



St Swithun's WINCHESTER

ST SWITHUN'S SCHOOL

CURRICULUM POLICY (SENIOR SCHOOL)

Policy History	
Reviewed and updated	September 2025
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Reviewed by:

Deputy Head Academic

Charles Hammel

Date: September 2025

The Education Committee

Steve Bailey, Chair

Date: October 2025

Aims

In line with the school's aims and ethos, curricular provision is designed to:

- develop the full academic and creative capabilities of each pupil as an individual;
- provide a broad, balanced, academic curriculum with an emphasis on flexibility and individual choice;
- be relevant and appropriate and to motivate and engage pupils;
- provide equality and opportunity for all students with inclusive learning opportunities;
- provide opportunities for numeracy and literacy, speaking and listening throughout the curriculum;
- help to develop an understanding of personal, social, health and economic issues (PSHE) in the curriculum and the wider school context;
- develop the role of citizenship in the curriculum and the wider school context;
- provide careers advice and guidance throughout the school;
- encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and develop intellectual curiosity;
- prepare pupils for the next stage of their lives, equipped with the knowledge and skills to facilitate lifelong learning;
- prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society;
- reinforce the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils;
- develop in each pupil the learning skills (Advanced Cognitive Performance characteristics [ACPs]) and behaviours (Values, Attitudes and Attributes [VAAs]) associated with High Performance Learning.

Principles

- Pupils in L4 – L5 (years 7 – 9) follow a broad, general curriculum which aims to develop a wide range of skills and subjects, including linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative aspects of education. All pupils follow a programme of enrichment known as Stretch, which offers a wide range of courses and a lecture programme.
- Pupils in M5 and U5 (years 10 and 11) at IGCSE or GCSE, study English language and literature; mathematics; a minimum of two sciences, either (i) separate biology, chemistry and/or physics, or (ii) double award science; and at least one modern foreign language. In addition, they choose from a range of optional subjects which includes humanities and social sciences; classical languages; and technological, aesthetic and creative subjects. Pupils continue to follow the Stretch enrichment programme. Physical education is compulsory.
- In the sixth form (years 12 and 13) A levels are offered in a range of subjects. Pupils may choose either three or four full A levels as two-year courses. All pupils are given the option to complete the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) within the timetable

structure. In addition, pupils continue to follow the Stretch programme, and physical education is compulsory.

- In Key Stage 3 pupils are organised into divisions (mathematics – years 7, 8 and 9; French, German and Latin/Classical civilisation – year 9 only); in Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11) pupils are organised into divisions where it is deemed appropriate (English language and literature, mathematics and, where timetabling permits, modern languages).
- All pupils in Key Stage 3 have timetabled provision for religious studies, and the subject is available as an option choice in Key Stages 4 and 5. Aspects of religious education are also delivered through school assemblies.
- The choice of subjects available at I/GCSE and A level is wide-ranging, and the school endeavours to meet the option requests of all students. However, on occasions, this may not be feasible due to timetable constraints.
- There is a programme of co-curricular activities designed to extend and complement the curriculum.

ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Students who are not expert users of English either because it is not their first language or because they have experienced significant exposure to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English, may have English as an Additional Language (EAL) lessons. These lessons aim to develop increasingly effective use of the English language, either enabling and then enhancing access to and engagement with the curriculum. As well as supporting students with their academic curriculum and their general English, sixth-formers can prepare for the IELTS test if they are likely to require it as part of their university applications.

Please see the separate EAL policy for further details.

LEARNING SUPPORT

St Swithun's is a learning community in which pupils should experience success. We are committed to an inclusive culture where all girls are enabled to have equality of access to the curriculum in a welcoming, valuing and respectful environment. Sometimes a pupil needs additional support to enhance development or learning performance in order to strengthen self-esteem across an area(s) of the curriculum. The department which takes responsibility for this is called the Learning Support department.

Please see the separate Learning Support policy for further details.

SUPPORTING THE MOST ABLE PUPILS

All pupils at St Swithun's are able. We are, however, always looking to challenge the most able through appropriate learning and teaching approaches and diverse and stimulating co-curricular and enrichment opportunities. The ethos of the school is one whereby we hope that all girls aspire to be confident learners and high achievers.

Please see the separate Supporting the Most Able Pupils policy for further details.

FUTURE PATHWAYS

The future pathways department focuses on supporting individuals in personal development, encouraging self-confidence and the ability to handle decisions and manage change. The aim of the future pathways department is to provide impartial guidance to enable all pupils to achieve their declared long-term career objectives and, where no definite goal exists, to ensure that they are sufficiently informed to keep a wide range of options available to them.

The government publication *Careers guidance and access for education and training providers* (May 2025), outlines the following as statutory duties for state schools:

High quality careers education and guidance in school or college is critical to young people's futures. It helps to prepare them for the workplace by providing a clear understanding of the world of work, including the routes to jobs and careers that they might find engaging and rewarding.

Independent careers guidance to be provided for all students from year 8 (12-13 year olds) to year 13 (17-18 year olds). '**Independent**' is defined as external to the school or college. External sources of careers support could include employer visits, mentoring, website, telephone and helpline access, and personal guidance provided externally to the school or college. Taken together, the external sources must include information on the range of education and training options, including apprenticeships. Personal guidance does not have to be external – it can be delivered by school or college staff, if trained.

Schools and colleges have a responsibility to set students on the path that will secure the best outcome which will enable them to progress in education and work and give employers the highly skilled people they need. That means schools and colleges must act impartially, in line with their statutory duty or contractual requirement, and not show bias towards any route, be that academic or technical. They should promote a full range of technical options. Schools and colleges should always focus on the student and what is best for them. Although our universities are world-class, it is not the only choice: in many cases, a college course or apprenticeship can offer better outcomes.

