

The Saffron Walden County High School Curriculum

“Truly great schools inspire their students to develop an all-encompassing love for learning. They focus both on passing on the learning, values, and beliefs of the past and on developing.....a wide range of skills and aptitudes that they can apply to the world of the future.” Woods, Macfarlane and McBeath (2018)

Curriculum Intent

Our mission is to be ‘a local school of exceptional quality’. To support this mission, our curriculum provides children with the academic and cultural capital that will enable them to enjoy life in modern Britain and be ready to work in an exciting global economy. We ensure our curriculum has rigour, richness, and depth with delivery by subject specialists. Our emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge whilst explicitly teaching the skills of critical analysis and imaginative application that can only be acquired when knowledge is rich. It would be unhelpful to characterise Saffron Walden County High School as either a traditional or progressive school. It does not conform to such stereotypes.

Our curriculum offer, detailed in this policy, is broad (four languages choices are available, including Latin) and shows the value placed on all areas of learning. The curriculum decisions and the quality of provision at Key Stage 3 is reflected in students’ option choices as they move up to GCSE. Students are expected to keep a rich and balanced curriculum throughout their Key Stage 4, with both a Language and a Humanities choice being a part of our ‘standard’ GCSE curriculum. All ‘English Baccalaureate’ subjects have high rates of entry. We also value the other subject domains, and we have a wide offer of ‘Open’ choices at GCSE including Art, Music, Drama, Dance, PE, Graphics, Textiles, Product Design, Business, Health and Social Care. All areas of learning thrive and are valued. Creative subjects thrive: GCSE Music, a subject under pressure nationally, has multiple groups at GCSE.

This rich curriculum offer continues post-16, where we offer 45 different courses. We offer minority subjects like Latin, Philosophy, Photography, and Environmental Science alongside the very large numbers following subjects such as Maths, Physics, Chemistry, History, and English Literature.

Students make excellent progress and achieve exam success at Saffron Walden County High School, but we do not see the curriculum as being synonymous with specifications; subject enrichment is built into the offer to students – teachers teach beyond the specification and teach to the top.

Enrichment

Our intention is to expose our young people to the best that has been thought and said both in lessons and in our wider provision. Our mission is to engender an appreciation of **human** creativity and achievement in all our students. Saffron Hall is a living symbol of how this philosophy sits at the heart of the school: this internationally renowned concert hall is also the school hall. All students in the school have the opportunity to work with professional dancers, classical and jazz musicians, and to attend concerts featuring the likes of Courtney Pine, Nicola Benedetti, and The London Symphony Orchestra. The school believes in building the cultural capital of all its learners. This is exemplified by the concerts and workshops provided by Saffron Hall. For example, the Brooklyn-based group ‘So-Percussion’ performed two excellent and challenging concerts to all Year 9 students, introducing them to a range of styles and composers. ‘So Percussion’ then worked with a smaller group to compose a new piece of music that the students helped to perform in a public concert. Other

workshop and performance opportunities for our students have been led by Boy Blue, Britten Sinfonia, Courtney Pine, UNIT, Nicola Benedetti, and Jess Gillam.

Inspirational extra-curricular opportunities are a feature of our provision at Saffron Walden County High School. Each year we stage ambitious school productions which range from musicals to performances of Shakespeare and involve students in both performance and the technical support. Our staff lead outstanding extra-curricular opportunities for students in **all** subject areas with clubs including Politics Club, Geology Club and Coding Club as well as 18 different Music Ensembles. We also have a very popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme programme open to all students from Year 9. We want our extra-curricular provision to be inclusive and open to all, as well as nurturing particular talents; our annual dance show sees over 200 students performing, whereas a 'Masterclass' will be put on for a select group of our top instrumentalists.

We place great importance on the extra-curricular sport provision for our students. Our extra-curricular provision is built around 'Sport for All' with extra-curricular PE clubs in a wide range of individual and team sports attracting hundreds of students each week. We compete in a wide range of local, district and national competitions, often entering multiple teams. We are no strangers to regional and national sporting success with County High teams winning competitions at all levels and individual students securing places in national squads. We also host the Uttlesford School Sport Partnership of 34 primary schools and 4 secondary schools. This offers a broad sporting competition programme which gives opportunities to all key stages and abilities of children.

