

CURRICULUM POLICY

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff Responsible	Deputy Head (Academic) and Head of Prep
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
Date of Last Review	May 2026
Date of Next Review	May 2027

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

AIMS

This policy supports the school's academic strategy: to provide an aspirational learning journey that enables every student to achieve academic excellence beyond expectations. To meet this aim, this policy provides a framework that supports students to develop intellectual curiosity, resilience, independence and academic self-efficacy through a curriculum that:

- Is carefully sequenced and knowledge-rich, delivered through excellent teaching
- Challenges and supports all students to achieve aspirational academic success, with no ceiling placed on achievement
- Provides meaningful enrichment opportunities that extends learning beyond the classroom, stretching, supporting and inspiring all learners

WIDER REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education Regulations 2014
- Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook, September 2025.
- DfE's framework guidance for Character Education 2019.

RELATED INTERNAL POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Curriculum Plan
- Teaching, Marking and Assessment Policy
- Reporting and Pupil Progress policy
- Homework Policy
- Co-Curricular Policy
- SEND Policy
- EAL Policy
- Highly Able Policy
- Relationship and Sex Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

St Mary's School curriculum is designed with clearly defined and ambitious outcomes at each stage of a student's journey. These outcomes reflect our commitment to enabling all students to develop as confident and independent scholars, equipped with the knowledge, skills and intellectual curiosity to learn and make excellent progress in order to achieve success beyond expectations.

A high-expectations culture underpins the St Mary's curriculum. We believe that all students are capable of aspirational academic success and of developing as confident and independent scholars. Through a value-added approach, each student is challenged and supported to make exceptional progress from her

individual starting point, ensuring that she achieves beyond expectations and fulfils her academic potential. Equally, we recognise that learning thrives within a collaborative environment; our curriculum is designed to foster a strong sense of community, collaboration and shared aspiration.

Foundational to achieving this intent is the development of character strengths that underpin both academic success and a strong community: intellectual curiosity and adventure, resilience, independence and self-efficacy, teamwork and kindness, to enable students to engage deeply with their learning, respond positively to challenge and contribute positively to the life of the school.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

St Mary's curriculum is carefully designed to ensure that knowledge and skills are developed progressively over time, enabling students to learn deeply and make sustained progress throughout their educational journey.

Curriculum planning is underpinned by the following principles:

1. A culture of aspiration and high expectations for all: The curriculum is designed to promote academic ambition and secure strong foundations for success
 - Depth of understanding: The curriculum is designed to secure deep and lasting understanding, enabling students to develop strong subject knowledge and the confidence to think critically and independently.
 - Cumulative knowledge: Learning is designed to be cumulative, with key concepts revisited and strengthened over time, ensuring that students retain knowledge and make meaningful connections across topics and disciplines.
2. Challenge and enable intellectual growth: The curriculum is structured to develop students as independent learners who think critically and engage deeply with their subjects.
 - Sequenced learning: Content is organised in a coherent and logical sequence, allowing students to build upon prior knowledge and develop increasingly sophisticated understanding within each subject.
 - Retrieval and application: Opportunities are planned for students to revisit prior learning, apply knowledge in new and unfamiliar contexts, and develop the ability to transfer their understanding across different areas of study.
 - Cumulative knowledge: Learning builds progressively over time, supporting long-term retention and deeper intellectual engagement.
3. Prepare students to be future ready: The curriculum equips students with the knowledge, skills and adaptability required for success beyond school
 - Application and transfer: Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge in varied and increasingly complex contexts, preparing them for further study and real-world challenges.
 - Preparation for future learning: Curriculum design ensures that students are well-prepared for the next stage of their education, developing the knowledge, skills and intellectual resilience required for continued academic success and future readiness.

This structured approach to planning ensures that the curriculum is delivered consistently and supports the school's commitment to high expectations, intellectual growth and value-added progress.

