



**THE DOWNS**  
PREPARATORY SCHOOL  
BRISTOL

## 4.4

## CURRICULUM POLICY

### Aims

- The curriculum offered at The Downs is in line with our core values; to provide a stimulating all round education, appropriate to the needs of all pupils. We provide experiences in mathematical, linguistic, technological, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative areas.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school that is from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to year 8.

### Objectives

- to provide an education for children of all backgrounds who are of suitable ability
- to provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of all pupils including those pupils with an Education Health Care (EHC) plan,
- to give pupils opportunities to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy,
- to provide children with a curriculum that has a strong focus on the teaching of the core subjects with a balance of the foundation subjects; i.e., modern languages, humanities, technology, arts, music, Physical Education (PE) and games, and Personal, Health, Social, Economic Education (PHSEE)
- to provide personal, social health and economic education that reflects the school's aim and ethos, encourages respect for other people and actively promotes fundamental British values
- to ensure that the curriculum provides the opportunity for students to reach levels of attainment that ensures a smooth transition to their next school
- to provide appropriate introductory career guidance to pupils in Years 7 and 8
- to give all pupils the opportunity to learn and make progress,
- to develop, in all pupils, the values, skills and behaviours they need to get on in life, providing a rich provision of classroom and extra-curricular activities that develop a range of character attributes
- to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (British Values)
- to provide a balanced provision in the 7 areas of learning for EYFS;
  - the prime areas of learning are; communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development.
  - The specific areas of learning are: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, expressive arts and design,

## Curriculum Provision

- i. *to provide an education for children of all backgrounds who are of suitable ability;*

Ref Academic profile of the school, Admission Policy, Staff Handbook

The Downs is non selective as children enter the school in the Reception Year. For this reason a wide range of ability exists among the children of the school. Children joining the later years are offered a place after an informal assessment. The ability level of each potential joiner and any special need that they may have is taken into account as it is essential that the school is able to provide appropriately for each child's needs.

- ii. *to provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of all pupils including those pupils with an EHC plan,*

Reference: Effective Teaching  
Learning Support Handbook,  
EAL & EHC plan  
Staff Handbook

The school seeks to challenge but nurture each child at a level appropriate to their needs in all aspects of the education provided. In the academic setting differentiation is used in various guises;

- within general classroom teaching
- by setting, this begins in Year 4 in some subjects
- by specialist group teaching such as Learning Support and Scholarship Groups
- on occasion by hosting children in year groups appropriate to their ability, rather than age

- iii. *to give pupils opportunities to acquire skills in speaking, listening, literacy, and numeracy,*

**Linguistic:** opportunities are provided in all lessons for pupils to develop their communication skills and expand their use of language through listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, all children in the school participate in a drama production during the year.

Languages are also taught throughout the school and in many of these lessons language other than English is used as the main medium of instruction.

Mathematical: the children are presented with opportunities to make calculations, to understand and appreciate relationships and patterns in number and space and to develop their capacity to think logically in most subjects although inevitably maths and science take the lead in this regard. Opportunities are provided for children to investigate, discuss, explore and use practical activities to further their understanding.

- iv. *to provide children with a curriculum that has a strong focus on the teaching of the core subjects with a balance of the foundation subjects; i.e., modern languages, humanities, technology, arts, music, PE and games.*

Ref 'Subject Breakdown' below within this policy

The school strives to achieve a balanced curriculum that provides a broad knowledge and a secure platform from which pupils can further their education after The Downs with confidence.

**Scientific:** within science lessons, and in other areas of the curriculum, children are provided with opportunities to increase their knowledge and understanding of nature, forces and materials. They develop their skills of enquiry through observing, hypothesizing, experimenting and recording findings.

**Technological:** along with science, IT and woodwork provide opportunities for children to develop their skills in the use of programming, information and communication technology, working with tools, handling equipment and materials, evaluating processes and products

**Human and Social;** in the study of history, geography and RE amongst other subjects, children are presented with opportunities to learn of people and the environment and how human action has influenced events and conditions.

**Physical:** within games, PE and similar subjects, such as dance, the children are able to develop physical control and co-ordination. They develop an awareness of strategy and tactical awareness and they learn to understand the rules of games. They are given opportunities to evaluate and improve performance and they are taught the principles of fitness and healthy living.

**Aesthetic and creative:** through art, drama, speech and drama, dance and music, opportunities are provided for the children to make, compose, invent and express their creativity.

