



S05 Curriculum

Reviewed: Education and Policy Committee

Approved: Full Governing Body

Approved Date: December 2024

Next Review Date: December 2025

INTRODUCTION

Westminster Abbey Choir School (WACS) is a school which aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, within the demands of what is effectively a specialist music school. The school curriculum is designed and delivered to provide a full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age, which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education.

We respect the right of all children in our school, irrespective of differences in ability, to access all areas of learning and to develop the skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding that are necessary for their self-fulfilment and their eventual development into active, responsible and caring members of our community. We aim to make provision for both academic achievement and the spiritual, social, moral, cultural, physical and creative development of young people. The curriculum aims to help prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

We believe that intelligence is multifaceted and children learn in different ways and curriculum planning at WACS reflects this. Alongside the generous curriculum time given to music, WACS also provides provision for pupils to develop in sport, performing and creative arts. This is all underpinned by the personal, social and health education provision and the extracurricular activities offered to all.

The planning and delivery of the curriculum at WACS, alongside the other opportunities on offer ensures that all pupils make good progress according to their ability.

Policy Aims

Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- Provide a thorough and broad curriculum with a wide variety of learning experiences that engage, excite and challenge our pupils to the best of their ability;
- Promote a positive attitude towards learning, so that children enjoy being at school, and acquire a solid basis for lifelong learning;
- Enable children to be creative and to develop their own independent thinking;
- Encourage pupils to take an active part in their learning process and develop high order thinking skills;
- Promote Fundamental British values, while recognising, appreciating and valuing the contribution made by all groups in our multicultural society and grow up committed to equal opportunities for all;
- Enable pupils to be positive citizens;
- Enable children to have respect for themselves and high self-esteem, and to be able to live and work cooperatively with others;
- Prepare pupils for entrance examinations, and transition to their next schools and for adult life;
- Provide a planned and monitored curriculum which ensures that learning is progressive and skills-based;
- Help children to be physically fit and regard sport and physical exercise as an important part of a healthy and well-balanced life;

- Provide opportunities for children to experience the Christian faith amongst other faiths, enabling them to build their own values towards life, making responsible and informed choices;
- Develop a growth mindset and skills that promote independent discovery and learning;

School Structure

Westminster Abbey Choir School admits pupils in National Curriculum Years 4 – 8, (aged 8 -13). At WACS, these year groups are called Forms I-V. The school is small in size with class sizes being around six pupils per year group. In Forms I and II (Years 4 and 5) pupils are class-based with a single teacher taking them for English, Maths, Humanities, PSHE and Reasoning. Specialist teaching takes place in Science, French, Music, Art, ICT and Sport.

In Forms III-V, (Years 6 – 8), pupils are taught by specialist teachers in all subjects and the curriculum incorporates: English, Maths, Science, French, Humanities, Drama, Music, Art, Latin, PSHE, Sport. ICT is taught to pupils in Form III as a discrete subject but incorporated into subject areas in Forms IV and V. Greek is also offered in some years to pupils in Form V depending on their progress in other languages.

All pupils also study piano and one other orchestral instrument. As part of their Chorister commitment, they have a separate timetable of Song Schools and services that wrap around the school day and are delivered by the Music Department of the Abbey.

Pupils follow aspects of the National Curriculum, but the primary focus is on the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) syllabus, which itself is linked to the National Curriculum but provides a framework and focus ensuring pupils are prepared for the ISEB Pre Test in Form III and Senior School entrance examinations in Form V. In accordance with statutory requirements (2020) Relationships and Sex Education is taught through PSHE and Science.

Area	Subjects
Literacy	English; French; Latin; Greek; drama.
Mathematical	maths; biology; chemistry; physics; ICT.
Scientific	biology, chemistry, physics.
Technological	ICT, art & design.
Human, Social & Cultural	English; history; theology, philosophy & religion (TPR); French; Latin; Greek; music; PSHE; drama.
Physical	Games; Drama.
Aesthetic & Creative	art; drama; music; English, ICT.

Whilst considerable development and enrichment is provided in all key curriculum areas, additionally in all subject lessons and in co and extra-curricular activities and opportunities, there is a strong emphasis on the valuable interpersonal skills such as resilience and teamwork which are also gained axiomatically through choristership.

Additional Educational Needs (AEN) including those with EAL and higher attaining pupils

WACS complies with all legislative and best practice requirements to meet the individual needs of our pupils in accordance with the protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

Our curriculum is designed to provide access and opportunity for all pupils. If we believe it is necessary to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of individual pupil, we do so in consultation with parents. Due to the very unique characteristics and size of the school, we are able to tailor our teaching to the needs of each individual pupil. This level of focus and small class size allows those with AEN to be catered for within a teacher's subject planning. Planning reflects the needs of those identified with SEND and EAL requirements or those pupils who are higher attaining.

If a pupil displays signs of having special educational needs, a teacher, parent, and/or pupil may identify this to the Director of Studies who will liaise with the school's SENDCo. An assessment may be made in consultation with the teachers and strategies put in place to meet the pupil's needs within the class.

If a pupil's need is more severe, consideration is given to involving appropriate external agencies.

Should a student be in receipt of a statement or EHC plan, we will endeavour to provide them with an education that meets their needs as specified by their statement. However, it may be the case that some students in possession of an EHC plan or statement cannot be accommodated due to their needs being beyond the resources available, requiring greater readjustment than is reasonable. The unique demands of Chorister life at WACS provide some particularly specific additional challenges to all of our pupils and it is key to our admissions process that we assess a pupil's ability to cope with the wider demands of chorister and boarding life.