Our trips and visits programme is also ambitious and broad. All students engage with their local community with RE and Geography fieldwork in the local area as well as visits to the Hindu Temple in Neasden and the Olympic site in London. There is also a rich offer of trips within Europe as well as opportunities to travel further afield, including an exchange visit to China and a science trip to Zanzibar. We raise funds to try to ensure that the cost of these visits is not a barrier to participation.

We have emphasised the importance of extra-curricular opportunities in our post-Covid recovery plans, running extra trips to Europe in 2022 (for example, extra Languages visits and additional Battlefields visits, and a Music tour to Belgium) as well as double casting our production of *Chicago* to provide the opportunity for more students to be involved. Extra-curricular music, sport, and other clubs have been supported as we want to ensure that our students are inspired to be involved. Nationally, students missed out during the lockdowns, and we are working hard to close that experience gap for our students at Saffron Walden County High School.

We want joy, awe, wonder and inspiration for all our students both in and outside of the classroom.

Pastoral Curriculum

We have a curriculum for our daily tutor time. This pastoral curriculum at Saffron Walden County High School aims to provide our pupils with the cultural literacy and relational skills that will prove vitally important in an ever more competitive and inter-connected world. It is our intent to deliver a rich pastoral curriculum that balances our need to support pupils with the operational demands of school life with a desire to foster a community within which all children at Saffron Walden County High School feel valued and supported. It is also our intention to provide opportunities for our children to build their knowledge of, and critically analyse, key issues and developments enabling them to contextualise the world within which they live. Further details of this tutor time curriculum is included as Appendix A.

Curriculum Implementation

A powerful and impactful curriculum depends on, more than any other factor, excellent subject specialist teachers, and so we place emphasis on the recruitment training, well-being, and retention of staff. The school employs highly qualified graduate teachers with a passion for their subject who can share that passion through excellent subject teaching and engage and inspire their students through their wealth of knowledge.

Vital to the quality of our curriculum planning and delivery is the deep trust shown in our subject experts. Our school policies for teaching and learning establish principles, but departments are given the autonomy and flexibility to operate in ways that work best for them, respecting what Christine Counsell calls the 'grammar of their subject'. Our middle leaders direct developments in their own curriculum areas, both in terms of the curriculum itself and how it ensures progression, and also in terms of the subject specific pedagogy.

The curriculum model (including extra-curricular provision) at Saffron Walden County High School aims to allow all students to acquire deep knowledge and understanding, and to develop transferable learning skills and positive character traits by:

- Providing an engaging curriculum that inspires a love of learning.
- Providing a broad curriculum that promotes, across a wide range of subjects, deep subject knowledge and the ability to engage critically with each subject.
- Ensuring teaching, across the curriculum, that supports the development of lively, enquiring, and agile minds, and fosters intellectual curiosity and the ability to question rationally.
- Helping students to understand the world in which they live and how to navigate through it as active, engaged, and responsible participants in society.
- Building cultural capital and broadening personal horizons through curriculum provision and a planned and inclusive extra-curricular entitlement that provides challenge and memorable, enriching experiences with access for all.
- Enabling students to recognise, develop and to use effective and transferrable skills (including oracy, literacy, numeracy, IT, and the school's "SkillsBuilder" work-related skills) that foster character development and promote 'intrapreneurial' contributions within school and beyond.
- Developing a strong moral compass through the provision of learning with SMSC at its heart.

Implementation is achieved by:

- Ensuring that curriculum review, planning, design, and delivery is a strategic priority for the school.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to each cohort of students, within the context of a rapidly changing world that will be inhabited by our students.
- Ensuring that the curriculum builds on the students' KS2 experience and provides challenge and progression for all students throughout Key Stages 3 to 5.
- Design and delivery of subject pedagogy by subject experts.
- Ensuring that the curriculum is adapted to meet the changing needs of cohorts (for example in response to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic).

