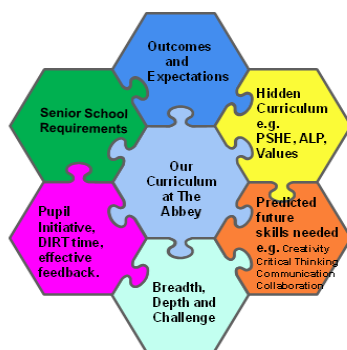
Junior School Development & Progression

Subject co-ordinators prepare planning guidance each year which is shared with all staff. 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 and organic, rather than static.

Junior School Curriculum

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

Elements to Consider when Planning



Our bespoke Outcomes and Expectations describe the expected achievement in each subject by the end of each year.

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 and PE, including Ballet. Each student's form teacher has an overview of her development and maintains close communication with parents.

Students in Key Stage 1 (LPrep and UPrep) spend the majority of their time with their form teacher. LPrep and UPrep have specialist teaching for Computing, Music, PE, 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. Focus is also placed on the Learning Awareness and Engagement (LAE) of the girls, the attributes of which complement the Abbey Learner Profile (ALP).

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 (LPrep and UPrep). 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 students, 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) and Learning Awareness & Engagement (LAE).

Library and ICT

The library has a wide selection of books covering all curriculum areas as well as computers and/or iPads 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 students. Each class from UPrep upwards has a timetabled library slot where a group visits the library on rotation.

Our students 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

Our curriculum seeks to stretch and challenge every student, in and outside of the classroom, in a manner consistent with the School's core principles and, most importantly, joy. We seek to make each learner's journey as personalised and bespoke as possible to enable students to flourish and to gain a lifelong love of learning. Teaching and Learning is informed by the Abbey Learner Profile and actively seeks to inculcate ways of thinking and approaching life.

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, Food and Nutrition, Art (including 3D Design), Drama, Music and Computer Science. Most subjects have subject areas on the School site and most lessons are taught within these areas.

French, German and Spanish are offered at GCSE level and are often delivered by native speakers. Additionally, Mandarin is available at Key Stage 3 and Italian is available in the Sixth Form as part of the IB Diploma. In Lower IV and Upper IV students have the ability to make bespoke and personalised language choices over which and how many languages they study.

Students' ICT skills are strong and ICT is embedded into the KS3 curriculum, with Computing taught throughout Upper III to Upper IV. At Key Stage 4 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 Upper III to Upper IV and encompasses the exploration and understanding of a variety of faiths against a Christian background. We also actively use this and other subjects to teach the principles of critical thinking and disagreeing well, including on potentially controversial topics. Our 'Upper IV project' teaches students memory and thinking skills which should help them throughout their school careers and beyond.

The Skills 4 Life programme encompasses PSHE, Citizenship and Careers and is delivered by 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 a very extensive programme of extra-curricular activities that extend and complement the timetabled curriculum. Subject departments run clubs in either a lunchtime or twilight slot and there is a particularly wide variety of drama, sport and music activities available. Enrichment is carefully planned and audited throughout the school, for example by the lower school digital portfolios, and is understood to work hand-in-hand with what is going on in the classroom.

Senior School Curriculum by Year Groups

Key Stage 3

The school's aim at Key Stage 3 is to offer a curriculum that is broad and balanced as well as being bespoke and personalised. We seek to promote personal choice and autonomy alongside excellent grounding in the core subjects. 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, Computing, Food & Nutrition and Textiles which they can then pursue to GCSE or through 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. Biology, Chemistry and Physics are taught as separate subjects in dedicated laboratories. Students have a languages carousel enabling them to study some French, Spanish, German and Mandarin as well as a language investigation/linguistics module. All students also have some teaching of Classics. Specialist teachers deliver the curriculum in all subject areas.

