

Last review: November 2025

Review date: November 2026

Signed By: PN

Approval Committee: Governing Body



CURRICULUM POLICY

Gillingham School

Hardings Lane, Gillingham

Dorset, SP8 4QP

Curriculum Policy and Practice

Our Values

Our school is characterised by a distinctive ethos of inclusion, achievement, learning together, mutual respect and enjoyment. We are proud of our reputation for high standards in academic work, personal achievement and conduct.

We recognise young people have many abilities, talents and personalities and learn in many different ways, and are committed to enabling all of our students to achieve their full academic and personal potential. We aspire to enable all students to make the best possible progress regardless of previous attainment or additional learning needs. We are committed to developing resilient, adaptable and resourceful learners. We aim to develop ability, raise expectations and provide the support necessary for life-long success by offering a wide range of enriching experiences both in and beyond the classroom.

We have a broad, challenging and inclusive curriculum shaped according to the key knowledge, skills and competencies students need to know, understand and do in order to thrive for the rest of their lives. Embedding core skills and knowledge in the long-term memory is a priority in terms of curriculum design and pedagogical approaches.

We believe in the development of the whole child and equipping them with the necessary skills and attitudes to make a positive contribution to a dynamic, diverse and multi-cultural society in the 21st Century. We expect and promote a culture of tolerance and diversity. Our school values, underpinned by British values, enable students to develop their cultural capital whilst developing a greater understanding and appreciation of the global community.

Our Policy

Our curriculum has a strong academic core rooted in high expectations whilst offering flexibility to cater for individual needs. Students at Gillingham School have equal access to a curriculum which is rich, ambitious and well-sequenced, designed to offer breadth, balance and relevance. We think and plan in terms of a 'five-year curriculum' (with Year 9 being a transition year between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4) and individual subject curricula reflect this. In Years 7 and 8 students study all National Curriculum subjects, whilst in Year 9 students study five option subjects alongside their Core subjects and Religious Studies. The aim is to offer some element of choice whilst maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum for each student, leading to informed choices for Years 10 and 11. The element of choice for Year 9 gives subjects the opportunity to go deeper into content and plan broader learning than just exam specifications and spend longer developing the knowledge and skills needed to be successful at KS4 and beyond. Alongside the core subjects, there are a wide range of traditional GCSEs, a variety of BTEC qualifications and we are able to offer the students the opportunity to study new subjects such as Business Studies, Digital Applications, Media Studies and Psychology. We are committed to the principles behind the EBacc and when making option choices, most students are expected to choose at least one Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish), as well as Geography or History (or both) unless we feel it is in their best interests not to do so. In addition, processes are in place to ensure that each student's option choices are approved as broad, balanced and in their best interests.

All subjects have a clear 'curriculum intent' (including 'vision statements') and carefully design and sequence their five-year curriculum so that new knowledge and skills build on previous learning and

build towards clearly defined end points. This includes frequent opportunities for spaced learning and retrieval practice to embed knowledge and skills into long-term memory. We believe that the additional opportunities for this afforded by a 'transition year' in Year 9 has a positive impact on students' mental health, particularly in the period approaching the final examinations in Year 11.

Equality of access does not mean that all students follow the same programme of study; Students progress at the speed and depth that most suits them. The objective is to personalise learning to individual students, as well as to classes and groups. When appropriate for the individual, we are committed to offering our students access to alternative provision, either school based (for example Art Therapy, Ceramics, Climbing, Gardening, Mountain Biking) or from external providers (for example: Rylands Farm and Willow Bank Forest School, local work experience). These opportunities can form part of a bespoke curriculum for individual students as appropriate.

Careers provision is delivered as a planned aspect of subject curricula and via a whole-school careers programme.

The large number of trips, clubs and extra-curricular opportunities available is a feature of our school, and we believe that this is particularly important in a rural area. It is also important that students are given opportunities to contribute to the wider community, for example by participating in the National Citizen Service (NCS), Duke of Edinburgh Award and charity work / fundraising.

A Curriculum Review takes place annually in the autumn – the school curriculum within each Key Stage, and as a whole, is reviewed and evolves to take account of changing and developing circumstances, the needs of our students and other developments both locally and nationally. Through our regular quality assurance processes, we will continue to evaluate the intent (planning knowledge and skills), implementation (teaching, learning and assessment) and impact (outcomes) of our curriculum.

Grouping & Setting of Students: Year 7 and 8 teaching groups are organised on a mixed attainment basis. The groups also reflect the varied educational background of pupils who arrive from primary schools of different organisation, approach and size. From Years 9 to 11, all option subject classes are mixed attainment groups. Core subjects use the teaching group structure that they find most successful, provided that they produce good outcomes and a positive climate for learning across all classes.

Our Practice

The Year 7 & 8 Curriculum

Students study the subjects listed below, thus ensuring each student follows a broad and balanced curriculum, and to enable the students to make informed, appropriate and varied choices in the options processes for Years 9, 10 and 12. Each subject area meets the minimum requirements of the National Curriculum at KS3. A second language has recently been introduced into Year 8.

Subject	Year 7	Year 8
Art	2	2
Computer Science	2	2
Design Technology	2	2
Drama	2	2
English	7	7
Food & Nutrition	2	2
French	6	3
Geography	3	3
Spanish		3
History	3	3
Mathematics	7	7
Music / Music Technology	2	2
PE	4	4
PSHE	2	2
Science	6	6
Total	50	50

The Year 9 Curriculum

Year 9 is the transition year between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, during which students study five option subjects alongside their Core subjects including Religious Studies. The aim is to offer some element of choice whilst maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum for each student, leading to informed choices for Years 10 and 11.