- Personalisation of teaching and learning to ensure that all students experience a challenging and appropriate route through both curriculum and extra-curricular pathways. Personalised pathways combine rich and deep subject and extra-curricular experiences that serve individual needs by promoting progress and achievement for all.
- Provision of on-going professional development of all staff promotes challenging and inspiring curriculum delivery, with a recent emphasis on the role of 'metacognition' in learning.
- Fostering the personal development of students within a caring, tolerant, and inclusive school community, characterised by good relationships and mutual respect between students and between staff and students. The highest expectations of students, together with common standards and procedures, are maintained by staff.
- Provision of a wide range of extra-curricular sporting, cultural, social, recreational, and charitable activities that are available as an entitlement for students.

PSHE/RSE/CEIAG

PSHE – Personal, Social and Health Education

RSE – Relationships and Sex Education

CEIAG – Careers education, information, advice and guidance

Our commitment to specialist delivery is also seen in our approach to PSHE, RSE, and CEIAG. All year groups have lessons delivered on a carousel model. This ensures that all groups are taught these vital lessons by dedicated senior teachers with a high level of subject knowledge and training. We also work with external experts and external providers on key aspects of our provision. For example, *Form the Future* work closely with us on our CEIAG delivery and they provide independent careers guidance for our students. Our PSHE programme includes a range of external speakers and workshops leads, all of whom are carefully researched by our team in advance of delivery.

52 lessons are timetabled over a fortnightly cycle. The vast majority of lessons are 1 hour in length, but lesson length can vary from 50 minutes to 120 minutes.

You can find an overview of our curriculum for each subject on our website.

Key Stage 3 Curriculum Overview (see appendix A for our Pastoral Curriculum)

Year 7

Students enter Year 7 as a member of one of 10 mixed-ability form groups divided, for timetable purposes, into two halves - 'S' (Saffron) and 'W' (Walden). They are taught in their forms for all subjects except for:

- a) PE
- b) Technology - year group divided into teaching groups of, typically, 20 students to undertake the Technology 'carousel' covering Textiles, Graphics, Product Design and Food.
- c) Maths – students are grouped according to ability after October half term. This is informed by data from Primary colleagues and further assessments in the first half term and students can move groups as required as the year progresses.
- d) English - We have a 'nurture' group on each half of the year group for students identified with primary colleagues as requiring a significantly adapted curriculum to secure key skills. The remaining students are taught in mixed ability groups.

Year 7 Subjects	Timetable allocation (periods per cycle)
Maths	7
English	6
Science	6
Computing	3
Geography	3
History	3
RE	2
French	3
German	3
Technology	3
Art	2
Dance	1
Drama	2
Music	2
PE	4
PSHE/CEIAG	2

Year 8

Students are allocated to new mixed ability 'teaching groups', remaining in their form groups for tutor time. This allows students to make new friendships and to work with a different cohort of students. Students are taught in these groups for all subjects except for:

- a) PE – students grouped by gender and ability
- b) Technology - year group divided into teaching groups of, typically, 20 students to undertake the Technology 'carousel' covering Textiles, Graphics, Product Design and Food
- c) Music – students are taught in groups of 20 students to support practical work
- d) Maths – students are grouped by ability
- e) English – A top set and a 'nurture group' is in place on both sides of the year
- f) Latin is offered as an enrichment opportunity (taken by approximately 80 students) and is taught in lessons after the end of the usual school day.

Year 8 Subject	Timetable allocation (periods per cycle)
Maths	7
English	6
Science	6
Computing	3
Geography	3
History	3
RE	2
French	3
German	3
Technology	3
Art	2
Drama	2

Music	2
PE	4
PSHE/CEIAG	1
Citizenship - Politics	1

Year 9

In Year 9, students continue to study a broad suite of subjects and complete their Key Stage 3 programmes of study whilst also making some choices to personalise their Year 9 programme. This gives students the chance to have Latin, Spanish, Health and Social Care and Business as a part of their Year 9 offer to widen their experiences and ensure that they can make fully informed GCSE choices for the start of Year 10. In Year 9 we allocate more time for each Language choice (all students study at least one language in Year 9), as this provides the strong foundations required for success at GCSE, which is a core part of our standard GCSE curriculum offer. In Year 9, we give more time for each Science and move to subject specialist delivery.

