

CURRICULUM POLICY

Last reviewed:	September 2026
Next review due:	September 2027
Reviewed by:	Vice Principal – Staff and Curriculum Director of Academic Studies

In line with our desire to provide a broad and balanced education for our students, this policy touches on our extra- and co-curricular provision as well as the academic curriculum.

As a general principle, our academic curriculum subsumes and extends beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 4, our students prepare for I/GCSE (Year 11) examinations. Our Sixth Formers prepare for A levels or level 3 equivalents.

This policy is in two sections: the first sets out the overall aims and principles that inform our approach and practice throughout the school. The second sets out details of the curriculum for the different age groups.

1. Overall aims and principles

- To offer a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum with a strong academic core with which all students have the opportunity to learn and make progress;
- To take into account the individual needs and aptitudes, and to develop the particular talents, of all of our students as far as we possibly can, including any who may have an EHC (Education, Health and Care) plan;
- To ensure that, through our curriculum and our approach to teaching and to our extra- and co-curricular provision, we actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- To promote a broad, tolerant and open-minded understanding of the world around us, including an appreciation of the democratic process and precluding the promotion of partisan political views in the classroom, in extra- and co-curricular activities, or in any other aspect of the school's activities;
- To offer full-time supervised education for students of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which offers a wide range of subjects, giving students experience in linguistic, mathematical, technological, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Also, where appropriate, to offer students a wide range of options and as much flexibility as we can in subject choice;
- To offer a programme of activities appropriate to the needs of students above compulsory school age;
- To ensure students acquire speaking, literacy and numeracy skills;
- To maintain the highest standards of teaching;

- To ensure a curriculum that offers continuity and progression of learning within and across Key Stages;
- To ensure the sequencing of our curriculum is considered holistically from Year 7 through to Year 13.
- To maintain a vibrant and effective learning environment in which students are engaged and stimulated both by the curriculum and by the teaching;
- To ensure that every student is able to achieve to the maximum of his or her potential throughout the ability range, with effective differentiation to account for varying abilities, paces and styles of learning;
- To provide ample opportunities to stretch and challenge the most able whilst also providing all the necessary support for those who need it;
- To make learning an enjoyable experience, and to stimulate curiosity and an enthusiasm for active and independent learning;
- To foster the intellectual and study skills and habits on which students will be able to draw in higher education and in the workplace;
- To ensure that students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SEND) and those whose first language is not English are appropriately supported;
- To provide personal, social, health (physical and mental) and economic education which reflects the ethos of our school, which is appropriate, both in its content and the way in which it is delivered, to the age, experience and needs of the students, and which encourages tolerance and respect for others, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act, 2010;
- To help our international students to adjust to the practical, cultural and academic consequences of living and studying in a different country;
- To provide all students with a learning environment that is inclusive and promotes and celebrates the diversity within and beyond our school;
- To supplement the taught curriculum by a diverse range of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that will provide further stimulus, richness and breadth to the students' educational experience;
- To provide accurate and up to date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner, that encourages all students to fulfil their potential and enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of study and career options;
- To ensure that the educational experience we provide gives our students an effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society in particular, and more generally in a world that is increasingly global in its outlook.

2. Actively promoting fundamental British values

The active promotion of the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of others, including those with different faiths and beliefs, has long been deeply embedded in our school's ethos and in our day-to-day practice, both in and out of the classroom.

3. A non-partisan approach to political, ethical and religious issues

A healthy understanding of the world around us is an important part of the educational experience that we want to provide for our students. In doing so, the emphasis will always be on open-mindedness, tolerance and critical evaluation – encouraging students to appreciate that, where moral, ethical, religious or political questions are concerned, there is always likely to be a multiplicity of viewpoints, and stressing the need to respect the views of others.

When such issues arise, in subject teaching or in the context of co-curricular or extra-curricular activities (such as Debating Club) we will always ensure that we offer a balanced presentation of opposing views which precludes the promotion of partisan opinions or dogma.

Personal, social, health and economic education

The detail of our policy and practice in this area is set out in the schemes of work for the Personal Development programme and in the school's policy on the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of students.