Subjects	Year 9
English	8
Mathematics	8
Triple Science	8
PE Practical	4
PSHE / RE	2
Option A	4
Option B	4
Option C	4
Option D	4
Option E	4
Total	50

Core Subjects:

All students in Year 9 will study the following Core subjects:

English Language
English Literature
Mathematics
Science (Triple Science) *
Physical Education practical lessons.
PSHE / Religious Studies

*Note that all students initially begin a Triple Science course i.e. separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, with the opportunity to move to a 'Combined Science' course (Two GCSEs) during Years 10/11.

Option Subjects:

In addition, Year 9 students will be able to choose five option subjects to study from the extensive list below.

Almost	Art	Geography	all
	Business Studies	German	
	Computer Science	History	
	Design Technology: Electronics	Media Studies	
	Design Technology: Product Design	Music / Music Technology	
	Design Technology: Textiles	Photography	
	Digital Applications	Physical Education	
	Drama	Psychology	
	Food and Nutrition	Spanish	
	French	Religious Education	

students are expected to choose at least one Modern Foreign Language (French or Spanish), as well as Geography or History (or both) unless we feel it is in their best interests not to do so.

The Head of Department, Tutor, Head of Year and senior staff consider teacher recommendations as well as student preferences when deciding each student's course of study. We will ensure that each student maintains a broad and balanced curriculum and there will be some restrictions on course combinations; for example, students will NOT be able to choose:

- Art and Photography together
- More than one Design Technology subject (but this could be chosen alongside Food and Nutrition).

The Year 10 & 11 Curriculum

Subjects	Year 10	Year 11
English	7	7
Mathematics	7	7
Science	10	10
PE Practical	4	4
PSHE/RE	2	2
Option A	5	5
Option B	5	5
Option C	5	5
Option D	5	5
Total	50	50

Core Subjects: All students in Years 10/11 will study the following Core subjects:

English Language
English Literature
Mathematics
Science (Triple Science or Combined Science)
Physical Education practical lessons.
PSHE / Religious Studies

Option Subjects:

Towards the end of Year 9 students will decide which four of their current option subjects they wish to continue into Years 10/11 (this may include full course GCSE Religious Studies). In exceptional circumstances, and when we feel it is the student's best interests, it may be possible to start a new option subject at the start of Year 10.

Art	German
Business Studies	History
Computer Science	Media Studies
Design Technology: Electronics	Music
Design Technology: Product Design	Music Technology
Design Technology: Textiles	Photography
Digital Applications	Physical Education BTEC
Drama	Psychology
Food and Nutrition	Religious Studies
French	Spanish
Geography	

Most students are expected to continue with at least one Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish), as well as Geography or History (or both) unless we feel it is in their best interests not to do so.

The Head of Department, Tutor, Head of Year and senior staff consider teacher recommendations as well as student preferences when deciding each student's course of study.

Choices will be guided by conversations with teachers and parents/carers taking into consideration individual progress during Year 9.

There will be a wide range of information, advice and guidance to support students and parents with the options process from Year 9 into Year 10.

As part of the core curriculum all students are required to study the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme. If a student decides not to follow the full Religious Studies GCSE in Years 10/11, they will still be required to study (non-examined) PSRE as part of this statutory provision.

The Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form) Curriculum

Two-year Advanced level and BTEC (Level 3) courses are offered in both traditional and new subjects.

List of A Level/Level 3 courses:	
Art: (Fine Art)	History
Art: (Photography)	
Biology	ICT (Applied: BTEC)
Business Studies (A-Level & BTEC)	Law
Chemistry	Mathematics
Computer Science	Mathematics with Further Mathematics
Design & Technology: Product Design	Media Studies
Design and Technology: Textiles	
	Music
Economics	Music Technology
English Language	Philosophy and Ethics
English Literature	Physical Education
French	Physics
Geography	Psychology
German	Spanish
Government & Politics	Sociology
	Theatre Studies

Note that all courses offered are subject to change and are regularly reviewed based on factors such as demand, funding and staffing. However, whenever possible we are committed to supporting small classes in order to maintain the breadth of subjects offered to students in this rural area.

Additional Sixth Form studies:

EPQ (Level 3) & HPQ (Level 2)	Compulsory work experience
PE/Games	Community Work
Classroom Assisting	Student Mentoring
Tutorial Programme (All students)	Independent Study (All students).

Wednesday afternoons are reserved for sixth form enrichment activities. Alongside their PE/Games options there is a core programme which includes areas such as Future Routes (including UCAS), pastoral sessions and a community project. Students can also opt for one of the following:

Public Speaking/Debating

STEM activities

Young Enterprise.

There will be a wide range of information, advice and guidance to support students and parents/carers with the options process from Year 11 into Year 12.

A minimum of five GCSE grades 4 or above (including a grade 4 in either English Language or English Literature) is required to follow three or more Level 3 courses. Some subjects have additional requirements (see Prospectus for details), whilst others can be chosen without prior GCSE level study.

Most students will study 3 subjects at Level 3 (A-Level/BTEC). However, an average GCSE point score of 7.0 or above provides the opportunity to study 4 subjects, and some students will be allowed to study 2 subjects.

Many Year 13 students also opt to complete an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) which is equivalent to an AS level.

Alongside these courses, it is compulsory that all students continue to study English and/or Maths GCSE if they have achieved below a grade 4 in Year 11 & 12

Independent study sessions in the Sixth Form Learning and Study Centres are an essential part of Sixth Form study.