

## **The Highfields School curriculum: The key to a great quality of education**

### **Our curriculum is underpinned and shaped by our Core Purpose:**

To be an inclusive, happy community that values every individual and inspires them to achieve their full potential

### **Our ambitious curriculum Intent: A curriculum which engages and inspires so that all students enjoy a great education**

The curriculum is everything – it is the sum of the whole student experience. It is not solely about qualifications and courses, though these play a vital role at its heart. Our curriculum must be broad and bold, ambitious and rich, in order to meet our core aim of inspiring every individual to be the best they can be.

The Highfields curriculum is designed to engage and challenge all students to achieve their fabulous potential. We aim to inspire confident, considerate, knowledgeable and creative young people, who enjoy and appreciate the value of learning. We seek to develop young people who are equipped to live happy and fulfilling lives in a dynamic and rapidly changing world. Highfields students should be ready to make positive contributions as responsible citizens within our vibrant and diverse society

### **Our curriculum seeks to deliver and develop**

- Opportunities to learn, to lead, to create, to participate, to contribute, to be enterprising, to enable all students to find something that they enjoy are good at
- Excellent experiences – inside and outside the classroom
- Strong, embedded knowledge and understanding across a spectrum of areas
- High levels of literacy and numeracy – so that all students able to communicate fluently and apply key skills across all areas of learning
- Confident, independent learners – who value learning and who are
  - Resilient - seeking challenge and able to deal with set-backs, seeing them as opportunities
  - Responsible - able to manage their own learning, whether working alone or in a team
  - Reflective - responsive to feedback, continually seeking ways to improve
  - Resourceful - Creative, able to approach problems in different ways
  - Reasoning - able to think things through and reach well supported conclusions
- Sensitive awareness of current issues, and ability to contribute to them through thoughtful discussion and well-judged action
- Young people who model values of respect and tolerance, who value democracy and rule of law
- Strong, sophisticated understanding of, and engagement with, equality and diversity in modern society
- An appreciation of beauty, a sense of awe and wonder, intelligent engagement with spiritual and moral discourse

## **A broad and balanced curriculum**

At the heart of our curriculum is a strong focus on the core subjects that provide the foundation for success in all learning. As students progress through school there are increasing opportunities for flexibility and choice – thereby meeting the interests, needs and aspirations of all.

All students follow a common curriculum in years 7 to 9, providing full coverage of the National Curriculum. Students have lessons in maths, English, science, design technology, computing, history, geography, music, art, drama, dance, physical education, a modern foreign language, philosophy and religious studies (PRS). A second modern foreign language can be taken from year 9. Students follow a full programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which includes a course on 'Learning to Learn' and modules on citizenship. Through the Learn to Learn programme, and the integration of the 5Rs across the school curriculum, we aim to develop students as effective learners, equipped with the skills and self-awareness required to succeed. These skills become increasingly important as students progress through the school, and are key to achieving one's potential.

Teaching towards accredited GCSE courses begins in science, PRS and maths in year 9, but these are not examined until the end of year 11.

In years 10 and 11, the number of compulsory courses is reduced and choice is expanded with a wide range of options. In addition to a common core of subjects we offer many qualifications including applied options in vocational areas such as travel and tourism and engineering.

Many of our students choose to stay on at Highfields School in the sixth form and choose from a wide programme of predominantly 'A' level subjects. Our students thrive on the rigour and challenge of the post 16 curriculum and achieve consistently excellent outcomes.

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education at Highfields is essential to their development as young people. All curriculum areas contribute to this programme, alongside specialist provision within Philosophy and Religious Education and through the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme which focusses on areas including sex and relationships, careers, health, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. At Key Stage 4 we provide a dedicated programme of specialised events and opportunities. Across the whole school our tutorial periods and assemblies provide time for independent reading, literacy and numeracy enhancement and exploration of current issues.

Our curriculum also includes a full and varied programme of activities outside the classroom. We encourage all of our students to explore and develop their interests through such opportunities. Activities range from reading groups to the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, from sports teams to dance and drama, from involvement in debating competitions to playing in one of our bands or orchestras.

