Curriculum Policy: Senior School

1 Introduction

In line with our core purpose, we aim to prepare students for life in the 21st Century. We provide an academic and practical education in a caring and supportive environment. Sydenham & Dulwich Girls is dedicated to enabling its students to develop their intellect and talents, and a confidence to believe that their aspirations are achievable. From an early beginning, we encourage students to be honest, reliable and trustworthy. Academic rigour is valued at all key stages and the focus in the classroom and beyond is on challenge, engagement and enjoyment. Learning is celebrated. The school has a well-qualified and highly motivated staff, both teaching and non-teaching. All members of the community are valued and given the opportunity to flourish in a caring and supportive ethos.

2 Aims and Objectives

Our vision is that Sydenham & Dulwich students are offered:

- a rich and diverse curriculum in which they can achieve at all levels within a creative and vibrant atmosphere
- the self-confidence to become independent learners and achieve beyond the school environment
- the skills necessary to develop an enquiring and discriminating mind, and a desire for knowledge
- an environment where respect for others is paramount

3 Full-time supervised education for students, which gives students experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education

The National Curriculum forms the basic framework across Key Stages 1 to 4. This may be delivered in an enriched form where teachers feel the student would benefit. Science subjects are taught separately from Year 9 with the expectation that students will carry on with a minimum of two sciences and generally at least one modern foreign language is studied to GCSE level.

The range of student ability is broad at Sydenham & Dulwich Girls and so where appropriate, the curriculum for individual students is adjusted to meet their needs, for example by reducing the number of GCSE courses studied or providing targeted learning support as

detailed in the 'Intervention at Senior School' section of the SEND and Learning Support Policy.

Students who have been identified as More Able and Talented (MAT) are offered appropriate additional activities as opportunities arise. More able students are identified by the Deputy Head (Academic) as those individuals who score an overall MidYIS score of 120+. In addition, subject specific student lists are compiled and collated in a departmental MAT audit, which is available via handbooks and communicated to the Deputy Head (Academic) and Heads of Section. Teachers plan lessons taking their needs into account, providing stretch and challenge activities.

The curriculum embraces all areas of experience: human and social, linguistic and literary, spiritual and physical, scientific, mathematical, technological and aesthetic/creative. Cross-curricular work and projects encourage students to see the connections between learning domains.

The delivery of the curriculum aims to promote the development of an enquiring mind, independent learning and the opportunity to develop communication, organisation and team working skills. Opportunities to confront challenges and to develop leadership qualities are also created.

Within departments, progression between Key Stages 3 & 4 and 4 & 5 is monitored by Heads of Department. The Head of Junior School and Head of Lower School liaise to provide an effective student data transfer between phases of the school.

Some whole school staff meetings and study days are used to focus on teaching and learning issues. We also have staff working parties which focus on different areas of school development.

The Senior School works a two week timetable of 50 x 60 minute lessons. The school works for 176 days (35.2 weeks) and the directed curriculum hours (weekly) are as follows;

Y7-11: 25 hours
Y12: the norm is 16.5 hours (3 A Levels plus EPQ, Personal Development & Advanced Electives)
Y13: the norm is 16 hours (3 A Levels plus EPQ)

Key Stage 3
This takes into account the National Curriculum but extends beyond it. All students study two Modern Foreign Languages – initially French in Year 7 and then either German, Italian or Spanish in addition in Year 8. All students take Latin. In Year 7 and 8 students study Science and from Year 9 the three sciences are taught separately. Computer Science is taught as a stand-alone subject in Years 7 to 9.

In addition to the main curriculum subjects, Year 7 to 9 have a 45 minute PSHE lesson per week. In Year 7, students also attend a 'Stepping up to Year 7' lunchtime session during the first half of the Autumn term that incorporates additional induction and learning skills led by the Head of Lower School. Year 9 students also attend Elevate lessons 1 hour per fortnight.

Mixed ability teaching groups are established from entrance tests, interviews and other application data and most lessons take place in these teaching groups. These teaching

groups may change at the start of each academic year when a student is promoted into the next year group. The exceptions are Mathematics (Year 8 and 9) where lessons are blocked to allow for setting.