4. Careers education

Preparing our students for the future is central to our mission. We therefore have a comprehensive careers and higher education programme which aims to provide all our students with the information, experiences and opportunities to help them make the right decisions for their future. This begins in Year 7 and continues all the way through to Year 13.

We aim to ensure that such guidance is accurate, well informed and up to date. It is also delivered impartially, with the aim of encouraging students to fulfil their personal potential and helping them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options.

We seek in our career guidance to avoid any form of stereotyping, ensuring that girls and boys from all backgrounds and diversity groups consider the widest possible range of careers, including those that have traditionally tended to have a bias towards the opposite gender.

As well as offering guidance on choosing GCSE and A level subjects, careers education at d'Overbroeck's provides students with opportunities to discover and develop their aptitudes and interests, to meet with a wide range of employers, to engage in work experience, to find out about different post-16 and post-18 options and to learn about the experiences of the school's alumni.

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THE CURRICULUM

5. [Years 7-11](#)

5.1 The Taught Curriculum

a) Years 7-9

In Years 7-9 students are taught in mixed ability groups except for Maths where classes are setted according to ability.

All students follow a broad curriculum, embracing Mathematics, English (including Literature), Geography, History, Latin and Classical Civilisation, Computing, Art, Music, Drama, Physical

Education, Personal Development and Religious Education. A General Science course taught by specialists in Years 7 and 8 leads to the separate sciences from Year 9 onwards.

A commitment to fluency in foreign languages is reflected in the provision of French and Spanish from Year 7. Italian, Russian and Mandarin Chinese may also be studied either as part of the regular timetable or after school, subject to demand.

b) Years 10-11

Our students typically study 9 GCSEs/IGCSEs. There is an additional academic enrichment programme in which they have the opportunity to complete a HPQ and also explore a range of subjects not commonly taught at Key Stage 4 such as Psychology, Philosophy and Economics. Students follow a balanced programme with Maths and English Language, being mandatory. We also expect all students to study a minimum of two sciences from Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Some students complete an additional GCSE (eg, in another language or in Level 2 Further Maths).

During their GCSE years, pupils will also receive guidance on preparation for public examinations, careers and their options for Sixth Form and further education.

For our international students in Years 10 and 11, where additional English language support is required, they typically study 7 GCSEs with an extended English programme and protected study periods where additional support can be given.

c) One-year IGCSE / Key Stage 4 programme

Our one-year IGCSE programme is designed for students, generally 15-16 years of age, who arrive with an Upper-Intermediate level of English language (B2 on the Common European Framework / IELTS 5.5). Students with a level of English below this may also be considered, although they may be required to do a pre-sessional programme prior to starting.

The intensive one-year IGCSE programme contains a core curriculum of:

- IGCSE English as a Second Language;
- IGCSE Mathematics;
- IGCSE Biology;
- IGCSE Physics;
- PD (not examined);
- Sport (not examined).

Students currently have the option to study Business or Chemistry as their 5th GCSE.

Students are integrated into the academic enrichment programme with the other Year 11 students, in which they have an opportunity to explore a range of subjects not commonly taught at Key Stage 4.

Students wishing to take an additional language subject (eg, in their native language) will be catered for where possible within the constraints of the timetable by offering small group or one-to-one tuition.

This academic programme may also be adapted to stretch top students. For example, some students may complete qualifications in English First Language, Level 2 Further Maths, or HPQ.

5.2 Personal Development (PD)

The PD curriculum is broad and wide-ranging and covers personal, social, moral, health and economic education. It is designed to inform, to help develop life skills, to stimulate students into thinking critically about moral, ethical and social issues, to appreciate that different people may hold different views, to develop the ability to articulate one's own opinions while being able to listen to others and to respect their points of view, and to foster tolerance of other people and lifestyles, with particular regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The PD curriculum also helps students to reflect upon their aptitudes and interests and to use this knowledge to make good decisions about their GCSE, A level and post-A level choices. Other opportunities to support this process, include attendance at events, such as the annual careers evening which is open to students from Year 9 upwards, and participation in the FutureSmart career guidance programme in Year 11.

