

The Curriculum at Heathfield

Curriculum Intent

At Heathfield we have 6 “important goals” that are the basis by which we conduct our everyday experience and set our long term aspirations. They are underpinned by the essence of Heathfield: **Pride. Ambition. Community**



Heathfield Community College is committed to fulfilling the potential of each of its learners. We are a fully inclusive College with outstanding provision for the whole range of students from our most vulnerable to our most gifted.

‘Pupils and sixth formers who met with us enthused about their school. They have high aspirations and their behaviour remains very good. There is a strong community spirit and the school is a warm and welcoming place to be’. (OFSTED 2016)

Our curriculum aims to ensure that all students leave the College as well rounded young adults ready to be knowledgeable responsible citizens of the future with strong values, strong principles and ambition for success. This is achieved by a clear focus on deep subject knowledge alongside the skills and attributes that we know are essential for future success in life. The exceptional exam results achieved by our students will open doors but the key to sustained future success and happiness is the ability to demonstrate the qualities that rarely appear on an exam paper. We call them our **Heathfield Habits** and we promote, recognise and reward them every day and they are embedded in the delivery of our curriculum.



Heathfield Habits

Ambitious & Confident

- I am proud of myself and what I have achieved.
- I set myself the highest expectations.
- I have self-belief in my own strengths and abilities and communicate these through my words and actions.

Engaged & Enthusiastic

- I do as I am asked, the first time I'm asked.
- I engage positively in lessons.
- I make sure I have the right equipment, uniform and attitude for learning.
- I am on time to school and lessons.

Compassionate & Considerate

- I value others, show kindness and consideration to all in our community.
- I listen and respond carefully, show good manners.

Determined & Reflective

- I show resilience and determination in the face of challenge; I stick with it when things are not going well.
- I am willing to make and learn from mistakes.

Honesty & Integrity

- I am proud of the College and take my share of responsibility to make it a positive environment.
- I accept and respect that the teacher owns the organisation of the classroom and the learning.

We understand the curriculum extends beyond the classroom and the wider opportunities offered to students at Heathfield are considerable. Collapsed Curriculum Days are devoted to different learning experiences for all students. Educational visits are many and varied, both locally and abroad and an enrichment week offers a variety of activities to students giving them a chance to face a personal challenge that takes them out of their “comfort” zone or to develop, or further develop, a new or established skill. They have the opportunity to work with staff and other students in new ways which helps their personal development and allows them to engage in deeper learning.

Curriculum Delivery and Experience

Our curriculum delivery is shaped by the 7 principles of curriculum as established by Dylan William in his work with the SSAT on Redesigning Schooling (2013). These principles are: Balance, Rigor, Coherence, Vertical integration, Appropriateness, Focus and Relevance.

Through engagement with all members of the senior team, curriculum leaders and governors we review our curriculum against these 7 principles on an ongoing basis. Teachers demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach showing a clear understanding of the relationship between curriculum intent and pedagogy. Curriculum leaders review their subject curricula against the 7 principles of curriculum design.

The Organisation of the Curriculum

A two-year Key Stage 3 was introduced at Heathfield in 2010. The current model reflects regular review against our intent and the principles we have established and has the following benefits.

- Key Stage 3 curriculum allows all subjects, including Philosophy and Religion, PSHEe, Arts and Technologies to continue to be taught discreetly.
- CEIAG at Year 8 is full and personalised enabling individual needs for the full range of our students to be met when making their choices for KS4
- Unlike many schools nationally and locally students have a choice of four option subjects at GCSE. This means students are maintaining a breadth of curriculum for longer as we are increasingly seeing schools now narrow or homogenise their KS4 offer to accommodate the increased content and rigour of the reformed GCSEs.
- Where subjects are taught proportionately within the guided learning time over 2 or 3 years there is scope for additional enrichment and depth of study outside of the examination requirements.

Furthermore, responsibilities for students' wellbeing and health also influence the College decisions around curriculum modelling at KS3. NHS East Sussex studies repeatedly show that the major health concern of young people in this locality is mental health and anxiety. The College is committed to exploring ways both academic and pastoral of preventing and alleviating the causes and symptoms of mental health issues, as reflected in our 'Important Goals'.

- "Experiences that build self-esteem, leadership and resilience"
- "Students equipped to enjoy and thrive in their lives, in and beyond the college"

Under the current examination specifications, a year 11 student sitting all their exams in 4 options and core in the same year would experience up to 30 exams in one summer. Structuring KS4 differently, this can be alleviated and ensure students stay healthy and balanced whilst maintaining a breadth of curriculum which creates greater options for KS5. Staggering the GCSE entries over the 3 years, running intensive courses alongside extended ones reduces workload and stress, as shown repeatedly through student voice and parental feedback. This is particularly relevant with the removal of coursework and modular exams which previously helped to balance the pressure.