Year Group	**Y7**	**Y8**	**Y9**
Subject	**Number of lessons per fortnight**		
Linguistic			
Latin	2	3	4
Spanish/Italian/German	-	4	4
English	6	6	5
French	4	3	4
Mathematical			
Mathematics	6	6	6
Scientific			
Biology	2	2	3
Physics	2	2	3
Chemistry	2	2	3
Technological			
Computer Science	2	2	2
Design and Technology	2	3	2
Human & Social			
Geography	3	2	3
History	3	2	3
Religious Studies	3	2	3
PSHE	2 (45mins)	2 (45mins)	2 (45mins)
Physical			
Physical Education	1	1	1
Games	4	4	4
Aesthetic/Creative			
Art	3	2	2
Drama	2	3	2
Music	3	2	2

Key Stage 4

Students generally study 9 GCSE subjects.

All students are required to take the following core GCSE courses, which are currently; English Language, English Literature, Mathematics (IGCSE). They opt to take two or three separate Sciences as part of the core; Biology, Chemistry and/or Physics.

Students also select 3 or 4 additional subjects, to take them to a portfolio of 9. Most students take at least one humanities subject within these options.

Core © and Optional Subjects for Key Stage 4

Year Group	**10**	**11**
Subject	**Number of lessons per fortnight**	
Linguistic		
Latin	5	5
Spanish/German/Italian	5	5
English Language/Literature	7	7
French	5	5
Mathematical		
Mathematics	7	7
Scientific		
Biology	5	5
Chemistry	5	5
Physics	5	5
Technological		
Computing	5	5
Design and Technology	5	5
Human & Social		
Geography	5	5
History	5	5
Religious Studies	5	5
Physical		
Physical Education	5	5
Aesthetic/Creative		
Art and Design	5	5
Drama	5	5
Music	5	5

In addition to the core and optional subjects all students take Games (PE, 2 hours per week). Year 10 also have one Elevate Programme lesson and a 45 minute PSHE session per week. Year 11 students have PSHE once a fortnight in a 45 minute slot.

Key Stage 5

In general, students study 3 linear A Levels plus an EPQ. However, in agreed circumstances, some students take 4 A Levels.

The following subjects are offered:

History	Physics	Further Mathematics
Geography	English Literature	Politics
Music	Religious Studies	Philosophy
Art	Drama and Theatre Studies	Latin
Physical Education	Classical Civilisation	Design and Technology
Sociology	French	Psychology
Biology	Spanish	Italian
Economics	German	Computer Science
Chemistry	Mathematics	History of Art
Business		

In Year 12, students have 4.5 hours of teaching a week in each subject they study. This increases to 5 hours of teaching a week in Year 13.

In addition, all Year 12 students follow the Elevate curriculum which includes: Power Skills Programme (PSP); Community service and Academic Stretch in the Summer Term. Students also follow a PSHE course throughout the year (one 45 minute lesson per week) and Advanced Elective courses (one hour per week) with James Allen's Girls' School and Dulwich College. Year 12 students also have a games lesson once a week.

Year 13 students have a compulsory 45 minute PSHE lesson each week, and attend a games lesson if they are available in the Year 12 games timetable slot.

Co-curricular Activities – all Key Stages

A wide range of co-curricular activities are available. Detailed information about activities that are on offer are shared with students via Google Classroom and SOCS.

4 Subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of students, including those students with an EHC plan

In all subjects, baseline testing is used to determine students' skills and ability. This enables teaching staff to provide appropriate teaching and learning activities to students of all abilities.

At Key Stage 3 and 4, students' underlying potential, and their strengths and weaknesses across four sub-scales: Vocabulary, Mathematics, Non-verbal and Skills are made available to staff in the form of MidYIS individual pupil records (IPRs). IPRs are used by teaching staff to inform teaching and learning. GCSE performance predictive data is also available to staff on SIMS. In Year 10, students also complete YELLIS testing to give further baseline data for analysis and a tracking update.

At Key Stage 5, ALIS IPRs provide an overall ability score and a breakdown of Vocabulary, Mathematics and Non-verbal scores. ALIS chances graphs are also available to staff via SIMS and give an indication of likely future outcome, expressed as a percentage chance, in each subject at A Level, for individual students and across subjects.

Mathematics is set from Year 8. Mathematics classes are based on prior attainment from Year 7. Pupils are split into two streams, with two groups in each. The streams are based on the teacher's assessment of the pace and style of learning that will benefit each individual pupil. Stream 1 has two groups with comparable ability; two Division 1. Stream 2 has a Division 2 and Division 3.

Throughout the school, differentiation is used within lessons to ensure that each student is given tasks appropriate to their aptitude. Teachers use extension materials in order to stretch and challenge able students and often scaffold tasks to support those who need it.

Teacher observation and knowledge of each student is the most comprehensive tool in assessing the aptitude of students and all teachers use assessment strategies to ensure that all students are assessed and make progress.