Students are taught in mixed ability groups for all subjects, except for:

- a) PE – students are grouped by gender and ability
- b) Technology - year group divided into teaching groups of, typically, 20 students to undertake the Technology ‘carousel’ covering Textiles, Graphics, Product Design and Food
- c) Languages – students are usually grouped by ability (in some cases, where only 1 group is in place, the group may be mixed ability and have additional LSA and FLA support)
- d) Maths - students are grouped by ability
- e) English – A top set and a ‘nurture group’ is in place on both sides of the year

Year 9 Subject	Timetable allocation (periods per cycle)
Maths	7
English	7
Science	9
Geography	3
History	3
RE	3
Language choice (from French, German, Latin, Spanish)	5
German	3
PSHE/CEIAG (including Core Computing)	2
Arts/Technology choice	3
Open Choice (from Arts, Additional Computing, Additional Language, Technology, Vocational).	3
Open Choice (from Arts, Additional Computing, Additional Language, Technology, Vocational).	3

In March of Year 9, students are asked to make their options choices for their GCSEs.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum Overview

In Years 10 and 11 we have a broad core programme followed by the vast majority of our pupils. This includes GCSE courses in English Language, English Literature, Maths, Science (Combined or Triple), RE, a Language and either Geography or History. In addition, all students continue to follow our rigorous PSHE and CEIAG programmes. In addition to the core subjects, students choose 2 further 'options' for their GCSEs, ensuring all students have a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. For their two option subjects, students can pick from a wide range of subjects.

Students are taught in mixed ability groups for all subjects, except for:

- a) PE – students are grouped by gender and ability
- b) Technology - year group divided into teaching groups of, typically, 20 students to undertake the Technology 'carousel' covering Textiles, Graphics, Product Design and Food
- c) Languages – students are usually grouped by ability (in some cases, where only 1 group is in a timetable block, the group may be more mixed in ability and have additional LSA and FLA support
- d) Maths - students are grouped by ability
- e) English – grouping depends on the cohort and the texts being chosen.

Year 10 and 11 Subject	Timetable allocation (periods per cycle)
Maths	7
English (Language and Literature – 2 GCSES)	7
Science (2 or 3 GCSEs)	10
Geography or History	5
RE GCSE	3
Language GCSE	5
Core PE	4
PSHE/CEIAG	1
Option subject 1	5
Option Subject 2	5

Students can also select to study Additional Maths, which requires attendance at lunchtime lessons.

Adapted Curriculum Provision

Saffron Walden County High School recognises its responsibility to respond to the needs of students who may benefit from an adapted curriculum and bespoke programmes and courses are in place where this would best meet the needs of our students.

Whilst we expect the vast majority of our students to follow our core curriculum as outlined, we do offer bespoke programmes for those who would benefit from that. Selected students are offered the opportunity to join a Study Support Group where additional support is available to promote progress and achievement. Selected students are disapplied from the requirement to take a language to GCSE level and are instead allowed to take an additional GCSE option. Selected students follow an amended Science course, and some students are withdrawn from one or two options courses. This allows more time for personalised support within the Learning Support Department, bespoke ASDAN courses and additional support in English and Mathematics.

Our Approach to Inclusion

Our staff adapt the learning to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Our staff also receive regular training in SEND to help identify students who may need additional resources and support.

The Learning Support team provide support in all curriculum areas and our Teaching Assistants are trained in their subject specialism to offer the highest level of support. Teaching Assistants and Teachers co-plan lessons to meet the needs of students with SEND to ensure that high expectations and challenge are maintained whilst balancing this with support to access the subject.

The school uses auxiliary aids and human resources to guarantee that educational opportunities are accessible to all. This includes educational trips, including residential trips, extra-curricular activities and clubs, access to educational resources such as texts, and technology.

It is our aim as a school to make all learners confident and courageous in their learning and through careful considerations and planning we are able to offer a fully inclusive experience. For some students who require considerable adaptations to include them in a challenging and engaging curriculum, we make these adaptations in full consultation with families, the young person and where appropriate health professionals and/or the local authority.