- v. *to provide personal, social health and economic education that reflects the school's aim and ethos, encourages respect for other people and actively promotes fundamental British values*

Reference PHSE  
History & RE Schemes of work and handbooks  
Core values  
Staff Handbook;  
Assemblies

The school's values are fundamental to the education of the children at The Downs. These, and fundamental British values, are reinforced on a daily basis during the general school routine. Along with the wider issues of PHSE and citizenship they are also considered in depth during such times as Assembly, Tutor time and during the teaching of curriculum subjects, specifically RE and history.

Within PHSEE lessons and the general school routine and ethos pupils are taught to respect all others, even if they choose to follow a lifestyle that one would not choose to follow oneself.

- vi. *to ensure that the curriculum provides the opportunity for students to reach levels of attainment that ensures a smooth transition to their next school*

Pupils leave The Downs in Year 8 to attend a range of senior schools. The requirements of senior schools vary widely but they are well known to The Downs. The

broad academic curriculum is regularly reviewed, not least against senior school requirements and goes well beyond these expectations. Specialist teachers in the Prep School are well versed in preparing pupils for the Common Entrance and Common Academic exams. The pupils also attend mock interviews and are given thorough feedback in preparation for senior school assessment.

*vii. to provide appropriate introductory career guidance to pupils in Years 7 and 8*

**Ref: PHSEE & Citizenship policy**

Career guidance is delivered to the pupils in an impartial manner, ensuring that the advice and guidance given is consistent for all pupils regardless of their gender, background, diversity group, in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Pupils in Years 7 & 8 are provided with a wide range of opportunities to learn about different careers and opportunities to enable them to make informed choices. They gain information about training and occupations beyond school and consider their future careers. They receive advice which will help them to fulfill their potential. This is achieved through our curriculum plans, assemblies and study skills sessions. Within PHSEE pupils are given opportunities to discuss the wider world and consider their options for the future. Through study skills sessions pupils are given opportunities to 'know themselves' and learn of their own strengths, weaknesses and interests.

Outside of the classroom, they participate in a range of educational visits, they are able to attend parent network talks and they regularly receive lectures from a variety of external speakers including senior school heads, politicians, adventurers and authors. Recent examples include Dr Liam Fox (MP), Rev. A. Sewell, Turner twins (explorers), RNLI.

During their Leavers programme the Year 8 pupils participate in a money management workshop, attend team work and leadership skills sessions and undertake community work for the school.

*viii. to give all pupils the opportunity to learn and make progress,*

**Reference: Staff Handbook  
EAL & EHC Plan Policy**

The school strives to ensure that, without exception, all pupils are presented with the opportunity to learn and progress regardless of their context. Expert, specialist provision is made for those with learning difficulties, chiefly dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia and for those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) suitable support is provided in the manner of Teaching Assistant and differentiated learning. The more able students are extended through vehicles such as the Scholarship and Endeavour Group.

*ix. to develop, in all pupils, the values, skills and behaviours they need to get on in life, providing a rich provision of classroom and extra-curricular activities that develop a range of character attributes*

**Reference Department Handbooks**

Co-Curricular Activities – Clubs  
DAS Policy  
Trips & Camps

In all years, in the classroom, teachers provide activities which develop a range of life skills and character attributes, encouraging pupils to be determined and conscientious.

Pupils throughout the school are provided with the opportunities to participate in a variety of activities offered as after-school clubs. These clubs enable the pupils to experience new interests and develop skills and character attributes such as focus, commitment and communication.

Through the games curriculum, from Year 3, all children are involved in team sports, regularly playing matches against other schools. These sessions and experiences encourage the children to work as part of a team whilst also developing their leadership skills. In Years 3 and 4 every child is given the opportunity to be captain of their team, learning skills such as delegation, communication and leadership. Experiencing success and defeat allows pupils to learn humility and resilience.

The Downs Award Scheme enables those children, from Year 5, who genuinely do not enjoy Games, to enjoy the experiences of outward bound activities. They are provided with opportunities to develop important life skills such as leadership and teamwork whilst improving confidence and developing a range of skills.

All children go on school trips and in the Prep school every pupil participates in a residential camp at the start of the autumn term, which allow children to develop skills such as teamwork, leadership and problem solving, and character attributes such as resilience and grit.

- x. *to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (British Values)*

Reference: Pupil Roles & Responsibilities, PHSE handbook, Department handbooks

Children throughout the school are presented with opportunities, responsibilities and experiences to promote their social and emotional development. From the youngest age they are provided with opportunities to take responsibility, throughout the Prep school children are given opportunities to captain sporting teams and by Year 8 each pupil is tasked with a specific role.