Achievement data in each subject is collated centrally in SIMS (assessment manager) each term at a minimum. These data are analysed to monitor individual students' progress and inform timely feedback and intervention at all ability levels. Interventions provide students with personalised support, be it specific advice if underachieving, steps to take in order to achieve at the next level, or advice for stretching and challenging the most able.

Departments use subject material to support teaching which:

- is specifically aimed at the age group
- caters for a wide range of aptitudes

Resources are provided in a variety of ways, from paper to digital. The school's digital platforms enable students to access learning resources at any level, from anywhere, at any time, and is powered by Google Workspace for Education (Google Classroom).

At Key Stage 4 and 5 departments follow public examination specifications which specify material appropriate for students in each year group. All teachers take care to ensure that any support materials used are appropriate for the year group.

There are numerous students with either specific learning needs (identified as ALN in Sydenham & Dulwich Girls) and/or English as an Additional Language (EAL). The Head of Learning Support maintains EAL and Learning Support registers which are made available to staff via 'Sydenham & Dulwich Handy Links' shortcut on the Chrome browser and internal Google sites.

Those individuals requiring learning support are identified by a series of baseline tests in the first month of Year 7. The Head of Learning Support then organises individual programmes and communicates with teachers to ensure that the subject matter delivered is matched to needs and aptitude, see 'Identification and assessment of SEND' section of the SEND & Learning Support Policy. Bespoke support and scaffolding for individual students can last until the end of Key Stage 4 with some students reducing the number of subjects that are studied at GCSE (see appendix 2). In the sixth form, students can be referred to or make individual arrangements to meet with the Head of Learning Support.

The Head of Learning Support arranges examination support where appropriate in conjunction with the Examinations Officer. Exam access arrangements for individual students in each year group are shared with staff via the Learning Support Register which is continually updated and linked to from the Sydenham & Dulwich Girls Handy Links.

More Able and Talented provision encourages independent learning. Best practice is embedded with a variety of enrichment and extension activities. Opportunities are open to all as everyone deserves the right to discover their talents but the MAT inevitably self-select and those students follow through and gain most from the experience. Enrichment activities are aimed at extending the inter- and intra-personal skills which may not be covered in academic lessons. Academic scholars all take part in the Socrates programme, which includes a series of lectures and extension activities and opportunities. This programme is open to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 but is compulsory for scholars. An additional programme exclusive to academic scholars is also on offer from the start of this year.

In Years 8 and 9 some interim entry students may give up Latin or one modern foreign language if they did not study it in their previous school, in order to give them independent study time to devote to other subjects.

5 Students to acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy

Students are given many opportunities to express views and to contribute and to listen to others in lessons. These opportunities are built into departmental schemes of work.

In English, students take part in speaking and listening assessments from Years 7 to 11. Key Stage 3 students learn how to debate, how to give formal individual presentations and learn the etiquette of group discussion in work relating to their curriculum. Years 10 and 11 are assessed formally for an endorsement in Spoken Language that is awarded in addition to their English Language GCSE. Many other subjects set presentations as assessments. In lessons, students benefit from the utilisation of interactive whiteboards and clevertouch screens which enable them to listen to audio/visual material while role play is used in many subjects to reinforce learning. Many students are involved in leading or contributing to whole school or section assemblies in each academic year.

Literacy is built into all subjects through their assessment criteria for written work. Subjects such as Geography offer subject specific word bank lists to support literacy. Key words are identified in schemes of work and shared with students during lessons.

The Head of Learning Support uses reading age and spelling baseline tests in Year 7 to identify those students who may require additional support to progress.

All subjects aid numeracy in some way. Data analysis is vital to many subjects and in those where numeracy is less prevalent techniques such as timelines, pie charts, graphs and averages are used.

6 Where a student has an EHC plan, education which fulfils its requirements

The school is a selective independent school where entry is determined by our 11+ examination. See Admissions Policy and SEND Policy.

Sydenham & Dulwich Girls has an effective Accessibility Policy which ensures that provision is made for students with EHC plans where possible and practical within the realms of accommodating a pupil's needs and/or Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. Sections of particular note in the policy are 'Curriculum Access' and 'Accessibility Plan'.

This policy has been devised to promote the successful inclusion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at Sydenham & Dulwich. We are committed to offering an inclusive curriculum to ensure the best possible progress for all of our students whatever their needs or abilities.

7 Personal, social and health education which reflects the school's aims and ethos

Sydenham & Dulwich Girls has a strong sense of community – the PSHE development of all students is the foundation of this (the PSHE Policy provides a detailed overview of provision). Awareness is fostered throughout the curriculum and particularly through assemblies, PSHE, Biology and Religious Studies lessons.