5.3 Religious Education

d'Overbroeck's is not associated with, or committed to promoting, any one particular faith or religious belief. However, we believe that it is important for young people to gain an open-minded understanding of a range of religious and spiritual traditions as well as investigating social and moral issues. REP (Religion, Ethics and Philosophy) is therefore a part of the core curriculum up to and including Year 9 and available as an option thereafter.

5.4 Relationships and Sex Education

We provide relationships and sex education as part of the Personal Development program. The PD curriculum is designed to help young people to develop self-esteem, self-responsibility as well as the understanding and attitudes that will help them to form caring stable relationships.

As in other aspects of school life, we aim to offer a broad and balanced view which reflects the nature of the world in which we live and which fosters a respect for the rights, beliefs and lifestyles of other people, reflecting current legislation and paying particular regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

5.5 Physical Education

All students are expected to take part in the Physical Education programme. We see this as a crucial part of a child's physical, intellectual and social development. The aim is to encourage participation and skills development through enjoyment and good sportsmanship.

All year groups enjoy a minimum of two lessons of Physical Education per week with the possibility of extra-curricular sport outside of the lessons. The sports taught are the traditional seasonal sports of rugby, hockey, football, netball, swimming, tennis, cricket, rounders and athletics although in recent years we have rung the changes with handball, climbing, dance, trampolining, squash, martial arts, yoga and pilates classes.

Year 10 students also have the opportunity to gain the Sports Leaders Award and to follow the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

For those students wishing to follow the academic route for Physical Education, the GCSE course is offered. Students choosing this option will follow separate additional theory and practical lessons with a view to examination after two years.

In addition to curriculum-based sport, we offer a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme which has included/includes sailing, sculling, riding, archery, golf, judo and dance, depending on staff

availability and expertise. Our fixture list is growing steadily and we play a variety of schools, believing that a degree of healthy competition is useful for developing individual skills and team spirit. We regard it as vital, however, that everyone has the chance to play in a team and that they enjoy the experience.

Students can only be excused from Physical Education lessons for medical reasons, (for which a note from a parent will suffice), or for other reasons agreed with the school. This, however, does not exclude them from making a contribution to lessons as a coach, official or assistant, or from gaining additional knowledge through observation.

5.6 The Extended Curriculum

A range of clubs and activities is on offer both during the school day and afterwards, designed to broaden students' experience and improve their skills and knowledge. Students have opportunities to participate in activities that may be closely related to the subjects they study during the day, for example in our range of subject 'clinics' and clubs, or that may open up a new experience as in our debating society, chess club or the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Homework forms an important part of the extended curriculum. It will be concerned with research, problem solving, the reinforcement of learning, and encouraging students to use their initiative. Homework follows an agreed appropriate timetable, known to parents, students and staff.

Cross-curricular activities will also be developed in which students investigate particular themes that transcend conventional subject and timetable boundaries.

Work experience in Year 11 is also an integral part of the extended curriculum.

5.7 Work Experience

The overall aim of work experience is to contribute to students' education by giving them a foretaste of working life, and helping to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adulthood.

Students in Year 11 (post exams) are given the opportunity to go out on a one week placement usually in June. Staff are encouraged to visit students on placements. Employers are asked to give us information on students' performance which can prove very enlightening.

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6. [The Sixth Form](#)

6.1 The Taught Curriculum

Our core curriculum is based on the majority of students studying four A level subjects in Year 12, normally reducing to three in Year 13. This includes A level equivalents like the BTEC in Criminology.

We believe that the opportunity to study four subjects for at least part of the Sixth Form is important, both from the educational perspective of providing a greater breadth of study and a wider educational experience; and from a more pragmatic one, whereby students have time to identify where their aptitudes and interests lie and to select their best three subjects for completion in Year 13.

In practice, we always respond to individual needs, so some students will drop the fourth subject somewhat earlier than the end of Year 12 and others will continue with four subjects right through to examination at the end of Year 13. On occasions it is possible for student to complete a fifth A level.