They are encouraged to become increasingly independent and to sensitively stand up for the values and expectations of the community. Through debate and activity they are also encouraged to develop their individualism although not at the detriment of others.

Within the teaching of various subjects, assemblies, the visits of speakers and trips both local and abroad, the cultural and spiritual awareness of the pupils and the understanding of fundamental British values is enhanced and developed. Pupils are introduced to a variety of political issues. A balanced presentation of opposing views

is offered and pupils are encouraged to discuss their thoughts and form their own opinions.

- xi. to provide a balanced provision in the 7 areas of learning for EYFS;*
  - a. the prime areas of learning are; communication and language, physical development, personal, social and emotional development.*
  - b. The specific areas of learning are: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, expressive arts and design,*

**Ref: EYFS Planning Documents, EYFS Profiles**

Children in Reception are taught in line with the EYFS statutory framework. Children in the EYFS are provided with opportunities to develop all of the areas of learning.

**Communication and language:** children are provided with opportunities to experience a rich language environment. They develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and speak and listen in a range of situations.

**Physical development:** opportunities are provided for children to be active and interactive. They develop their co-ordination, control and movement. They are helped to understand the importance of physical activity and how to make healthy food choices.

**Personal, social and emotional development:** children are helped to promote a positive sense of themselves, and others; to develop skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups and to have confidence in their own abilities.

**Literacy:** children are encouraged to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. They are given access to a wide range of reading materials to ignite their interest.

**Mathematics:** children are provided with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces and measures.

**Understanding the world:** children are guided to make sense of their physical world and their community. They are given opportunities to explore, observe and find out about other people, places, technology and the environment.

**Expressive arts and design:** children explore and play with a wide range of media and materials. They are provided with opportunities and encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play and design and technology.

There is a balance between child initiated and adult-led activities. This balance moves towards more adult led activities in preparation for Year 1.

We provide opportunities for children to use their home language within the school day. This would be recorded in class observations.

The EYFS profile is completed in the final term, before the 30<sup>th</sup> June, and is shared with parents. The teacher who completed the profile will discuss the progress made with the parents. We work closely with the local authority on the EYFS Profile moderation.

### **The School's Hours**

The school day starts at 8.20am for Prep school and 8.30am for Pre-Prep, with these finishing times:

Reception to Year 3                      4.00pm (37 hours and 30 minutes),

Years 4 to 8                                5.10pm (44 hours and 10 minutes).

However, there are numerous activities such as after school care, prep, clubs, supper, and matches that mean pupils are often in school beyond these times.

### **Curriculum Development**

The curriculum is developed through a process of consultation within the bounds of the general parameters described above. Heads of Departments annually present development plans that inform further discussion. The Curriculum Group and the Leadership Team then debate and propose adjustments in mind of the school development plan and the school's core values. Finally the headmaster agrees any changes to be implemented. Every three years a full scale curriculum review is carried out to ensure that balance of educational provision and the demands being placed on children and staff is reasonable, that is challenging but nurturing.

Staff are encouraged to attend courses to enhance their professional development and thus incorporate current educational thinking into both their teaching, schemes of work and development plans. The school is mindful of its independent status and of the opportunity to create a bespoke curriculum. It values traditional education practices but simultaneously it is keen to embrace modern practice that is proven to be to the benefit of the children.

Within departments and each Key Stage, staff are expected to have a broad based knowledge of the most 'recognized' curriculum documents, programmes of work, textbooks, computer software and resources, that are applicable to their subject and the levels of the children they teach. For example, staff are required to be familiar with QCA documents and the Common Entrance Syllabus at 13+.

### **General Curriculum Content**

In addition to the central academic curriculum of the core (English, maths, languages and science) and foundation subjects (history, geography, RE, IT, art & music) the following subjects / activities enrich the curriculum.

- **Pre-Prep**

Children in Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 2 have weekly dance lessons with specialist staff.

Yr 1 and 2 have recorder lessons.

All Pre-Prep children are in a choir.

All Pre-Prep children attend swimming lessons.

All Pre-Prep children regularly take part in forest school activities with a specialist.

- **Prep School**

All pupils in the Prep school are in one of four choirs.

Year 5 children study Grade 1 Theory of Music

From Year 5 children study Spanish as a second modern language

Year 6 study a minimum level of Grade 1 Theory of Music, although many more will study a higher grade

From year 7 Science is taught as three disciplines

From Year 7 Latin is an option

- **During the Friday afternoon activities programme:**

Year 4 attend programmes in etiquette, woodwork, chess and Forest School. They also attend drama rehearsals for one term.