In **Lower IV** (Year 8) students are taught in teaching forms which are different from their tutor groups to help them to mix with as many of their peers as possible. They can make choices about which languages they pursue, choosing to study two modern foreign languages or, if they wish to undertake an accelerated course of study, two languages together with Latin. More formal setting, based on Upper III results, is introduced in Mathematics. Food and Nutrition and Textiles continue as extra-curricular programmes. All subjects continue to be taught by subject specialists.

In **Upper IV** (Year 9) students can further personalise their curriculums by choosing two/three subject options from: Art, Drama, Food and Nutrition, Latin, Music and Textiles. Students may choose to study one or two modern foreign languages or, from 2024, to pursue the accelerated route of two modern foreign languages plus Latin. From 2024 those who choose to study only one language will have the opportunity to study a further optional subject plus a single of world studies. The Upper IV Project teaches students memory and thinking skills. Mathematics continues to be set and English is timetabled across the year with one more group than forms and an element of setting. Science is taught in six groups, again allowing some informal setting. The number of teaching groups may vary from year to year depending upon year group sizes.

There is a themed Learning Festival once a year for all Key Stage 3 students (for example 'change') in which all subject lessons link to that theme and there is an off-timetable cross-curricular day in which students will learn actively and in groups, completing a project that links to the week's theme.

Key Stage 4: Lower V (Year 10) and Upper V (Year 11)

A large range of subjects is available for (I)GCSE allowing students to personalise their curriculum to reflect their strengths and talents. The GCSE core includes English Language and Literature, Mathematics and a Modern Foreign Language. In addition, all students continue to participate in Physical Education and Skills 4 Life lessons. Students have three periods each of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The decision as to whether a student will be entered for Double or Triple award GCSE Science is made at the end of Lower V.

There is the opportunity to specialise in Classics and a number of students opt to study Classical Greek. These students often continue their interest into the Sixth Form, some winning places at Oxford and Cambridge. Certain students may choose to study 'Gratin', which involves taking accelerated Greek and Latin GCSEs from four periods of study per week (i.e. the amount given to most single subjects). Many students choose to take two languages at GCSE.

For those students with a high extra-curricular commitment or who would prefer to focus their studies the option to take one fewer GCSE is offered. These students are timetabled with Supervised Study periods. Internal examinations take place in the summer term of Lower V and before the Christmas holiday in Upper V.

Students are encouraged to choose a broad range of subjects that complements their interests and talents. Students may take 10 or 11 GCSE subjects from the list below:

Core	Options
English Language	Art & Design - Fine Art or Art: 3D Design
English Literature	Computer Science
Mathematics	Drama
Science; Biology, Chemistry, Physics (Double or Triple Award)	Food and Nutrition
One Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)	French
	Geography
	Greek
	History
	Latin
	Music
	Physical Education
	Art & Design - Textiles

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. There are no set criteria for admission to either programme and students make an open choice between them.

With either programme students have:

- A wide choice of subjects and a bespoke timetabling process
- 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
- Orchestra and other instrumental groups
- The School Production

A Level

A Levels allow students to specialise in subjects that appeal to them and in which they can excel. Students may choose either 3 or 4 A Level subjects (Further Mathematicians choose four including Further Maths and students generally study four subjects through the Lower VI as part of our 4Thought programme). Generally, those students on four A Levels will reduce to three in the Upper VI.

Art & Design – Fine Art or 3D Design	Geography
Ancient Greek	German
Biology	Greek
Business	History
Chemistry	Latin
Computer Science	Mathematics
D & T Fashion & Textiles	Music
Drama & Theatre	Philosophy and Ethics

Economics	Physical Education
English Language	Physics
English Literature	Spanish
French	
Further Mathematics	

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 and some non-examined assessment in other subjects. Examinations are taken in the summer of Upper VI.

Those students taking A Levels also have the option of taking an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which is a popular and effective way of broadening their interests and experience of academic research/thinking.

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)

The IBDP 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).