CURRICULUM ENTITLEMENT

The curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced, taking into consideration the interests, ages, aptitudes and needs of all students, including those who have an EHC plan. The curriculum is grounded within fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The curriculum prepares students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life within British society.

St Mary's does not follow the National Curriculum but keeps abreast of national curriculum developments. Heads of Department and Subject Leaders are responsible for work within each subject.

Broad

The curriculum is broadly based, each student is given access to a wide array of experiences, including: linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, spiritual, physical, aesthetic and creative.

Balanced

The weighting of each element of learning and experience is carefully considered and give an appropriate weighting. All students acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.

Ambitious and Challenging

The curriculum is stretching for all students and allows them to develop mastery of concepts and skills across all subjects. The curriculum supports the development of high standards of oracy, literacy, and numeracy across all areas. This includes students who are below and above compulsory school age, which is appropriate to their educational needs.

Inclusive and Adaptive

The curriculum is accessible to all students and designed to meet a wide range of needs. Key to this is teachers knowing their students' needs and using this knowledge to adapt their planning, teaching and assessment to ensure that all students are supported to engage successfully with their learning and develop confidence and independence. Adaptive teaching is best achieved through a clear identification of learning intentions, provision of support when needed and effective use of formative assessment.

Continuous

The curriculum is mapped across all key stages to ensure continuity in learning and a smooth transition between phases. Each stage builds on prior learning, supporting sustained progress and enabling all students to achieve success through a value-added approach.

Future Ready

The curriculum includes developing digital literacy, adaptability and the ability to apply learning in real-world and global contexts.

CAREERS CURRICULUM

Careers guidance is an essential part of the School curriculum and more information can be seen in the Careers Policy available on request. The careers curriculum ensures that all Senior House students have timely access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner; enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and helps to encourage them to 'know themselves' and fulfil their potential.

PSHCEE CURRICULUM

The curriculum incorporates Personal, Social, Health (Physical and Mental), and Economic Education for all students. The PSHCEE course reflects the School's aims and ethos and encourages respect for all pupils. Citizenship Education is incorporated within the delivery of PSHCEE, individual subjects and co-curricular activities and pays particular regard to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 which are as follows: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation. The curriculum is also designed to develop in every young person the values, skills and behaviours they need to get on in life and function as adult citizens within British Society, using the DfE's framework guidance for Character Education 2019. For more information, please see the PSHCEE Policy and Scheme of Work, which is available on request.

RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE)

The School provides RSE in the PSHCEE curriculum for all students, in which students are encouraged and guided by moral principles. A full statement of the School's RSE Policy is available to parents on the School website. All students study the biological aspects of human reproduction as a compulsory part of their Science curriculum.

SPRITUAL MORAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is included within the curriculum at all Key Stages. All staff are asked to consider how students' learning in their subject area enables them to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. The SMSC dimension is particularly extended in PSHCEE and Religious Studies and multicultural themes are explored in many subject areas. For more information on this please see the British Values policy, both of which are available on request.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Religious Studies is compulsory for all students up to the end of Key Stage 3. Any request to withdraw a student from the Religious Studies programme or related activities must be made to the Head in writing.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The School has been designated by statutory instrument as having a particular religious character: Anglican. Prospective parents are informed of the School's designated religious status.

All students are expected to take part in collective worship. The School has a programme of collective worship involving whole-school assemblies and smaller group assemblies.

POLITICAL EDUCATION

The promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the School is forbidden. Political issues are introduced in a number of courses and assemblies. These are always presented in a balanced way, in keeping with fundamental British values.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE) AND GAMES

All students (including the Sixth Form) are expected to take part in the School's Physical Education and Games programme. Students can only be excused from PE and Games lessons for medical reasons, for which a note from a parent will suffice, or other reasons agreed with the School.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ENRICHMENT

The curriculum extends beyond the classroom through a rich co-curricular programme, which is integral to developing intellectual curiosity, resilience, leadership and future readiness. All students in Prep, Senior House and Sixth Form must participate in clubs each term. Students are encouraged to lead clubs and activities where appropriate.

