

COGNITA



DOWNSEND
SCHOOL

Curriculum Policy

September 2025

1 Introduction

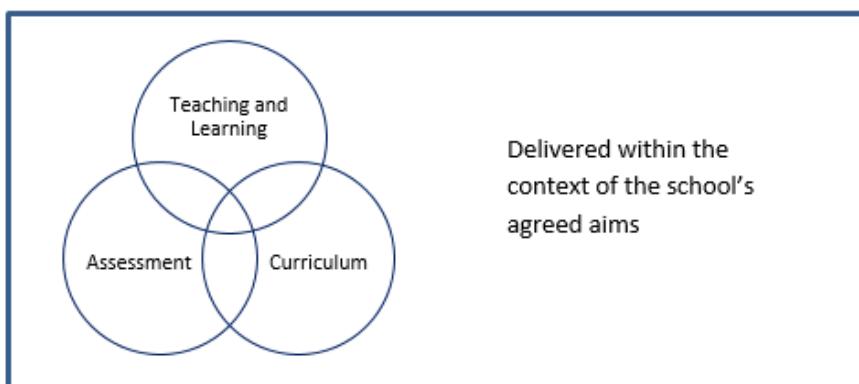
1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our curriculum supports our school ethos and fulfils our school aims, which are defined as:

- We inspire a global perspective, encouraging an awareness and an understanding of the world around us, and our responsibility to make change.
- We shape incredible people with the emotional intelligence to build relationships, lead teams and adapt to a changing world.
- We find the creativity within us all. We develop the curious, the critical-thinkers, the artists and the innovators.
- We aspire to digital mastery by equipping ourselves with the ability and the mindset to tackle the technology of the future.

1.2 This policy applies to all pupils, including those in the Early Years and Dowsend Plus.

1.3 We see the curriculum as, 'The total learning experience for our pupils, which includes not only the taught lessons but also the routines, behaviours, events, activities and other opportunities that our pupils experience on a daily, weekly and yearly basis in order to ensure that all of them make the best progress possible and attain high standards'.

1.4 A well-structured and coherent curriculum is a fundamental element of the tripartite of education that underpins all successful schools and includes Teaching, Learning and Assessment as in the following model:



1.5 We aim to provide a holistic curriculum which develops every pupil as a confident individual who loves learning. We understand that the curriculum, both within taught lessons and beyond them, and in everything we say and do, should create an environment where academic risk-taking, questioning and debating, challenging thinking and the freedom to learn from mistakes are all encouraged.

1.6 Our curriculum offers all pupils the opportunity to experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative aspects of education. We intend that our curriculum should imbue in our pupils:

- A passion for life-long learning;
- A capacity for independent and critical thinking;
- Self-awareness, self-regulation and resilience;
- Self-confidence without arrogance; and
- Genuine interests that extend beyond the confines of the classroom.

1.7 British values, which are; democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, are actively promoted in every aspect of school life.

1.8 Our curriculum is compliant with the following regulatory requirements as outlined in the Independent School Standards:

The written policy, plans and schemes of work:-

- (i) *take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan; and*
- (ii) *do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.*

The school is committed to ensuring:

- (a) *full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act (1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;*
- (b) *that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;*
- (c) *where the principal language of instruction is a language other than English, that lessons in written and spoken English, except that this matter does not apply in respect of a school which provides education for pupils who are all temporarily resident in England and which follows the curriculum of another country;*
- (d) *personal, social, health and economic education which:*
 - (i) *reflects the school's aim and ethos; and*
 - (ii) *encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act(a);*
- (e) *for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-*
 - (i) *is presented in an impartial manner;*
 - (ii) *enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and*
 - (iii) *helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential. The school has a separate careers guidance policy.*
- (f) *where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills*
- (g) *where the school has pupils above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs;*
- (h) *that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress and*
- (i) *effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.*

2 Taught Curriculum

2.1 Our taught curriculum broadly follows and, at times, goes beyond the National Curriculum at KS1,2,3,4 and 5 and is formally assessed at the end of KS2 by NFER, at KS4 by GCSEs and at the end of KS5 by A levels and BTECs. Year 12 pupils also complete assessed elective options. The details of which exam boards are used at GCSE and A level by our different subjects can be found in the individual subject information section on our website. Our pupils also take GL summative assessments at the end of years 1-6; 7-8 in English and Mathematics.

2.2 Pupils entering the school in years 7-9 take the CAT4 baseline test in September in their year of entry; all pupils take the CAT4 baseline test at the start of year 9. Pupils entering the Sixth Form in Year 12 will take the CAT4 baseline test. The outcomes of all tests are shared with pupils and parents as part of informed discussions about a pupil's potential. They are used to make sure that the curriculum offer is individualised to need.

2.3 Time awarded to each subject in each year group is visually explained in the curriculum model in appendix 1.

2.4 Details of how the taught curriculum is translated into subject Schemes of Work (SoW) and lesson plans can be found in the individual subject information section on our website.

2.5 Taken together, the taught curriculum will ensure that by the time they have completed their time with us, all pupils are able to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to move onto the next stage of their education at the highest level.

3 Special Educational Needs and Disability - SEND

3.1 Our curriculum is inclusive. For those pupils with special educational needs or specific learning difficulties, the school has a well-established Learning Support department, led by the Head of Learning Support or SENCO.