Year 5 attend drama rehearsal, undertake study skills sessions and complete a group project in the learning lab and ICT suite

Year 6 attend drama rehearsal, undertake study skills sessions and complete an independent project in the learning lab and ICT suite

Year 7 attend drama rehearsals, undertake study skills sessions and practice VR and NVR papers

Year 8 attend a programme to prepare pupils for specific senior school entry

### **Subject Breakdown**

The following tables illustrate the number of lessons allocated in each curriculum area, in all years of the school (with the exception of Reception which adheres to the EYFS guidelines). Further notes provide additional information, demonstrating the manner in which the subjects are taught. Where there is no setting according to ability, the pupils are taught in two mixed ability form groups.



## Curriculum Subjects Years 1 & 2

	Year 1	Year 2	
Subject Name	Lessons per week	Lessons per week	Notes
English	7	7	Includes drama and a library period
Mathematics	7	7	
Science	4	4	Also included in cross curricular sessions
ICT	1	1	
Humanities	4	3	Also included in cross curricular sessions
Art / DT	2	2	Taught by a specialist teacher in Year 2
Music	1	1	Music assembly on Friday
Dance	1	1	Includes drama in Y1
Physical Education	5	5	Includes swimming
Religious Education	1	1	
French	1	1	Taught by a specialist teacher
PSHEE	1	1	Daily form time is also timetabled
Choir	1	1	
Phonics (Letters & Sounds)	3	3	
Special Educational Needs			Provision provided through SEN Department

## Curriculum: Years 3 & 4

Subject Name	Year 3 Lessons per week	Year 4 Lessons per week	Setted by ability	Notes
English	7	7	2 sets in Year 4	Includes drama Includes a library period in Year 3
Mathematics	6	6	2 sets in Year 4	
Science	3	4		Taught by a specialist teacher in Year 4
ICT	1	1		
History / Geography	3	4		
Art	2	4		Taught by a specialist teacher
Music	2	2		
Physical Education	5	2		Includes swimming lessons in Year 3
Games	4	6		
Religious Education / TPR	1	2		
French	1	2		Taught by a specialist teacher
PSHEE	1	1		
Choir	1	1		
Tutor period		1		Circle time in year 3 and tutor time in year 4
Prep period		1		Maths & English alternate
Reading Period	1	4		Booster groups in these sessions
Phonics (Letters & sounds)	3			
Special Educational Needs				Provision provided through SEN Department

## Curriculum: Years 5 & 6

Subject Name	Year 5 Lessons per week	Year 6 Lessons per week	Setted by ability	Notes
English	6	6	2 sets in both years	Drama incorporated in the English curriculum.
Mathematics	6	6	2 sets in both years	
Science	4	5	Only set in Year 6 (2 sets)	
ICT	1	1		
History	2	2		
Geography	2	2		
Art	4	2		
Music	2	1		
Physical Education	2	2		
Games	6	6		Year 5 & 6 participate together
Religious Education / TPR	2	2		
French	3	3	Only set in year 6 (2 sets)	In exceptional circumstances children may be exempt from French
Spanish	1	3		In exceptional circumstances children may be exempt from Spanish
PSHEE	1	1		
Choir	1	1		
Prep period	1	1		
Reading Period	4	4		Booster groups happen in these sessions
Special Educational Needs				Provision provided through SEN Department

### Curriculum: Years 7 and 8

Subject Name	Year 7 Lessons per week	Year 8 Lessons per week	Setted by ability	Notes
English & Drama	7	7	2 sets in both years	Drama incorporated in the English curriculum
French	3	3	2 sets in both years	In exceptional circumstances children may be exempt from one language.
Spanish	3	3	2 sets in both years	In exceptional circumstances children may be exempt from one language.
History	2	3		
Geography	2	3		
Religious Studies / TPR	2	2		
Mathematics	6	6	2 sets in both years	
Physics	2	2	2 sets in both years	
Chemistry	2	2		
Biology	2	2		
Art & Design	2	2		
ICT	1	1		
Music	1			
PE	1	1		
Games	6	6		Years 7 and 8 participate together
Choir	1	1		
Prep Period	1			
Reading Period	4	4		Booster groups and current affairs sessions may happen within these sessions
Special Educational Needs				Provision provided through SEN Department

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The curriculum is under constant review by the Curriculum Group although each year it is formally reviewed. In addition the balance of the curriculum and the pressure placed on the children and staff is reviewed in depth every three years.

<b>This policy (or Handbook) was updated on</b>	<b>Signed on behalf of the School/Nursery</b>	<b>Date for next review</b>
<i>10/2/20</i>	<i>I Payne</i>	<i>1/11/2020</i>