Enrichment activities, such as educational visits and subject-, careers- or general interest-related workshops provide further opportunities for students to engage in the curriculum beyond the classroom.

SENIOR HOUSE ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

Senior House planning takes place in three phases.

Long term planning: The whole-school curriculum map is reviewed annually, with subject provision and curriculum time allocated by the Head and Deputy Head (Academic), in consultation with the SLT and Heads of Department.

Medium term planning: Heads of Department oversee programmes of study appropriate to the age and needs of students, supported by schemes of work developed collaboratively by teaching staff. These set out core knowledge, skills and objectives, ensuring that the curriculum is engaging, coherent and tailored to our students. Schemes of work incorporate planned opportunities for assessment, including formative assessment and feedback, to monitor progress, identify next steps and support students in developing independence and confidence in their learning. Departments regularly review and refine schemes of work to ensure effectiveness. While informed by the National Curriculum (KS3) and examination specifications (KS4–5), the curriculum extends beyond these to reflect the school's aims and values.

Short-term planning: Teachers plan lessons on a weekly or daily basis, setting clear learning objectives and selecting appropriate resources and activities. Planning takes into account the needs of individual students, ensuring that all learners are supported and challenged effectively. Assessment is used to inform teaching and ensure that learning is responsive to the needs of all students, supporting sustained progress and a value-added approach.

SENIOR HOUSE NUMERACY AND LITERACY

All Senior House staff contribute to the development of all students speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills. This requires creating space within lessons to allow students to practice, giving clear feedback and by holding students to a high standard.

The School have made the advancement of these skills a priority and staff training has focussed on how the skills can be built within lessons. Lessons in literacy are included in the curriculum in Year 7, Year 10 and Year 12 as part of a broader curriculum in the SPARKlers, SPARKs and IGNITE programmes.

PREP DEPARTMENT ORGANISATION AND PLANNING

We plan our curriculum in three phases. We agree a long-term plan for each subject within each year group. This indicates what topics are to be taught in each term, and to which groups of children. Our curriculum map, which is reviewed annually, attempts to link subjects, where possibly, to broaden the students understanding and develop their learning.

Medium term plans give clear guidance on the core knowledge and objectives around which teachers can develop exciting and stimulating lessons to promote the development of students' knowledge, understanding and skills. These plans also include activities linked to our SMS Spirt values. Medium term plans may suggest teaching strategies that can be used when teaching each topic, including retrieval practice.

Short-term plans are written by our teachers either weekly or daily and in a style to suit the individual teacher. These are used to set out the learning objectives for each session, and to identify what resources and activities will be used and take into account provision for the differing needs of the students.

In the Early Years, we adopt an inter-disciplinary topic approach to curriculum planning based on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook, September 2025. Our school fully supports the principle that young children learn through play, and by engaging in well-planned, structured activities.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 we base our plans on the National Curriculum 2014. In Key Stage 1, this is largely delivered by the form teacher, with specialist teachers for Music, Computing, French and PE. At Key Stage 2 we teach all subjects separately either by form teachers or by specialist teachers.

PREP DEPARTMENT NUMERACY AND LITERACY

In accordance with National Curriculum guidelines, and in addition to the individual subject Schemes of Work, we promote the teaching of core skills across all subjects:

Numeracy and Mathematics

Teachers develop students' numeracy and mathematical reasoning in relevant subjects so that they understand and appreciate the importance of mathematics. Students are taught to apply arithmetic skills fluently when solving mathematical reasoning problems. Students will develop age-appropriate understanding of key concepts such as, place value, measure, shape, fractions, decimals and percentages. Stretch and challenge opportunities are a core part of the curriculum and students are

encouraged to become independent mathematicians using a range of resources including online platforms and opportunities such as national Maths challenges and competitions.

