



# CURRICULUM AND GROUPING POLICY

September 2024

# Curriculum and Grouping Policy

## 1. Curriculum Rationale

The Curriculum at Churchill Academy & Sixth Form is designed to provide a rich, broad and balanced experience to all students, in order to set no limits on what we can achieve.

At Churchill we define “curriculum” to include the traditional “in-lesson” offer, and the wider extra- and super-curricular offer designed to empower all students to develop knowledge, skills, character and confidence.

## 2. Curriculum in practice

Each year the Academy publishes the curriculum for each year group in a booklet on the website under <https://www.churchill-academy.org/curriculum>. The Sixth Form curriculum is published in the Sixth Form Prospectus each year, which can also be found on the website.

The curriculum is organised into three stages as follows:

- KS3 Secondary Foundation Stage (Years 7, 8 and 9)
- KS4 Personalised Stage (Years 10 and 11), divided into:
  - Traditional curriculum pathway
  - Vocational curriculum pathway
- KS5 Advanced Stage (Years 12 and 13)

### 2.1 The Secondary Foundation Stage curriculum

Churchill Academy operates a three year Secondary Foundation Stage KS3 (Year 7, 8 and 9). This provides a wider curriculum experience than students will have generally experienced at primary school. Our intention is to build upon students' core learning in English and Maths and also to enrich the breadth of the curriculum offer. This not only builds a firm foundation for the Personalised Stage, but also ensures that all students are exposed to the inspiration and wonder of enquiry, creativity and independent learning skills through Science, the Humanities (History, Geography and Statutory RE), a modern language (French or Spanish), the performing arts (Drama, Dance and Music), Art, Design and Technology, Food and Nutrition, IT and Computer Science, Physical Education, and PSHE (see below). All Year 7 students follow the full curriculum offer with some modification to course content and delivery within MFL and English to provide literacy intervention. A small number of students may be disapplied from learning a modern foreign language so that further literacy interventions can be implemented..

Each subject has taken account of the DfE recommendations and statutory requirements for maintained schools and adapted these to suit the Churchill context, student learning and experience at KS2, as well as building the strong foundations required for GCSE or equivalent specifications.

### 2.2. The Personalised Stage curriculum

Churchill Academy & Sixth Form operates a two year Personalised Stage curriculum (Key Stage 4: Years 10 and 11). This allows deep learning in specialised subjects, with the breadth maintained through a rich options offer. Students are able to study a broader range of subjects through the personalised phase and are given sufficient time to cover the increased content within the reformed GCSE suite. In this way we have been able to maintain a balance of traditionally academic and creative subjects. Furthermore, the curriculum design in the Personalised Phase recognises the importance of enabling a deep and rich knowledge within a subject, and this unlocks opportunities within each course, which are not available to students when the curriculum skims over topics. At Churchill, this comprehensive knowledge and wider range of skills gives our students

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greater flexibility and choice for post 16 study and fosters broader vocational and academic aspiration. The majority of students follow a traditional curriculum pathway. For students with complex needs, or those for whom the traditional pathway is inappropriate, an alternative vocational pathway is available.

## 2.2.1. The 'Traditional Curriculum' pathway

All students follow a compulsory core curriculum based on the English Baccalaureate: English, Maths, Science, Modern Languages and Humanities, alongside Physical Education and PSHE/RE (see below). There is then a broad range of additional options, from which students choose two. The options offer emphasises practical and creative learning, with additional academic options also available. The options offer will always include opportunities for the study of performing arts, art, design and technology, food and nutrition, physical education, and IT and computer science, alongside additional offers for triple science, humanities and languages. Details of the options offer can be found on the website here: <https://www.churchill-academy.org/curriculum>

## 2.2.2. The 'Vocational Curriculum' pathway

Students likely to benefit from a differentiated provision are identified in KS3 and their progress tracked together with further investigation of any unidentified barriers to learning. Heads of House and The SENCo will review this information during Term 2 of Year 9 in addition to considering recommendations from curriculum leaders. Families are involved in the recommendation for the vocational pathway through the options process in Year 9. Our differentiated provision aims to ensure that students with more complex needs or a likelihood of struggling to manage a full quota of GCSEs are given additional time in their learning to succeed at fewer subjects, gain core life skills through Asdan qualifications and bespoke vocational opportunities.