We are passionate about sport. We aim to involve all our students in enjoying sport and to help them to understand the advantages of a healthy lifestyle. Participation in sport develops crucial personal and life skills, such as leadership, team work and mutual respect. Competitive sport provides opportunities for many of our students to excel.

A very distinctive element of our programme is sports leadership. Our Sports Leadership Academy is nationally recognised as one of only three beacon schools in the country. We provide extensive opportunities for students to become involved in sport as coaches and officials, developing

particular skills in supporting the development of primary age children in sport and PE. Many students are inspired by sports leadership into further study in sport and aspire to careers in the sports and recreation industry.

We retain a commitment to our tradition as a performing arts school. Drama, dance and music activities provide students with a range of experiences that extend their understanding, develop valuable skills and build self-esteem. Visiting actors, musicians and dancers work with students across the age range; there are extensive performance opportunities for students and the chance to see professional artists both in regional theatres and at Highfields. We are locally renowned for the quality of our productions.

Within school students have many opportunities to develop as active citizens and leaders, for example by becoming involved in charity projects, helping at school events and acting as peer mentors to younger students.

We have an active school council which has been instrumental in improving our approach to, for example, recycling and has a clear voice in shaping learning experiences in school. We run an exciting programme of trips and visits, including regular visits overseas to locations as varied as Iceland and New York, alongside day visits to locations here in the Peak District.

### **Need to Know – a summary of our approach to ensuring that students know, understand and can do more**

A core responsibility for all educators is to build up a store of knowledge in long term memory and 'make it stick'. In order to do this we need to be clear about what students need to know and clear about how to help them build that knowledge. The curriculum needs to ensure that the right components are embedded through careful sequencing:

Research shows that to build knowledge in long term memory we need to focus on doing a few quite simple, inter-linked things. These all inform our curriculum delivery and future planning

- We are clear that real learning will be quite hard – if it isn't 'hurting a bit' we are not likely to be learning. So, we ensure that our curriculum is challenging, and matches to students' needs.
- We need to revisit things on a regular basis – this is called **spaced learning / spaced practice**. In lessons we often revisit earlier topics to refresh, re-new and consolidate prior learning. This may include a 15 minute session at the start of a Year 11 lesson on a topic previously studied in Year 10, for example.
- We need to practice our ability to recall things from our memory and apply them – this is called **retrieval practice**. This is often done by answering a series of quick quiz questions that require factual recall from earlier lessons or past exam questions that require deeper application.
- We need to mix learning up, working on 2 or 3 linked topics at a time. This is called **'interleaved practice'**. A simple example of how this is done can be seen in Maths homework assignments which mix up questions from a wide variety of topics. We are adapting delivery to interleave content more extensively

By doing these things research suggests that learners build a better store of knowledge in long term memory and gain fluency. Students are then able to make better use of knowledge, applying it flexibly and with greater ease to new situations.

### **Ensuring access to our curriculum**

We have high academic ambitions for all of our students, including those who have Special Educational Needs and those who may be deemed disadvantaged due to economic circumstances. Our approach to successful inclusion of all students through the curriculum includes:

- A relentless focus on the power of high quality classroom teaching. One size does not fit all. Teachers make use of information about students' learning needs to consider where they seat students, how and when they question students, how they prioritise personal support and attention throughout lessons and how additional resources might be used to challenge and support students to meet core learning objectives.
- Inclusion of students in all aspects of the curriculum. We do not remove students from subjects on a long term basis or narrow choices.
- We provide a 3 year Key Stage 3 curriculum. This ensures that all students have access to the full breadth of subjects until the end of Year 9. This maximizes their exposure to the diversity of our curriculum and ensures that sufficient knowledge has been built to enable success in exam courses followed from Year 10.
- We provide some additional support programmes such as extra literacy intervention to help all students to access a challenging secondary curriculum. In years 10 and 11 a small number of carefully selected students follow a programme of additional maths, English and science as one of their 4 options. This provides an appropriate number of exam qualifications whilst strengthening knowledge, understanding and skills in a core of subjects
- Additional funding is available to support students in accessing the enrichment provided by trips and visits.