Language and Literacy

Teachers develop students' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary as integral aspects of the teaching of every subject. English is both a subject in its own right and the medium for teaching; for students, fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects.

Spoken Language

Students are encouraged to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently using standard English in lessons and assemblies. They learn to justify ideas with reasons; ask questions to check understanding; develop vocabulary and build knowledge; negotiate; evaluate and build on the ideas of others; and select the appropriate register for effective communication. They are taught to give well-structured descriptions and explanations and develop their understanding through speculating, hypothesising and exploring ideas. This enables them to clarify their thinking as well as organise their ideas for writing.

Reading and Writing

Teachers develop students' reading and writing in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge. Students are taught to read fluently, understand extended prose (both fiction and non-fiction) and are encouraged to read for pleasure. We promote wider reading through use of the Accelerated Reader Scheme and by provision of a variety of genres of books in classrooms and libraries and set clear expectations for reading at home. Students develop the stamina and skills to write at length, with accurate spelling and punctuation. They are taught the correct use of grammar and build on what they have been taught to expand the range of their writing and the variety of the grammar they use. The writing they do includes narratives, explanations, descriptions, comparisons, summaries and evaluations: such writing supports them in rehearsing, understanding and consolidating what they have heard or read.

Vocabulary Development

Students' acquisition and command of vocabulary is key to their learning and progress across the whole curriculum. Teachers develop vocabulary actively in lessons building systematically on students' current knowledge. They increase students' store of words in general and make links between known and new vocabulary, discussing the shades of meaning in similar words. In this way, students expand the vocabulary choices that are available to them when they write. In addition, it is vital for students' comprehension that they understand the meanings of words they meet in their reading across all subjects. It is particularly important to induct students into the language which defines each subject in its own right, such as accurate mathematical and scientific language.

FOREST SCHOOL

Forest School offers learners opportunities to achieve and develop confidence, independence and resilience through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment. The skills learnt can be applied in the classroom to develop and extend learning.

Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider curriculum and is led by accredited Forest School Trained Leaders.

Nursery and Reception attend a weekly session and students in Key Stage 1 and 2 have an opportunity to attend Forest School in CORI sessions.

TEACHING

Teachers should plan and deliver lessons and sequences of lessons that reflect the following principles.

- Set excellent expectations for learning and behaviour
- Promote excellent progress and outcomes
- Demonstrate excellent subject and curriculum knowledge
- Plan and teach well-structured lessons
- Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all students
- Make accurate and productive use of assessment

CURRICULUM PLAN

The curriculum plan is reviewed annually to ensure it meets the needs of the students. The current Curriculum Plan is available on request.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

The curriculum that we teach in the Early Years classes meets the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Outcomes, 2025. We provide a programme of activities for students in Early Years which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills.

Assessment forms an important part of the future curriculum planning for each child from Nursery upwards. At the end of a student's Reception year, the teacher completes an Early Years Profile.

The three 'prime' areas:

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development

The four 'specific' areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

KEY STAGE 1

Subjects

Core	Core
English & Phonics	Computing
Mathematics	Topic (History and Geography)
Science	Music
Physical Education	Art
PSHCEE	French
Religious Studies	CORI

KEY STAGE 2

Subjects

Core	Core
English	Drama Year 5 & 6 only
Guided Reading/ Vocabulary Skills	Computing
Mathematics	History
Science	Geography
Physical Education	Art
PSHCEE	STEM
French	Music
Religious Studies	CORI
Thinking Skills Year 5 only	

KEY STAGE 3

Subjects

Core (Year 7)	
English	Computing
Mathematics	History
Science	Geography
Physical Education	Art and Textiles
PSHCEE (including Careers)	Food Technology
French	Drama
Religious Studies	Music
Literacy and Study Skills	
Core (Year 8)	
English	Computing
Mathematics	History
Science	Geography
Physical Education	Food Technology
PSHCEE (including Careers)	Drama
French	Music
Religious Studies	Spanish

