ST SWITHUN'S SCHOOL

CURRICULUM POLICY (SENIOR SCHOOL)

Policy History	
Reviewed and updated	September 2026
Date of next review	September 2027

Curriculum policy contents

1. Aims — Page 2
2. Principles — Pages 2-3
3. English as an Additional Language (EAL) — Page 3
4. Learning Support — Page 3
5. Supporting higher-performing pupils — Pages 3-4
6. Future Pathways — Pages 4-6
7. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE): *Thrive* — Page 6

Reviewed by:

Deputy Head Academic	**Education Committee**
Charles Hammel	**Steve Bailey, Chair**
Date: September 2026	**Date: October 2026**

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 student 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. Students may choose either three or four full A levels as two-year courses. All students are given the option to complete the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) within the timetable

structure. In addition, students 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 and German – 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 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 HIGHER-PERFORMING PUPILS

All pupils at St Swithun's are able. The ethos of the school is one whereby we believe that all our pupils can be high performers, and we teach and encourage all pupils to be confident learners and to develop the learning skills and behaviours that underpin high performance. This is central to our High Performance Learning (HPL) approach to learning and teaching. We are always looking to challenge our highest-performing pupils through appropriate learning

and teaching approaches and diverse, stimulating co-curricular and enrichment opportunities.

Please see the separate Supporting Higher-Performing 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* (June 2026) sets out the statutory requirements for careers guidance in state schools and colleges in England. It emphasises the importance of high-quality careers guidance in helping young people make informed decisions about their future education, training and employment and highlights the need for impartial guidance that presents the full range of pathways available to students:

> 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, websites, telephone and helpline access, and personal guidance provided externally to the school or college. These sources must include information on the range of education and training options, including apprenticeships, T Levels and other technical pathways. Personal guidance may be delivered by trained school or college staff, provided that it is impartial and supplemented by external sources of support where required.
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> Schools and colleges must provide independent careers guidance and promote the full range of academic and technical pathways available to students. They should act impartially, enabling young people to make informed decisions about the opportunities best suited to their aspirations, interests and abilities.
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> The Department for Education expects all institutions to use the internationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks to develop a careers programme that provides opportunities for students to engage with employers, workplaces, colleges, training providers and universities, together with access to personal careers guidance and meaningful experiences of the workplace. The benchmarks also support schools in fulfilling their statutory duty to provide access to information about technical education, apprenticeships and other post-16 and post-18 pathways.

The ISI inspection framework requires that pupils of secondary age have access to accurate, up-to-date and impartial careers guidance, enabling them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options and helping them fulfil their potential. The Values, Attitudes and Attributes (VAAs) and Advanced Cognitive Performance Characteristics (ACPs) associated with High Performance Learning support the development of the cognitive skills, attitudes

and behaviours that enable students to thrive in further study, employment and life beyond school.

As an independent school we are not required to follow the statutory careers guidance for state schools in England. However, in the interests of best practice we take account of this guidance when developing our programme. Provision is informed by the Gatsby Benchmarks, which provide a framework for good careers guidance and support continuous review and development of the programme.

At key decision points during their time at school, students have access to careers guidance from a qualified careers advisor. All students receive individual guidance interviews in U5 (Year 11) and L6 (Year 12) to discuss future plans and subject choices. Additional guidance appointments are available at other stages, including L5 (Year 9), where requested by students, parents or staff. 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.

The school works in partnership with Tinker Tailor to provide a structured programme of workshops and guidance across the senior school, supporting students in exploring future pathways, developing self-awareness and making informed decisions about higher education and career opportunities.

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): Students continue to develop awareness of future pathways and employability skills through the wider careers programme, including an enterprise day and external workshop provision.

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, analysing current labour market information, exploring workplace behaviours and how to build a positive online reputation. 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.

In M5 and U5 (years 10 and 11): Through the Thrive (PSHEE) programme students develop a greater understanding of their strengths, interests, skills and aspirations, and how these relate to future educational and career pathways. They explore career pathways and post-18 options, including degree apprenticeships, while developing employability skills through CV preparation, interview practice and seeking work experience. Students have the opportunity to undertake Morrisby profiling and receive individual careers guidance interviews to support informed decision-making regarding subject choices and future pathways. Enterprise skills are developed during the enterprise day in the autumn term of M5. Students are encouraged to undertake work experience in the post-GCSE period as part of the U5 activities programme.

Students in U5 and L6 are provided with specialist support to strengthen applications for higher education and other post-18 pathways, including advice and support with admissions tests, opportunities to engage with professionals through career networking events, participation in subject-specific societies and a range of academic enrichment activities.

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, and L6 (year 12) attend a local UCAS HE exhibition. Talks by UK university admissions tutors are arranged where possible, alongside information sessions covering applications to international universities. 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 see also the separate Relationships and Sex Education policy.