Sixth Form Curriculum Delivery

Within our Sixth Form, students opt for one of five pathways which meet the 16-19 study programme requirements. The different pathways are summarised below and full details of the courses on offer are available in our Sixth Form prospectus (available on our website). Many of our students start on a 4 or 5 course programme to ensure a broad Year 12 academic experience and ensure appropriate choices are made for Year 13.

6th Form Pathway (Including entry requirements)	Courses followed
Pathway 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 or more GCSEs at grades 5-9 (including English Language and Maths)• Individual subject entry criteria met for each choice	4 A Level subjects in Year 12 (usually dropping to 3 in Year 13)
Pathway 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 or more GCSEs at grades 5-9 (including English Language and Maths)• Individual subject entry criteria met for each choice	3 A Level subjects + 1 Level 3 BTEC/CTEC/WJEC diplomas (usually dropping to 3 subjects in Year 13)
Pathway 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4-9 (including English Language and Maths at grade 5)• Individual subject entry criteria met for each choice	2 A Level subjects + 2 Level 3 BTEC/CTEC/WJEC diplomas (usually dropping to 3 subjects in Year 13)

Pathway 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or more GCSEs at grades 4-9 (including English Language OR Maths at grade 5) • Individual subject entry criteria met for each choice 	1 A Level subject + 2 Level 3 BTEC/CTEC/WJEC diplomas. Students on this pathway can also re-sit EITHER English or Maths GCSE, as required.
Pathway 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or more GCSEs at grades 3-9 • Individual subject entry criteria met for each choice 	1 Level 2 Diploma + a level 2 HPQ + English and Maths GCSE resits, as required. This is a 1-year programme for Year 12 only. At the end of the programme students can reapply to start Year 12 on one of the pathways above. Students are also supported in making applications to other educational establishments and to employment (including apprenticeships).

Many students choose to add an EPQ or Core Maths to their pathway choices.

In addition, all students follow a structured academic enrichment to develop post-16 study skills and to broaden their academic experience. All students also study PSHE in the Sixth Form which includes support for all our students to prepare for their chosen destinations using the 'Unifrog' platform and structured programmes to help those preparing for higher education and those preparing for apprenticeships and employment.

There is a strong extra-curricular offer for our students including our Electives programme and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and trips. Our Sixth Form Music Academy allows our musicians to access masterclasses and other enrichment.

We encourage our Sixth Form to be engaged with the wider community. Many Sixth Formers take part in volunteering. Our Charities Week and Senior Citizens Buddying schemes give further opportunities for our Sixth Form to both develop leadership skills and to help others.

Measuring the Impact of our Curriculum

We evaluate the impact of our curriculum through our rigorous self-evaluation programme, external audits, analysis of the progress of our students and through student voice.

We reflect on the effectiveness of our curriculum implementation and the impact of our curriculum in subject teams and make changes to curriculum plans and approaches as a part of our improvement planning.

Appendix A – Pastoral Curriculum

Please note that PSHE/RSE and CEIAG are taught as a part of our timetabled lessons and are not covered in this policy as this refers to our pastoral curriculum delivered by tutors in tutor time.

Pastoral Curriculum at Saffron Walden County High School (Year 7 – 11)

Statement of Intent

The pastoral curriculum at Saffron Walden County High School aims to provide our pupils with the cultural literacy and relational skills that will prove vitally important in an ever more competitive and inter-connected world. It is our intent to deliver a rich pastoral curriculum that balances our need to support pupils with the operational demands of school life with a desire to foster a community within which all children at Saffron Walden County High School feel valued and supported. It is also our intention to provide opportunities for our children to build their knowledge of, and critically analyse, key issues and developments enabling them to contextualise the world within which they live.

Implementation

In order to achieve our intent, the pastoral curriculum at Saffron Walden County High School will be delivered by Form Tutors from a wide range of subject specialisms under the leadership of an experienced Year Achievement Co-ordinator (YAC) who liaises closely with the Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher responsible for pastoral provision. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), such as our literacy co-ordinators, have been involved in the development of the pastoral curriculum to ensure that the delivery is based on sound pedagogical research.