## 2.3. The Advanced Stage curriculum (Sixth Form)

Access to the post-16 offer is based upon students meeting the threshold for Level 3 study and meeting the individual entry criteria for their subjects. Each subject's key content and entry criteria is outlined in the prospectus, which is updated annually to ensure that our curriculum meets our students' needs. The Sixth Form Prospectus is available on our website: <https://www.churchill-academy.org/apply-to-the-sixth-form>

### 2.3.1. The Specialist Tutor Programme (Advanced Stage)

Personal development and advice and guidance is knitted together within Sixth Form through the Specialist Tutor Programme. Each student is allocated a specialist tutor to help support and guide them through their Advanced Stage. The specialist tutor is aligned to the student's subject choices and intended pathway. Weekly activities are planned to provide access to employers, HE and other sources of inspiration, alongside projects that provide super-curricular learning. The tutorial programme and assemblies allow students to consider and discuss ethical, social, financial and personal safety. The Specialist Tutor Programme builds in one to one guidance and support that students need, as they continue to plan for post 18 progression into apprenticeships, employment or continuing education.

## 2.4. Further Curriculum personalisation and adaptation

Churchill Academy & Sixth Form is able to provide curriculum adaptations based upon individual student needs. These provisions may be short or long term and are only considered and agreed in conjunction with families. The aim of all curriculum personalisation is to support the individual student with achieving academic and personal success and is designed to promote the principles of inclusion and equality of opportunity.

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**Secondary Foundation stage** – curriculum personalisation will be considered for students with the lowest prior attainment as they join the academy in Year 7 so that they are supported with improving their literacy and specifically their reading age so that they can access the curriculum independently. To facilitate the delivery of additional literacy teaching students there is adaptation to the content and delivery of a modern foreign language in Year 7 and potential disapplication in Year 8 and 9 where students will explore other cultures through a literacy programme. Identification of students for whom this adaptation would be appropriate is done in conjunction with the Year 6 teacher, the Primary SENCo and families. Students with more complex special educational needs may require further curriculum adaptation and this is designed by the SENCo on an individual basis to best support the student's need in balance with the views of students, their families, and other professionals involved in their care.

**Personalised Stage** – all students in Years 10 and 11 study a core curriculum of Mathematics, English, Combined Science, PE and PSHE. Students also study two E Bacc subjects at GCSE and two 'free choice' options at GCSE or Level 2 equivalent. Where appropriate, students with additional learning needs will be offered the vocational curriculum pathway. Students with complex special educational needs may require further curriculum adaptation and this will be shaped for them on an individual basis and in agreement with them, their families and in conjunction with The Deputy Head (Curriculum), Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion), SENCo, and/or Head of House as appropriate.

**Advanced Stage (Sixth Form)** – most students studying in the Sixth Form take three level 3 courses as the core of their study programme. The breadth of subject offer means that there are vocational or academic courses to suit a wide range of interests. All subjects are Level 3, and some require prior attainment at particular standards, as set out in the prospectus; others are available for students who have only met the general entry criteria. Students personalise their programme further by studying an additional subject, such as Core Maths, EPQ or study skills. Guidance is given on subject choices throughout Year 11 and at the start of Year 12 to ensure that students are starting the right curriculum pathway for their interests, skillset and pathway. Similarly, where students choose to study subjects that stem from the same discipline (e.g. Art and Photography) we support the student's right to specialise. Further curriculum adaptation, including curriculum reduction or work experience options, may be considered in the light of individual circumstances.

## 2.5. The PSHE and RE Curriculum

The PSHE and RE curriculums promote:

*"The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of pupils at the school and that of society; and prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of modern life' Education Reform Act 1988*

RE:

The RE curriculum has been developed to enable students to investigate a variety of religions and world views. Students are encouraged to reflect on and express their own ideas and the ideas of others. The curriculum enables students to respond to religious belief and worldviews in an informed, rational and insightful way. Values such as tolerance, respect and ethics are integrated throughout lessons.

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Parents have the right in law to withdraw their children, wholly or partly, from Religious Education. We offer an inclusive and engaging RE curriculum and would welcome discussions with families considering this option, to discuss the next steps.

## **PSHE**

The PSHE curriculum has been carefully designed around the PSHE Association's guidance to respond to the needs of our students. Each of the three strands of PSHE, Relationships, Health and Wellbeing and living in the wider world are covered in lessons with each year group. As part of the relationships topic students explore issues relating to Relationships and Sex Education, healthy relationships, consent, toxic masculinity, child on child abuse and values within relationships. In Health and Wellbeing students explore issues surrounding drugs and alcohol, risk, online safety and mental wellbeing. In the Living in the Wider World topic students cover; career pathways, LMI, alternative pathways, Economic and Financial understanding.

The PSHE curriculum is supported in its aims through the Academy's ethos, the pastoral system, the assembly programme and other areas of educational experience and extra-curricular activity. The curriculum and its aims are monitored and overseen by the PSHE Leader of Learning

Elements of SMSC are woven through the foundation and personalised curriculum stages and this is audited and monitored by the PSHE Leader of Learning. In addition to the timetabled careers lessons our independent careers guidance includes information on the range of education or training options, including apprenticeships and technical education routes. Guidance is always given with the intention of best promoting the individual student's interest.