Dance	Art and Textiles
Core (Year 9)	
English	Computing
Mathematics	History
Science	Geography
Physical Education	Food Technology
PSHCEE (including Careers)	Drama
French	Music
Religious Studies	Spanish
Dance	Textiles
Art	

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

All students are given the opportunity to study a Modern Foreign Language. In Prep, from Nursery – Year 6 girls study French. In Year 7 the students study French. In Year 8 they add Spanish to their Languages curriculum and in Year 10 they are encouraged to study at least one of these languages at GCSE. In some cases, students will not study a Modern Foreign Language. This allows the student to access additional supports in keeping with their SEN requirements as identified in their Provision Passport or EHC plan. During this time, they will receive extra support in core skills such as literacy. For more information on support for students on a reduced curriculum please refer to the SEND Policy. Some students elect to take optional language subjects in addition to the normal curriculum (e.g. Polish). The School will support these where possible.

KEY STAGE 4

Subjects

* Denotes possible adapted pathway for a small group of students

** Final cohort completing in June 2027

Core	Option
English Language (IGCSE) and English Literature (GCSE)	History (GCSE)
Mathematics (IGCSE)	Geography (GCSE)
At least two Sciences (choose from Biology, Chemistry, Physics) (GCSE)	Art and Design (GCSE)
*English Language (Functional Skills)	Food Preparation and Nutrition (GCSE)
*Mathematics (Entry Level Certificate)	Drama (GCSE)
Physical Education (Core)	Music (GCSE)
Study Skills and Literacy (Y10)	Textiles (GCSE)
PSHCEE including Careers	French (GCSE)
	German (GCSE)**
	Spanish (GCSE)
	Business (GCSE)
	Computer Science (IGCSE)**
	Religious Studies (GCSE)
	Physical Education (GCSE)
	Further Mathematics (GCSE)
	Media (GCSE)
	Dance (GCSE)

Core GCSE Subjects

All students take core subjects of Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, and two Science subjects, choosing from Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

GCSE Options System

Students will additionally select four optional subjects at GCSE level. The School encourages students to choose a broad range of options subjects, including a Humanities subject and a Modern Foreign Language. Students receive support and guidance from the School to help them select appropriate options, considering both the breadth of subjects, and strengths of the individual student.

The School aims to allow all students to secure their preferred option choices but sadly this is not always possible and as a result some students are asked to select 'reserve' choices.

Further Mathematics

Further Mathematics is taught as part of the options subjects and students can elect to take the examination.

KEY STAGE 5

Sixth Form curriculum consists of more than just academic study and we offer a programme of activities for students which is appropriate to their needs. In addition to the A Level lessons, there are a number of lessons and activities that the students have in order to enrich their education and give them valuable experiences and preparation for independent adult life.

Subjects

** Final cohort completing in June 2027

Core	Option
Physical Education (Core)	English Literature
Ignite Enrichment Programme including:	Mathematics
• PSHCEE including Careers and Life Skills	Further Mathematics
• Study skills	Biology
• Digital literacy (Digital Human)	Chemistry
• Young Enterprise	Physics
• Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)	Computer Science
• Cambridge OCR Level 3 Oracy AAQ	Religious Studies
	History
	Geography
	Economics
	French
	Spanish
	Fine Art
	Food Science and Nutrition (Level 3 Diploma)
	Drama and Theatre
	Media Studies
	Music
	Government and Politics
	Psychology
	Business
	Physical Education
	Sociology
	Textile and Design
	History of Art**

Option System

Students choose to study three A Levels, alongside one of three academic choices:

- Further Maths as an additional A Level
- The Extended Project Qualification, worth half an A Level
- Cambridge OCR Level 3 Oracy AAQ worth 25% of an A Level

Subjects at A Level have entry requirements that vary between subjects. These include performance at GCSE in related subjects and prior study. The School aims to allow all students to secure their preferred option choices but this is not always possible and as a result students are asked to select 'reserve' choices.