Rather than operating the more typical 'Gifted and Talented' activity approach, we believe that all pupils should be stretched and encouraged to learn beyond the classroom, recognising that all of our pupils are particularly talented in relation to music but may well also excel in other areas. This provision for pupils takes place in the classroom and is done in a manner whereby all pupils may benefit from the inclusion of particularly challenging and stretching material. Pupils are catered for as individuals by teachers who know them well and who have strong subject expertise. Through exposure and encouragement all pupils may begin to demonstrate characteristics of excellence.

Pupils may additionally be offered enrichment opportunities ranging from in-school book groups and activities through to the opportunity to attend relevant events, trips and talks. In addition, lists of suggested activities, reading lists etc are provided by subject teachers to individual pupils to encourage them to extend their interest in academic subjects, particularly when pupils are considering applying for Senior School scholarships.

Teaching and Learning at WACS

At Westminster Abbey Choir School, we believe that an outstanding school is one that enables all pupils to achieve their best. One where academic attainment is high and the academic progress of individuals is maximised; one where pupils' talents are recognised and nurtured; and one where individual learning needs are identified and met. Teachers provide curriculum planning in the following ways:

Long term and medium planning

- an overview of units and schemes of work to be covered
- the curriculum objectives to be covered

Short term planning

Teachers are expected to make weekly/half termly plans which give teaching intentions for that period. Short term plans should specify the following:

- learning objectives and pupils' activities
- directions for other adults (if present)
- scaffolding and or differentiation strategies for individuals and groups
- assessment opportunities

Curriculum and planning focus

It follows that our curriculum and lesson planning is designed to:

- provide opportunities for pupils to develop their character, focussing on our core aims of kindness to others, oneself and the environment
- provide opportunities to develop core skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy;
- provide opportunities to develop transferable skills across the wide range of subjects;
- provide opportunities to develop a deep knowledge and understanding of the essential facts about our world that also conveys British values;
- provide enriched experiences that our pupils can learn from;
- involves parents at every opportunity;
- extend pupils' involvement in the local community and beyond, developing their understanding of local, environmental and global issues;
- provide thorough coverage of the skills, concepts and knowledge as set out in the ISEB schemes of work for each subject area.

Within all our teaching and learning we look to always build on the following key aspects of effective teaching and learning:

- Building on what pupils already know
- Regular and effective verbal feedback
- Higher-order activities that challenge thinking
- High quality questions from adults
- Pupils being clear on the how why and what
- Explicit development of metacognitive behaviours
- The opportunity for pupils to construct their own learning
- Worthwhile classroom interactions and dialogue
- Variation of input during the process
- Regular opportunities to re-cap and summarise during the learning process

- Clear learning goals and students developed as assessment-ready learners
- Carefully selected scaffolding techniques

The Curriculum and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development

The School is a Christian school where pupils of all faiths and belief systems are encouraged to strive for academic excellence within a spirit of open and shared enquiry, whilst developing their individual potential and qualities of character so they can make a positive contribution to the world. As all pupils are Abbey choristers, they sing in the Abbey daily and a significant proportion hold Christian beliefs. All pupils, regardless of their personal beliefs, are led towards distinguishing right from wrong, to respect the law and towards acting consistently with their beliefs and with a view to the consequences of their own and others' actions.

We actively promote 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 does not allow the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject. We also take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that political issues are brought to attention of pupils always with a balanced presentation of opposing views. In accordance with the Prevent duty, the school also aims to educate to pupils about the dangers of extremism and to build resilience amongst them against the dangers of extremist views.

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education: (PSHE)

Our School is committed to providing a comprehensive programme of PSHE for all our pupils that reflects the school's aims and ethos. This programme is taught in all years, with PSHE in Forms I and II being delivered by the Class Teacher and in Forms III-V being delivered by the Deputy Head. In addition, we deliver our PSHE through assemblies and 'form time' to help our pupils acquire values and skills to enable them to develop independence and make informed and considered choices in life.

A comprehensive programme of study enables pupils to develop an understanding of public services and institutions and of how to take their place in modern democratic British society, whilst ensuring that our pupils understand, appreciate, and respect people of different cultures, faiths, and protected characteristics in modern democratic Britain. (See PSHE Policy)

In Relationship and Sex Education, pupils are encouraged and guided by moral principles and taught to recognise the value of family life, whilst being prepared to face the considerable challenges they will meet as they grow into young adults in an age-appropriate way. (See Relationship and Sex Education Policy)

Careers Guidance

Our School offers a programme of careers education for pupils in Forms IV and V as part of the PSHE curriculum that enables them to begin to make informed choices about a broad range of career options and supports them to recognise and fulfil their potential.

Life Outside the Classroom

Although the chorister schedule is heavily weighted towards musical activities, the School offers all pupils a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs which ensures that they learn, make progress and become young adults who will seek to embrace the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British Society. Such activities include outdoor adventurous activities, a diverse range of clubs on a Wednesday afternoon, House activities every other Monday afternoon, and wider educational excursions and trips to support the curriculum and choir tours both in this country and abroad.

Tracking progress

Progress of all students is tracked through a combination of formative and summative methods. Please see the Assessment policy for further details.

Scrutiny of planning and teaching

The Director of Studies is responsible for the scrutiny of planning, to ensure policy in practice and pupil progress. All planning will be monitored on a regular basis by the SLT

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for the standards of teaching across the school. Open-door teaching, peer-to peer reviews and collaboration in addition to regular formative observations and learning walks, ensure a consistent approach to teaching at the school.