The department expects all secondary schools and colleges to use the internationally recognised updated Gatsby Benchmarks (2025) to develop a careers programme that increases opportunities for students to access everything from experiences of the workplace and personal guidance with a careers adviser, to engagement with employers, colleges, training providers and universities. The benchmarks also support schools to fulfil their statutory duty to enable access of training providers to showcase to students what technical education and apprenticeships can offer.

The latest ISI regulations (April 2023) largely mirror the statutory guidelines, although they also consider careers guidance as applying to students in year 7 (11-12 year olds). The Values, Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs) and Advanced Cognitive Performance Characteristics (ACPs)

associated with High Performance Learning represent values, skills and behaviours viewed as part of preparation for life in British society, and are ones which we fully endorse and support as attributes needed for the world of work and life beyond school.

As an independent school we are not required to meet the statutory guidelines for state schools, although in the interests of best practice we take them into account when planning our programme. Another useful document is the Gatsby Report into *Good Career Guidance* (2014) with the eight updated benchmarks (2025) against which to assess provision: use of COMPASS is helping to inform our strategy moving forward in this respect. The future pathways department is working to gain formal accreditation of its careers programme through the Quality in Careers Standard. The Quality in Careers Standard is the single national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). The Standard is fully aligned with the [Gatsby Benchmarks for "Good Career Guidance"](#) and complies with the DfE's Statutory Guidance.

At points in the school career where subject option decisions arise [in L5 (year 9), U5 (year 11) and the sixth form (years 12 and 13)], each student has a careers guidance appointment with a qualified careers advisor to discuss career plans and subject choices. All students have access to the Futures SharePoint site which carries up-to-date links to impartial external websites and information about a wide range of opportunities. This is also accessible to current parents via the portal. In addition, the following year-specific input takes place, and Morrisby evaluations are used to obtain student feedback where appropriate:

In L4 (year 7): In the Thrive (PSHEE) programme, L4 explore the knowledge and skills needed to set realistic and challenging personal targets and goals. This is done mainly through work with form tutors, with additional time dedicated through Positive Education and PSHEE.

In U4 (year 8): In the Thrive (PSHEE) programme, U4 learn about different work roles and career pathways, including clarifying their own early aspirations. This also considers the diversity of professions and access to underrepresented careers. U4 students develop their enterprise skills during the enterprise day in the spring term.

In L5 (year 9): There are lessons within the Thrive (PSHEE) programme when students consider their own strengths and potential career choices and the implications of GCSE subject choices on their future plans. They explore a range of options using impartial computer software, including a basic Morrisby profile, consider their personal 'brand' and have an introduction to CVs and interview skills. The intention is to use this as the basis of an e-portfolio that the students are able to build upon throughout their time at St Swithun's and beyond. In the spring term there is a GCSE choices presentation in which the GCSE options available are outlined and further impartial advice is given on decision-making. Throughout the year there are careers speed meetings mornings.

In M5 (year 10): There is an opportunity to undertake Morrisby profiling (a commercial careers psychometric testing programme), offered on an opt-out basis. In the Thrive (PSHEE) programme students learn about the information, advice and guidance available to them regarding careers, and how to access it, together with exploring how their strengths, interests, skills and qualities are changing and how these relate to future employability.

In U5 (year 11): Students are encouraged to undertake work experience in the penultimate week of the summer term, in the post-GCSE period: this is incorporated into the U5 activities programme. The subject choices which students make at this stage have considerable implications in terms of future paths, decisions and choices, including university degrees, or careers, and these are aspects explored at some length in the one-to-one guidance interviews, which also incorporate the results of each student's Morrisby report. Workshops are held for girls in U5 and L6 to advise students on strategies to strengthen applications for specific university courses (e.g. engineering, medicine, law, etc.); these are delivered online or in person.

In sixth form: Support and impartial guidance are available to girls and their parents in preparation for UCAS applications. In the spring term of L6 students and parents are invited to a presentation about applying to university where the guest speaker is usually an experienced university admissions officer. In addition, L6 (year 12) attend a local UCAS HE exhibition and a booklet is sent to parents explaining the mechanism for university entrance. An annual talk takes place about applying to American universities as a precursor to a SAT tutoring programme, offered by a commercial company each spring if numbers support this. Talks by UK university admissions tutors are arranged where possible. With the University Guys' support the school hosts annual visits by admissions officers from North American and European universities to which our students are invited. Details of opportunities, including taster days, open days and apprenticeship opportunities are circulated to all students via e-mail and the Futures portal. Students attend these and university open days to inform their thinking about applications. An external agency also offers preparation for the University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT). Students are guided through the process of completing the UCAS form online with each student guidance tutor overseeing the applications of his/her own tutees: help with personal statements is provided by individual members of academic staff and sessions with admissions teams at local universities. In U6 (year 13) a programme of mock interviews takes place, staffed mainly by external experts, for those girls who will face university admissions interviews: the head of academic enrichment facilitates additional support and practice for Oxbridge applicants. A networking evening is held for sixth formers. Members of the student guidance team are available to give advice when A-level results are published and for post-A level applications or reapplications.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION (PSHEE): THRIVE

The PSHEE curriculum at St Swithun's, known as Thrive, is a developmental programme of learning through which pupils acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives now and in the future. As part of a whole-school approach, PSHE education develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society.

Please see the separate PSHEE policy for further details.

PSHEE includes Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), for which see also the separate Relationships and Sex Education policy.