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 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 (Studies in Language and Literature)	English Literature SL & HL English Language & Literature SL & HL
Group 2 (Language Acquisition)	French SL & HL German SL & HL Greek SL & HL (when not in A-Level) Italian ab initio SL Latin SL & HL Spanish SL & HL
Group 3 (Individuals and Societies)	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 (Sciences)	Biology SL & HL Chemistry SL & HL Computer Science SL & HL Environmental Systems & Societies SL Physics SL & HL Sport, Exercise & Health Science SL & HL
Group 5 (Mathematics)	Mathematics AA SL & HL Mathematics AI SL
Group 6 (The Arts)	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 Lower VI and the spring term of Upper VI with final examinations taken in every chosen subject in May or June of the Upper VI year.

Senior School Skills 4 Life

The Skills 4 Life programme encompasses statutory RSE within PSHE, and careers. It is timetabled weekly on a Wednesday and a detailed scheme of work, based on the Senior School thematic spiral programme and designed by the Head of Year, guides staff and students through the schedule. Topics are divided into three broad areas of Living in the Wider World, Relationships and Health & Wellbeing. More detail is available in The RSE Policy.

The Abbey School aims to provide a community for its students and staff in which learning flourishes and where students 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

To promote the development of self- awareness, self-respect and self-confidence;

- To raise students' self-esteem;
- To enable students to develop good study skills;
- To enable students to make informed choices;
- To help students develop skills of sensitivity and tolerance in their personal relationships;
- To encourage awareness of other people's problems;
- To develop listening skills;
- To promote a corporate ambiance within the form which is friendly, supportive and respectful of others;
- To broaden students' outlook, exploring community and global issues.

Careers

Careers guidance at The Abbey is based on a student-focused approach to allow students to explore possible academic and career pathways. The Gatsby Benchmark framework is central to this philosophy and provides the school with a structured approach to supporting students on their individual journeys. This is facilitated through the use of the Unifrog platform and students will be guided along "The Abbey Way Ahead Pathway". This is a holistic programme for the whole school, which aims to support students' choices of academic options and career aspirations.

The Careers Department provides two regular lessons per term during the weekly Skills 4 Life slot for all year groups. These are structured around the use of the Unifrog platform and provides opportunities for all students to complete and update, amongst other elements, a range of online questionnaires in the areas of Interests, Personality, and Skills. This data is stored in their individual Careers Profile and allows students to explore subjects and career options linked to their results.

Students will update their profiles at least annually as they grow and mature, to take into account their changing interests and skills. The platform is constantly updated with career options and regular profiling will help the students to narrow down their choices as they progress up through the school.

Academic lessons will also provide an opportunity for students to discover career options related to the specific subjects and this is added to their individual Careers Profiles, as and when the links arise in the Schemes of Work.

In the Lower School (Upper III, Lower IV and Upper IV), the KS3 curriculum project will enable students to add further information to their Careers Profile, based on their specific area of study.

In the Upper School, Lower V students are offered taster lessons in Sixth Form only subjects and in Upper V they receive comprehensive feedback on these profiles which are discussed at the "Next Steps Interviews". These interviews are conducted by a senior member of teaching staff and are an opportunity for each student, together with their parents, to discuss their next steps including Sixth Form options, University or Apprenticeship pathways and future career aspirations. Upper V students also have a full day experiencing life and classes in the Sixth Form to prepare them for the next stage of their school journey.

In the Sixth Form, Unifrog profiling continues with the students completing a further questionnaire that builds on their existing profile and suggests specific universities and courses to investigate. To introduce the Lower VI to the experience of university life, students will have the opportunity to participate in a tailored visit to the University of Surrey. UCAS applications are also incorporated into the Unifrog platform, providing a seamless transition and allowing students to build on the profile data to make their choices about university courses, as well as completing their Personal Statements. Where a student wants to explore the Apprenticeship pathway, the data will also support these aspirations fully.

Supporting this student-focused approach is the Aspire Programme which includes a series of careers lectures from outside speakers and Alumnae, a biennial Careers evening and an annual Higher Education evening. The Aspire Programme is designed to provide additional information and ideas to the students, delivering a fully-rounded and student focused approach to Careers guidance at The Abbey.