6.2 Choice of subjects

We offer a wide range of subjects in the Sixth Form. The timetable does not operate on an option-block basis, allowing maximum freedom for students to select the programme most suited to them. We work with each student and their parents to give the best advice and support in guiding subject selection.

6.3 Progression to Year 13

- Our expectation is that students who embark on the A level/Level 3 programme will complete it, so progression is in the great majority of cases assured; only if there are strong reasons to indicate that this is inappropriate is progression brought into question.
- Having said that, a strong academic performance at the end of Year 12 provides the best platform for progression to Year 13. Conversely, a weak performance at the end of the first year would suggest that a student has not done enough to be able to make a success of the generally more demanding work they will encounter in the second year. We therefore monitor students' progress very carefully throughout Year 12, using a range of indicators, including attendance, performance in homework assignments and progress tests at various points in the year and we attach particular importance to the summer term mocks in May.
- Where progress indicators over the year have given significant cause for concern, we will need to discuss their future plans during the course of the summer term of Year 12. We will, of course, take account of any genuine extenuating circumstances such as a serious illness during the year. Where there are no such extenuating circumstances, a student who does not meet the minimum requirement for progression to Year 13 may be required to repeat Year 12 if they are to remain at the school.

6.4 Breadth and extension

Stretch and extension activities are part and parcel of our classroom teaching. In addition, we regularly enter students for national competitions such as the UKMT Maths Challenge, science and maths Olympiads, essay, poetry and other creative writing competitions, etc. The EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) offers a valuable opportunity for students to pursue their interest in a particular topic and to develop a host of higher-level academic skills in the process. Extension classes, under the umbrella of the 'Horizons Programme', are targeted at the more able and ambitious, including but not limited to Oxbridge candidates. In the Autumn Term of Year 13, the focus of these sessions is targeted specifically at Oxbridge applicants or other applicants to highly selective universities/courses (eg, for Medics and Engineers). We encourage students to pursue individual interests and passions and are sometimes able to support students with a mentor from the school staff.

Speakers, often from our local universities, are invited to speak to students on topics of particular interest – either as part of our Personal Development programme or as stand-alone events. Subject departments also frequently arrange to take students to events, lectures, talks and performances both locally and further afield.

6.5 Provision for students with SEND – the Learning Development Department

Our small classes and our emphasis on teaching to every student in the class mean that, in the majority of cases, we are able to cater for the needs of students with SEND in classes without the need for additional learning support sessions. However, where we feel a student would benefit from such support, and this applies whether or not the student has been identified as having a specific SEND issue, the student will have the opportunity to work with a member of the Learning Development Team. Students and parents can request this support. Alternatively, teachers or Directors of Studies may contact the SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-Ordinator), in order to discuss the possibility of additional support. LDT will work with the student to identify particular needs and goals and will typically set short term, supported targets with the student. More complex or specialist support is likely to be referred specifically to the Head of Learning Development.

The Learning Development Department will help students to explore different learning techniques, to find those that work most effectively for them and then to develop the ability to use these independently to aid their own learning - in the Sixth Form, at university and in their working lives beyond that.

6.6 Provision for students whose first language is not English

Prospective students whose first language is not English are first assessed at the time of application. Only those whose English language is sufficiently strong to enable them to embark successfully on an A Level programme will be offered a place. Support with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is then offered to these students as part of their course here.

The primary aim of the EAL programme is to equip our international students with the language and communication skills that we believe are essential for academic success at A level and in their further studies beyond.

All students whose first language is not English will be expected to attend classes in EAL for the full duration of their first year in the Sixth Form. Exceptions will be made only where we are fully satisfied, at the point of enrolment, that the student's command of English is already of a very high standard and that they have a formal qualification in English at a standard that is sufficient to meet the academic entry requirements of good UK universities.

Students studying EAL will be entered for the IELTS examination, usually at the end of their first year in the Sixth Form. We expect most of our students to achieve high IELTS scores at this point.