KEY STAGE 3 (two-year)

Students complete their full National Curriculum entitlement in all subjects:

English, Maths, Science, Computing, Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish), Art, Design and Technology (including Food and Nutrition), Humanities (Geography, History, Philosophy and Religious Education), Physical Education, Music, Drama, and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHEe).

KEY STAGE 4 (three-year)

At Key Stage 4, all students study the statutory areas of Maths (with an opportunity for the most able to study Further Maths), English Language and English Literature, Science (we will provide opportunities for high attaining students to study separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics), PSHEe (including Citizenship and work-related learning), Religious Education and Physical Education.

Students are then entitled to opt for up to 4 other subjects to study to GCSE level or equivalent. Options will be selected in Term 3 of Year 8. Two of the GCSE option choices will run for two years with final exams at the end of year 10 and the other two choices for three years with final exams at the end of year 11. Courses which run over either two or three years have the same content and value and will be allocated the same curriculum time.

Given the profile of Heathfield students, it is the College view that the vast majority should complete the core academic entitlement represented by the EBacc suite of subjects. This is part of the guidance offered through careers guidance within the options process. Typically 65% or more students follow this route.

Breadth and balance of Key Stage 4 offer has historically been important to students and parents who value the legacy of the College's specialist status in Performing Arts. Despite the funding for this being removed in 2011 the numbers choosing to study Arts based subjects through the curriculum model has remained high, with typically 80% of students studying 1 or 2 Arts based subjects.

KEY STAGE 5

At post 16 students study a curriculum which caters for A-level courses within which there are a small range of BTEC Level 3 courses offered. In term 6 of year 12 and through year 13 all students take PSHEe and also access personal development through compulsory assemblies, tutor times and enrichment activities.

Appendix A

The research behind the current curriculum model

A range of government based research over time has suggested that a 2-year Key Stage 3 might offer benefits to a secondary framework, if applied judiciously within the context.

1. The DfES report 'A condensed Key Stage 3: Designing a flexible curriculum (2006 update)' also outlines further benefits including:
 - Rewriting Key Stage 3 schemes of learning mean that any unnecessary repetition of Key Stage 2 can be removed
 - Allowing a broader choice of subjects provided for GCSE options
 - Teaching GCSEs over three years allows for greater enrichment (depth) to be built in to curriculum time

2. The expert panel review in 2011, documented in 'The Framework for the National Curriculum', recommended a two-year KS3. The expert panel reviewed both models for KS3/KS4 (the 3 year/2 year and the 2 year/3 year models) and identified benefits and issues for both.

Amongst the benefits of a 2 Year KS3 they identified were:

- Learners would be more motivated and a sense of relevance may be enhanced. It could provide a remedy to the 'Key Stage 3 dip'
- Motivating high stakes assessment in Years 9, 10 and 11 can lead to higher attainment.

Issues of this model were identified:

- The model being a radical change from the more traditional model and so needing a complete review of the GCSE teaching structure.
- The 'broad and balanced' curriculum will cease one year earlier than the traditional system on 3 year/2 years and so necessitate a review of the GCSE's on offer and extra-curricular provision.

Overall, the expert panel recommended a three-year KS4. The expert panel believed a three-year KS4 would allow students to study a broader curriculum and avoid "premature subject choices that might disadvantage students later". It also suggests that it would allow subjects to be taught in greater depth, "with access to specialist teaching and more motivated students".

3. The Ofsted report on "Key Stage 3: the wasted years?" in 2015 warned of a lack of pace, challenge in Key Stage 3 where insufficient focus on transition, staffing and challenge meant students were allowed to drift and underachieve. Recommendations stated secondary leaders should:
 - make Key Stage 3 a higher priority in all aspects of school planning, monitoring and evaluation
 - ensure that not only is the curriculum offer at Key Stage 3 broad and balanced, but that teaching is of high quality and prepares pupils for more challenging subsequent study at Key Stages 4 and 5
 - ensure that transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 focuses as much on pupils' academic needs as it does on their pastoral needs
 - create better cross-phase partnerships with primary schools to ensure that Key Stage 3 teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills
 - make sure that systems and procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 are robust

- focus on the needs of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 3, including the ablest, in order to close the achievement gap as quickly as possible
- evaluate the quality and effectiveness of homework in Key Stage 3 to ensure that it helps pupils to make good progress
- guarantee that pupils have access to timely and high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance from Year 8 onwards
- have literacy and numeracy strategies that ensure that pupils build on their prior attainment in Key Stage 2 in these crucial areas.

4. Review of Option Choices at Heathfield

2018 - 80% opted for at least one Arts based subject (Art, Drama, Media, Music, Photography)

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References:

- Department for Education, (2011). The Framework for the National Curriculum. A report by the Expert Panel for the National Curriculum review. (London: Department for Education)
- Department for Education and Skills (2006 Update). A condensed Key Stage 3: Designing a flexible curriculum
- Ofsted, 2015. Key Stage 3: the wasted years?
- Redesigning Schooling: Principled Curriculum Design. Dylan William, 2013.