3.2 Further details of this provision can be found in our Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy.

4 Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

4.1 Our policy follows the advice given by the DfE in the non-statutory guidance of November 2014 and meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards/BSO Standards. Aspects of SMSC are infused within the day to day operation of our school; incorporated through the curriculum, both in content included in subject schemes of work and through other planned learning opportunities in the school. They are captured in our written aims and expressed in the ethos and behaviours of everyone.

a) Actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;

b) Ensures that principles are actively promoted which-

- Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
- Enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- Further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;

- Encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act; and
- Encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

(c) Precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school; and

(d) Takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils—

- (i) while they are in attendance at the school,
- (ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
- (iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

4.2 Discriminatory or extremist opinions or behaviours are challenged as a matter of routine.

4.3 In addition, our approach to SMSC ensures that all pupils will gain an:

- Understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process;
- Appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their well-being and safety;
- Understanding that there is a separation of power between the executive and the judiciary, and that while some public bodies such as the police and the army can be held to account through Parliament, others, such as the courts, maintain independence;
- Understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law;
- Acceptance that people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour; and
- Understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.

5 Religious Education and PSHEE

5.1 Our school chooses to respond to the legal requirement in maintained schools to teach Religious Education and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and to non-statutory guidelines to cover other aspects of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE). Our programme encourages respect for other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

5.2 Our PSHEE course is delivered to all pupils through discrete PSHEE lessons taught by our teachers. There is one lesson of taught PSHEE a week. Elements of the programme may be supported through the bringing in of additional expertise, such as outside speakers, or the use of teachers with a particular interest or knowledge in a specific area. In addition to these discrete sessions, PSHEE is also dealt with across the curriculum (e.g. Social issues through the teaching of English Literature; Health through Biology and PE; Citizenship through History & RE). There are also centrally organised sessions which supplement the delivery in house, dealing with issues such as bullying, alcohol, sexual relationships and drugs, as well as supporting careers and economic education.

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6 Co-curricular

6.1 A wide range of enrichment activities supplements the timetabled curriculum. Our pupils are encouraged to take part in an extensive range of art, drama, music, sport and other activities and clubs. Regular themed days and weeks are held. These may include Book Week, Maths Week, Science Week, Anti-Bullying Week or Art Week.

6.2 Pupils are taken to places of interest on a regular basis. Visits, including residential opportunities, are organised annually, which help to develop independence, teamwork and responsibility in a different environment to that in school.

7 Other Opportunities

7.1 Our school aims to provide an education for life. Other aspects of our curriculum which enable our pupils to gain the skills, knowledge and experience to be successful adults include:

- Careers and Higher Education;
- Leadership Training;
- Pupil Councils;
- Community Service;
- Duke of Edinburgh;
- Expeditions and trips;
- Fundraising Activities;
- Various Societies and Activities; and
- Sport.

8 Responsibility

8.1 Responsibility for the overview and yearly evaluation of this policy resides with Tim Pearne (Downsend Junior Leader of Learning and Innovation) and Martin Skitt (Downsend Senior Leader of Learning and Innovation). However, all staff are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and acted on.

8.2 When evaluating the use and impact of this policy, our school leaders will evaluate the extent to which there is evidence of a curriculum which:

- Fulfils the aims of the school;
- Embeds aspiration, attributes and the expectation to achieve high standards and high rates of progress; and
- Provides engagement and excitement for learning.

Ownership and consultation	
Document sponsor (role)	Group Director of Education
Document author (name)	Karen Nicholson, ADE
Consultation – May 2017	Consultation with the following schools: Long Close School, Charterhouse Square School, Quinton House School, El Limonar Murcia, Cumnor Boys' School, Downsend Leatherhead Pre-Prep School, Oakleigh House School and El Limonar Villamartin. Education Team representative: John Coleman, ADE.
Updated – April 2018	James Carroll, ADE
Review – May 2022	Nicola Lambros DE
Review – May 2025	Sarah Reynolds, Regional Director of Education

Audience	
Audience	All school staff

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Document application and publication	
England	Yes
Wales	Yes
Spain	Yes
Italy	Yes
Switzerland	Yes
Greece	Yes

Version control	
Implementation date	September 2025
Review date	September 2028

Related documentation	
Related documentation	Curriculum Policy Assessment Policy Teaching and Learning Policy SEND Policy EAL Policy Prevent Duty Early Years Policy, where relevant Independent School Standards

Appendix 1:

Downsend Junior:
(indicated in 60 minute periods **per week**)

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
English	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
Library	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Maths	5.5	5.5	5.5	5
Science	2.5	2.5	3	3
Critical Thinking			0.5	0.5
Art	1	1	1	1
DT	1	1	1	1
Drama	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Music	1	1	1	1
Humanities (Geog/Hist)	1.5	1.5	1.5	2
RS	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
MFL1	1	1	1	1
MFL2			1	1
Computing	1	1	1	1
PE/Games	4	4	4	4
PSHE	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5

Downsend Senior:
(indicated in 60 minute periods **per fortnight**)

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
English	8	8	8	8	8
Maths	8	8	8	8	8
Science	9	9	12	12	12
Art	2	2			
DT	2	2			
Drama	2	2			
Music	2	2			
Geography	3	3			
History	3	3			
RS	3	3			
MFL1	4	4			
MFL2	4	4			
Computing	2	2			
PE/Games	7	7	5	5	5
PSHE	1	1	2	1	1
Option A			6	6	6
Option B			6	6	6
Option C			6	6	6
Option D			6	6	6
Future Skills			1	(2)	
Triple Science/Support				2	2

Downsend Sixth:
(indicated in 60 minute periods per fortnight)

	Year 12	Year 13
Subject choice 1	10	10
Subject choice 2	10	10
Subject choice 3	10	10
Subject choice 4 (if applicable)	10	10
Future Skills	2	2
PSHE	2	2
Academic Elective	4	0
Games	4	4
Guided Independent Study	18	22