All students enrolled on the EAL course will continue to have one lesson a week for one term of Year 13, to enhance and support their academic studies. Students who have not achieved a result that is sufficient to ensure that entrance requirements to top universities are met, will continue to have additional EAL lessons in Year 13, until they have achieved the necessary qualifications.

6.7 Classroom teaching

We believe strongly that small and interactive classes are very important. Our maximum class size in the Sixth Form is usually 11. This gives students the opportunity to debate ideas and to form and share their own opinions, and enables us to generate an academic atmosphere of collective support and engagement whilst also allowing the time and opportunity to address the individual needs of each student.

6.8 The Extended Curriculum

A busy and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities is an important feature of life in the Sixth Form. We believe that involvement in these activities promotes a sense of teamwork, individual confidence and collective goodwill.

- A number of clubs and activities take place each week including a range of individual and team sports, drama, music, art, yoga, debating, environmental awareness, Duke of Edinburgh, Young Enterprise – and many more besides. There are also several weekend trips, activities and visits during the year.
- Year 12 students are expected to take part in at least one activity of their choice each week, with two slots being provided in the timetable exclusively for activities. When they reach Year 13, students are expected to participate in activities in the first term and then are free to decide whether or not to take part in the Activities programme for the remainder of the year, though participation continues to be valued and encouraged, and we hope that most students will carry on with their chosen Activities throughout the Sixth Form.
- We also run a Personal Development programme Year 12 students. It is intended to broaden students' horizons and to encourage them to engage more fully with the wider world around them. It consists of a weekly classroom-based lesson and a series of talks and workshops covering a wide variety of topics that could include anything from cutting edge science to challenging talks on moral, political and social issues, sexual consent, and from drugs and alcohol awareness to the adventures of polar explorers.

6.9 Careers and Higher Education Support

The great majority of our students go on to higher education at a university or other institution, such as medical school or art school. We see it as a crucial part of our responsibility to devote a great deal of time and resources to guiding and supporting students through the process of gathering information, thinking through options, making decisions and completing the necessary applications.

Students who choose not to go on to higher education but who wish instead to pursue more vocational alternatives are equally supported and helped to explore options and to make the necessary decisions and applications.

The Careers and Higher Education programme in the Sixth Form includes the following elements:

- The programme begins in the autumn term of Year 12 when students have the opportunity to take part in FutureSmart. This is a personalised career guidance and planning service run by professional, independent career advisers. The programme helps students to identify the career directions that are best suited to their interests and strengths. Students can opt for the guidance-only package or the package which also includes Morrisby psychometric testing.
- Throughout Year 12 there is a series of events and trips designed to inform and galvanise students to start thinking about their options in increasing detail. For example, we hold career insight webinars with industry experts in a range of sectors. Students also have the opportunity to speak to the school's alumni about their experiences of university and the world of work.
- A traditional highlight of the careers and higher education programme is the annual careers evening. This provides students the opportunity to meet and network with representatives

from a wide-range of careers. It is also a great opportunity for current and former d'Overbroeck's parents to get involved with this important aspect of the school's provision.

- During Year 12, students and parents are fully briefed about the UCAS application system for entry to British universities. Directors of Studies, supported by subject experts, spend a good deal of time working with each student to give guidance and advice on choice of courses, universities and the personal statement, in order to ensure that students are able to submit strong applications in the first term of Year 13.
- Potential Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science, Engineering and Law candidates are identified early on and a special programme of preparation is put in place for them, in order to maximise their chances of gaining places on these competitive courses.
- The careers and higher education programme also includes advice and information on gap year opportunities and on applications to universities in the US and elsewhere in the world for those who are interested in exploring these options.
- While the vast majority of our students go on to study at university, the careers and higher education programme also enables students to explore alternative routes, such as apprenticeships and direct entry into full-time employment.
- All Sixth Form students have access to the Careers and Higher Education Hub on Microsoft Teams. Here they can find up-to-date information on events, opportunities and resources.
- All Sixth Form students have access to Unifrog, an online platform which helps students to research university choices, apprenticeships and career paths.

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