## 2.6. The Extra-curricular offer

At Churchill Academy we believe in the value and importance of enrichment activities for the physical, social-emotional and psychological well-being of our students.

We encourage all students to participate in extra-curricular or enrichment activities each term and the extra-curricular programme is available on the Academy website and is promoted to students by their tutor and through display on the information screens around the Academy site. The majority of these activities are provided at no additional cost to families and we are grateful to our inspirational and talented staff for the time and commitment that they give so generously to allow us to offer so many extra-curricular activities.

Our extra-curricular programme affords opportunities for our students to engage in new activities, and sports, or to practise an old favourite. Students develop new skills, build relationships and strengthen camaraderie with peers. Our extra-curricular offer includes the following areas:-

- The Performing Arts
- Physical Education including competitive sporting fixtures
- Outdoor Education
- Academic enrichment and extension for example in Maths, Science, Art, Design and Technology
- Social and Political awareness
- Contribution to House/Academy
- Friendship and personal interests

## 3. Grouping Rationale

Students should be taught in combinations which allow them to make the best possible progress. These will usually be "mixed ability" groups containing students from the full

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range of prior attainment, and may include sets defined by prior attainment where appropriate.

Decisions about grouping are made by senior leaders in the Academy, based on the best available evidence about student progress. When the timetable allows, grouping decisions are delegated to middle leaders whose decisions must be ratified by the senior leadership team. In practice, this delegation usually occurs in the core subjects of English, Maths and Science.

## 3.1 Grouping in practice

In Year 7 students are grouped in "Learning Groups". Learning groups are constructed so that there is a balance of gender, a mix of students from different primary schools and a balance from the full range of prior attainment. Students are taught in these Learning Groups for all subjects except for PE, Performing Arts and Art, Design and Technology, where smaller groups are created to allow for practical teaching. These practical groups also contain students from the full range of prior attainment. Students in a Learning group study the same language, either French or Spanish, for the duration of Year 7 and Year 8. Some students and their families request a specific language before entry into Year 7 and we aim to accommodate this. It is not normally possible for students to change their language or learning group once they have joined the academy.

In Year 8 and Year 9, the Learning Groups are rearranged and used to deliver Science, History, Geography, and RE. Practical Learning Groups are also rearranged and used to deliver PE, Performing Arts and Art, Design and Technology. Separate grouping arrangements apply in English, Maths, and Modern Languages.

In the Personalised Stage (Years 10 and 11), teaching groups are arranged according to the options students have chosen. Separate grouping arrangements apply in English, Maths and Science.

In the Sixth Form groupings are arranged according to the options students have chosen. Students are also assigned to a specialist tutor who can support them with their chosen programme of study.

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## Appendix

### 4. Appendix: mixed ability or setting?

Our grouping rationale states that students should be taught in combinations which allow them to make the best possible progress. The Education Endowment Foundation summarises the available research as follows:

*Setting or streaming appears to benefit higher attaining pupils and be detrimental to the learning of mid-range and lower attaining learners. On average, it does not appear to be an effective strategy for raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, who are more likely to be assigned to lower groups.*

*Low attaining learners who are set or streamed fall behind by 1 or 2 months per year, on average, when compared with the progress of similar students in classes with mixed ability groups. It appears likely that routine setting or streaming arrangements undermine low attainers' confidence and discourage the belief that attainment can be improved through effort. Research also suggests that ability grouping can have a longer-term negative effect on the attitudes and engagement of low attaining pupils.<sup>1</sup>*

The available research shows that “mixed ability” approaches benefit all students, whereas setting and streaming approaches benefit the higher attaining students. Therefore, “mixed ability” grouping is the default option at Churchill Academy & Sixth Form.

However, in some subjects there is a compelling argument for setting, for example when students at different levels of attainment sit different examinations at the end of the course. This is the case for GCSE Mathematics, where some students sit a Higher paper and some a Foundation paper. It is also true of GCSE Science, where some students sit three GCSEs (Biology, Physics, and Chemistry) whilst others sit two (Core and Additional Science).

Where the curriculum content is different for students at different levels of attainment, a compelling case can be made for grouping them separately. In these cases, or others where there is a compelling or evidence-based reason for an alternative grouping approach, alternatives to “mixed ability” will be considered. Grouping decisions in these cases are made on prior attainment alone.

At all times, leaders and teachers are mindful of the fact that assessments of attainment are not the same as measures of potential, and therefore the facility to move up and down between sets must be retained in order to set no limits on what students can achieve.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/setting-or-streaming/>