PSHE is also encouraged through positions of responsibility. Form captains are elected in addition to roles on round table and student council.

In the sixth form, students are able to apply for a position on the Young Leadership Team. The YLT consists of the following roles: Heads of School, Senior Prefect, House Leaders, Charity Prefect. Students are appointed to the YLT positions following school elections (peers and staff).

The Student Council is managed and chaired by the Heads of School. Representatives from every class are given the opportunity to work directly with staff and contribute to the successful progress and running of the school. Feeding into Student Council is the Round Table discussion groups. Round Table discussion groups are held once a half term for every year group chaired by a member of the Heads of School team. Members of the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Section attend Student Council and Round Table discussions.

PSHE contributes to every student's ability to make informed choices and decisions, and allows them the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives from a social, moral, health and academic point of view. It will also help them to become responsible and active members of a challenging inner city community.

PSHE encourages every student to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

PSHE specifically aims to:

- give students the basic skills, experience, knowledge and attitudes that are required for work and leisure in a rapidly developing society
- enable students to become progressively more responsible for their own personal, social, health and citizenship education through a programme of study that takes into account information gained through PSHE, other subjects and within their own homes
- provide a safe and relaxed environment where each individual is respected and each culture and religion is recognised and included and in which students feel free to discuss and explore their ideas, opinions and concerns
- to 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

Each year group has the opportunity to study a variety of topics which provide opportunities for individual, paired and group work. Discussion is a key component of PSHE lessons, with students encouraged to express their opinions, and listen to those of others. External speakers are invited to speak to students as appropriate.

8 Appropriate careers guidance for students receiving secondary education

Through our Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) program, Sydenham & Dulwich aims to develop the following capabilities in all pupils:

- To recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate how these might affect future choices in relation to:
    - their GCSE and A Level choices

    - their options post 16 and post 18
    - the world of work
- To make informed decisions by making effective use of information, advice and individual-focused guidance
- To develop and demonstrate personal and employability skills
- To learn through a range of work related activities

Specific careers guidance is given to students in all Key Stages through:

- PSHE programmes
- parent and student information evenings

Further year group specific guidance is detailed in our Careers' Policy and includes, for example:

- Each student in Year 11 is encouraged to organise up to two weeks of work experience. Students are encouraged to seek their own placements but have access to the school database of contacts in different areas. Preparation work is covered in form time and a final briefing session is held just before the work experience begins. The Unifrog work placements tool is used to review all placements before students undertake their visit. In a debriefing session the students do an individual evaluation then discuss their experiences in groups before reporting back to everyone else.
- A Futures programme which begins with next steps talks and Sixth Form experience day in Year 10, and then continues with individual meetings with members of SLT to discuss future study and career plans in Year 11. Moving into Years 12 and 13, in collaboration with the governors and external visitors, the program includes Oxbridge and Competitive Courses Preparation, Medvet preparation, UCAS preparation, creative foundation course guidance, and Apprenticeships application support, as well as the 'Curate Your Future' information page with up to date next steps related events and opportunities.
- Introduction to elements of Unifrog from Year 7 onwards
- Unifrog profiling in Year 10 and Year 12, with students also receiving a personalised one to one careers meeting with the Head of Careers and Futures in Year 10 and 12 as well.
- Take Your Child to Work Day for Year 9

9 Where the school has students above compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs

When we have students who are above compulsory school age, they follow the broad and balanced Key Stage 5 curriculum. In addition to the academic curriculum, the programme of activities gives students access to the following: co-curricular, leadership, career, personal, social, emotional, physical development, communication and language opportunities. These aspects are delivered through the enrichment programme, PSHE and PSP. Further details are given in section 3.

10 All students to have the opportunity to learn and make progress

The curriculum is open to all students of all abilities and each individual has the opportunity to access the full provision offered. Student learning and progression is reviewed systematically both within and outside of the classroom.

Students sit the following assessments:

- baseline – MidYIS, YELLIS, ALIS

- regular internal progress data is collected each half term (academic tracking)
- summer subject exams
- external GCSE and A Level exams

The data from these assessments is made available to all staff in order to more fully match the students' needs with the provision offered. They are also used as a tool by SLT, Heads of Section and Heads of Department for monitoring student progress, departmental review and informing the quality of teaching and learning.

Over an academic year the school has at least five points of contact with parents about student performance and progress; either through interim reports, assessment/examination result reports, full reports or parents' evenings. At the beginning of each term, all students meet with their tutor to discuss their interim and/or full report to set SMART targets.