The pastoral curriculum will develop the cultural literacy of pupils at Saffron Walden County High school by:

- Providing opportunities to explore current affairs in order to support pupils' ability to contextualise events and build their wider knowledge of why things happen (causation) and why things change (change/continuity).
- Developing key relational skills through secure working relationships within their form group between peers and their Form Tutor.
- Engaging in constructive dialogue and debate through representation on the Student Committee, seeking positive change for the school in areas that are important to pupils.
- Seeking to enable them to appreciate the importance of high standards in areas such as independent organisational skills, effective communication, and time management.
- Building a sense of *esprit de corps* to support a sense of collective pride in being a pupil at Saffron Walden County High School.

Implementation is achieved by:

- Developing high quality resources through experienced colleagues and SMEs.
- Considering best practice through research and visiting other schools.
- Giving time to Form Tutors so that they can build important working relationships with their tutees.
- Raising the profile of the Form Tutor at Saffron Walden County High School through an increased accountability around this role within the appraisal process.
- Reviewing and monitoring the impact of our pastoral provision through the on-going Pastoral Review Process (PRP) as well as YAC tutorial checks, pupil voice, and external reviews.

- Broadening the pool of attached staff to widen the level of expertise available in each year group.
- Providing CPD to Form Tutors delivered by YACs/DYACs.
- Providing CPD to YACs/DYACs delivered by Assistant Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral).
- Offering training through external professional providers to the whole pastoral team.
- Fostering the personal development of pupils within a caring, tolerant, and inclusive school community, characterised by good relationships and mutual respect between pupils and between staff and pupils. The highest expectations of pupils, together with common standards and procedures, are maintained by staff.

Our provision


At Saffron Walden County High School, all pupils receive 1 hour 10 minutes of timetabled pastoral provision per week which is broken down as follows:

Form Tutor delivery	Year group assembly
4 sessions per week (55 minutes)	1 session per week (15 minutes)

In addition to this timetabled delivery, the PSHE Co-ordinator organises additional pastoral interventions through external organisations and agencies who deliver bespoke, off-timetable sessions throughout the academic year.

Sessions delivered by Form Tutors at Saffron Walden County High School are organised on a weekly timetable that aims to balance the delivery needs of pastoral content whilst recognising the importance of strong working relationships between Tutor and tutees.

An example of the pastoral curriculum for a particular year group demonstrates how we achieve our intent through implementation:

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Activity	Current affairs discussion	Reading for Pleasure (Tutor led)	Checks and register (8-minute Tutor Time)	Feedback from, and submissions to, the Student Committee or student voice-based activity. Or Tutor led, educational activity.	Assembly
Conceptual foundation	Cultural literacy/ public speaking/ debating and discussing views/ acknowledging diversity of thought and opinion.	Literacy/ cultural literacy/ historical enquiry/ exploration of social issues	Operational administration/ Supporting reliance and personal responsibility	Democracy/ effective working relationships	Cultural literacy/ <i>esprit de corps</i> / exploration of school-based and social issues
On-going	 Uniform checks, planner checks, equipment checks, individual supportive conversations etc.				

Impact

We measure the impact of our pastoral curriculum through the Pastoral Review Process (PRP) that includes one learning walk, per term, to each form. This data is reviewed at the end of every term by YACs and the SLT responsible for pastoral provision. Strategies and interventions are discussed and actioned, either as a leadership group or in line management meetings where appropriate.

The role of Form Tutor is included within the SAT appraisal process, requiring line managers to liaise directly with the YAC for comment on a teacher's performance as a Form Tutor.

Much of the relational work undertaken by teachers is intangible when trying to measure in line with typical school data models, however, we hope that the impact of effective Tutor relationships will manifest themselves through reductions in key behavioural measures such as isolations and suspensions, as well as consistently high standards of conduct around the school.

Saffron Walden County High School places a great emphasis on the development of character. It is our hope that this curriculum supports pupils from all backgrounds to achieve this.