Teacher assessment is also demonstrated through the use of assessment for learning strategies within lessons and regular setting and marking of practical and written work.

Heads of Section closely monitor student progress and have an overview of both the academic and pastoral life of the individual. The sanctions and rewards system acknowledges that students make mistakes and enables them to learn from them and move forward. It also celebrates their successes. When serious pastoral concerns arise students are referred to the school counselling service. Parents/guardians and outside agencies are involved as necessary.

11 Adequate preparation of students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life in British society

In addition to the opportunities given during the delivery of the academic curriculum, students awareness and development of values, skills and behaviours they require to get on with life are further enhanced during:

- assemblies
- house activities
- co-curricular opportunities

Students have access to a rich provision of classroom and co-curricular activities that develop resilience and grit, underpinning their future academic and employment success.

Numerous co-curricular opportunities are available to students. Activities and clubs are publicised to students and parents via SOCS, Google Classroom and email.

There is also a thriving house system, which includes a number of positions of responsibility for students. It also gives students of all ages opportunities to be involved in house competitions, including music, drama and debating. There is also an extensive programme of curricular and co-curricular trips, visits, talks and conferences.

A number of students lead co-curricular clubs. They also organise and run charity events, taking responsibility and increasing awareness of the wider community, citizenship and international issues.

Appendix 1

Timings of the School Day 2025 2026

* Staff briefing will be on Mondays at 08.15, with e notices on Thursdays.

Whole school staff meeting, after school, the first Monday after every half-term break, or longer holiday if there is no Staff Study day.

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

Time	Activity
07.30 - 8.30	Before school slot for activities and staff duties
08.30 - 09.00	**School starts** / am registration **Senior School Assembly**: Wednesday **Form time/Year group assembly**: Monday, Thursday, Friday
9.00 - 10.00	Lesson 1
10.00 - 10.20	Break
10.20 - 11.20	Lesson 2
11.20 - 11.25	Time for movement
11.25 - 12.25	Lesson 3
12.25 - 12.45	Lunch 1
12.45 - 13.40	Lunch 2 / clubs / Sixth Form lesson if required
13.40 - 14.40	Lesson 4 / pm registration **(Thursday Y12, 13.15 - 14.15, depart to DC 14.15)**
14.40 - 14.45	Time for movement
14.45 - 15.45	Lesson 5
15.45	**School ends**
15.45 - 16.45	After school slot for student support, activities and staff duties

Tuesday

Time	Activity
07.30 - 8.30	Before school slot for activities and staff duties
08.30 - 09.30	**School starts** Lesson 1 / am registration
09.30 - 10.30	Lesson 2
10.30-10.50	Break
10.50 - 11.50	Lesson 3
11.55 - 12.40	PSHE
12.40 - 13.00	Lunch 1
13.00 - 13.40	Lunch 2 / clubs
13.40 - 14.40	Lesson 4 / pm registration
14.40 - 14.45	Time for movement
14.45 - 15.45	Lesson 5
15.45	**School ends**
15.45 - 16.45	After school slot for student support, activities and staff duties

Y12 Stretch enrichment programme

Each student may select one of the following (*subject to change*) to participate in during the summer term:

- Political awareness
- Cookery
- First aid
- Rock climbing
- Photography
- Dance
- Sign language
- Culture vulture
- Sign language

Advanced Elective Series
Numerous courses are offered in conjunction with Dulwich College and James Allen's Girls' School. Course information can be viewed here for 22-23. 2024 onwards is password protected.

Appendix 2

Request to drop or change a GCSE/A Level Subject

In exceptional circumstances a student may be permitted to drop or change a GCSE/A Level subject. Students permitted to drop a subject are expected to use this additional study time in a disciplined manner, working in the library under the general supervision of the librarian or in the Sixth Form Centre as appropriate. There should be full discussions with the teacher/Head of Department/Head of Section/ Academic Deputy Head/parents as well as the Head before any subject is dropped.

Student's name: _____ Form: _____

The following points summarise some aspects that were discussed:

- xx
- yy
- zz

Student's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parental agreement:

After a number of conversations and correspondence with the Head of Year, Head of …. And Deputy Head Academic, I agree to ……dropping ……..and am aware of the points made above.

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

School agreement

Permission granted for dropping a subject/change of subject…… (subject)

Head of Department(s) signature: _____ Date: _____

Head of Section(s) signature: _____ Date: _____

Deputy Head Academic's signature: …… Date: _____

Additional comments to note: