

CURRICULUM POLICY

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Introduction

Our purpose is to teach our pupils knowledge, skills, and values to thrive and confidently contribute at Oakham School and beyond. We will provide exceptional, contemporary co-education with a global outlook, offering experiences to learn in a caring and inspiring boarding and day community.

We encourage all pupils and staff to articulate and embody our core values, which shape our curriculum. *Care* lies at the heart of everything we do. *Courage* and *contribution* are behaviours we wish to inspire, while we want pupils to seek and find *connection* in all aspects of their education and future lives.

Our Strategic Objective is to deliver an innovative, ambitious and challenging education fit for the 21st Century; one that fosters a love of learning through a broad, balanced and connected curriculum underpinned by our core values. We believe this objective is already well met with our current curriculum but will improve further as curriculum design continues.



1. Academic Curriculum

Across the School, there will be an increased focus on the explicit teaching of knowledge, skills and values, and the development of healthy habits through our Connected Curriculum. We are mindful of the growing importance of quality of grades versus quantity of grades, as well as the benefits of providing pragmatic choices for pupils in the number of subjects studied. It is hoped that this combination should lead to greater academic progress by pupils, while also promoting their emotional and physical development.

These changes will encompass academic, pastoral, and co-curricular learning, and are designed with purpose to enable positive outcomes for all pupils; a holistic approach mindful of promoting pupil mental health and wellbeing throughout, enabled through a Connected Curriculum.

The Connected Curriculum maps five key skills across our curricula to ensure pupils embed and master these competencies as appropriate as they move through each stage. The five skills are Communication, Social, Self-management, Research, and Thinking. These skills are drawn from, and strengthen, the IB Approaches to Learning (ATL) and Oakham School's objectives and values.

In the **Lower School** (Forms 1 and 2), pupils study a full range of subjects, including Mathematics, English, Modern and Classical Languages, Science, Humanities, Computer Science and Creative and Performing Arts.

The **Middle School** (Forms 3, 4 and 5) curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced, and to widen pupils' knowledge, understanding and experiences.

- In Form 3, pupils continue to study a full range of subjects. This develops their academic skills and allows them to explore their own specific interests and strengths and provides a sound basis from which they will be able to choose their GCSE courses.
- In Forms 4 and 5, pupils follow courses in either GCSE, IGCSE or Cambridge Nationals (in Sports Science only). They are required to study Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, at least two of Biology, Chemistry and Physics, a Modern Foreign Language, plus a selection of optional subjects, making up eight-to-ten GCSEs in total, with the majority studying nine GCSEs. It is possible for pupils to take Dual Award Science (called Trilogy) or the three Separate Sciences at GCSE.

This flexibility in number of GCSEs selected will benefit those who would previously have considered a reduction in subjects owing to aptitude or total academic load, creating time for learning outside of the classroom, a better balance of work, rest and play and improved likelihood of thriving in all they do.

The available subjects ensure that pupils maintain a broad range of skills and subjects, whilst allowing some specialisation, in a fashion that enables their successful progression to the Upper School. Study periods will also be used to strengthen pupil skills through the Connected Curriculum.



Results from Summer 2025 – the first cohort to benefit from this flexibility of GCSE subjects studied – showed significantly positive value-added outcomes, supporting this approach as a highly effective curriculum offering for Form 4 and 5.

In the **Upper School** (Forms 6 and 7), pupils may choose between the IB Diploma Programme (IB DP) or from a selection of standalone courses (including A-level and BTEC). Most Upper School pupils opting for the standalone courses route will select the equivalent of 3 A-levels, the normal practice at this stage and common in the sector. The options available are reviewed annually to ensure that this remains the case. The provision of academic enhancement activities, such as Extended Projects (EPQs) and other department-based opportunities, are reviewed regularly. This includes provision for elite pupils aiming for Oxbridge or other competitive institutions or courses.

Since September 2023, each A-level and BTEC choice has received 7 lessons per week, one more than in previous years. This provides the opportunity for subjects to offer greater extension, expansion, and support for pupils, and complements the more specific focus on Connected Curriculum skills. Pupils, just as at GCSE, will also receive the statutory RSE curriculum in a timetabled lesson every two weeks. Tutors support this through their regular one-to-one discussions with tutees, alongside twice weekly contact with their tutees as a tutor group.

In September 2025 Oakham School stopped offering A-level studies for the incoming Form 6 in French, Spanish, German, Latin and Greek, instead offering these five subjects in the IB DP as HL standalone certificates. Studied in the same sets as pupils studying the full IB DP, this change allows set sizes to increase, improving pupil learning experiences whilst helping the School to act in a financially responsible manner and safeguard our support for ancient and modern foreign languages. This change will result in pupils gaining access to university studies via A-levels, IBDP, a combination of A-levels and IB HL Certificates (typically 2 A-levels and 1 HL Certificate) if languages are studied or BTECs; a flexible offering that allows pupils to tailor their route their Upper School as best they can to suit their interests and academic strengths.

Detailed curricula for all academic courses are the responsibility of the Head of Department. The different needs of a diverse cohort of pupil are met by employing effective contemporary pedagogies, enabling all pupils to be as academically successful as possible.

We are mindful not to undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We consider this in our academic, pastoral, and co-curricular activities, and are aware of where in pupil's learning these values might be challenged, and how to address them with sensitivity and clarity.

2. Form 4 and Form 5 Options

Pupils select one different subject from each of block A, B, C, D and E.

Most pupils will take 9 or 10 GCSE subjects; 8 GCSEs can be taken following discussion with the Head of Middle School, Mr Nicholas Favill. Pupils leave one block empty if intending to take 9 GCSEs.

All students	Mathematics English Literature English Language Physical Education (practical – non examined)	Pastoral Curriculum
All students: science options	Double Award Science: Physics, Chemistry, Biology (two GCSEs) Increase to three separate GCSEs in Biology, Chemistry and Physics, by picking science in block B or D. Pupils can pick the triple science option and attend lessons in two of the three sciences. This would give two GCSEs in either Biology and Chemistry or Biology and Physics or Physics and Chemistry.	
Block A	French Spanish German <i>Native speakers of French, Spanish or German will sit the non-native GCSE in their native language: they will not attend lessons in their native language but will receive exam preparation before the GCSE examinations. Pupils are welcome to pick a non-native language in this block as long as they have studied it for at least one year.</i>	
Block B	Classical Civilisation Geography History Religion & Philosophy Triple Science (increases Double Award Science to 3 GCSEs) Two single sciences: Chem & Phys: Chem & Bio: Bio & Phys	
Block C	Geography History French Physical Education (Cambridge National Level 2)	
Block D	Art – Painting and Mixed Media Art – 3D Design Art – Textiles Design Technology Drama Dance Greek and Latin (known as Gratin - 2 GCSEs) Latin Music Physical Education (GCSE) Triple Science (increases Double Award Science to 3 GCSEs) Two single sciences: Chem & Phys: Chem & Bio: Bio & Phys	
Block E	Art – Painting and Mixed Media Citizenship Computer Science Design Technology	Drama Geography Physical Education (GCSE)



3. Form 6 & 7 IB Diploma Programme Options

Subjects are organized according to the IB Diploma subject groups. IBDP pupils should select one subject from each of the six columns, choosing 3 subjects at Higher Level (HL) and 3 at Standard Level (SL).

Subjects in the same vertical column are taught at the same time, hence only one subject from each column can be chosen.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Mixed Group
Language A	Language (Other)	Individuals & Societies	Sciences	Mathematics	Arts/ Electives
English A Literature HL/SL	German A Language & Literature HL French B HL/SL German B HL/SL Greek HL/SL Spanish B HL/SL Spanish <i>ab initio</i> SL	Business Management HL Economics HL/SL Geography HL/SL History HL/SL Psychology HL/SL Philosophy HL/SL	Biology HL/SL Chemistry HL Computer Science HL/SL Environmental Systems & Societies HL/SL Physics HL Sports, Exercise & Health Science HL	Mathematics: Analysis & Approaches (AA) HL Mathematics: Applications & Interpretations (AI) HL Mathematics: Applications & Interpretations (AI) SL	Biology HL (Gp4) Design Technology HL/SL (Gp4) Geography HL/SL (Gp3) Global Politics HL/SL (Gp3) Latin* HL/SL (Gp2) Spanish B HL (Gp2) Theatre* HL/SL (Gp6) Visual Arts HL/SL (Gp6)

Notes: *For timetable reasons, selecting HL Mathematics with HL English is not possible.*

**Latin HL/SL has some flexibility in placement (group 2 or the mixed group dependent on numbers)*

+Theatre may only be offered if a sufficient number of pupils choose it.

All pupils must choose Mathematics and English Literature at either HL or SL.

SL Mathematics pupils will follow the Applications & Interpretation (AI) course.

German students wishing to comply with KMK regulations should confirm with their local authority, but they will need to take Mathematics OR Bio/Chem/Phys OR a language at HL. They should take two languages, one an A course. All subjects listed above in group 3 are accepted. It is advised that pupils check subject choices with the universities of their region.



4. Form 6 & 7 A-level/BTEC Options

Pupils pick three subjects, no more than one subject from each column below. Some pupils will do four subjects in agreement with the Head of Upper School or Director of Studies.

A	B	D	E
Business	Biology	Biology	Art & Design
Chemistry	Critical and Contextual Studies	Chemistry	Business
Design & Technology	Mathematics	Economics	Classical Civilisation
Drama and Theatre	Maths & Further Maths	English Literature	Computer Science
Economics	Music	Geography	Economics
Geography	Physical Education	History	English Literature
History	Politics	Maths & Further Maths+	Geography
English Literature		Philosophy	Mathematics
Geography		Politics	Physics
Religion and Philosophy		Psychology	
	French B HL IB DP		
Spanish B HL IB DP	German B HL IB DP		
Latin HL IB DP	Spanish B HL IB DP		
BTEC Sport and Exercise Science [^]	BTEC Sport and Exercise Science [^]	BTEC Business Management [~]	

Notes: +If pupils wish to study **A-level Further Mathematics**, they select 'Maths and Further Maths' in both columns B and D. The course includes A-level Mathematics, so do not select Mathematics elsewhere. Further Mathematics **must** be taken as a fourth A-level.

[^]BTEC Sport and Exercise Science must be selected in both columns A and B, as it is the equivalent to two A-level courses.

[~]BTEC Business Management may be chosen as the equivalent to one A-level subject.

^{**} Latin and German A level may only be offered if a sufficient number of students choose it.



5. Wider Curricula

Oakham aims to provide pupils with a Connected Curriculum that encourages their development through a broad range of activities and skills, envisaging one curriculum through which the range of school activities is delivered.

The Connected Curriculum exists to provide pupils with a variety of challenging and fulfilling experiences, to stimulate their interests and skills - perhaps some of which they did not previously know they had - to encourage them on occasion to put their energies to the service of others, and to develop aptitudes of teamwork and leadership. Sport, Music, Drama and Activities all have priority time within the school day to nurture inspiration and excellence.

As pupils go through the school and start to develop their specialism some may need to spend more time in a particular area. This is supported through various elite programmes. Great care is always taken to ensure both short- and longer-term views are taken to support pupils in their aspirations.

6. Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) including Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Tutorial Programme

The aim of our pastoral care is to provide a supportive, safe, and challenging environment for every pupil. Houses are the focal point of pastoral support and should be places in which pupils feel safe, confident and happy.

Virtually all members of staff are responsible for a tutor group, and it is through a combination of tutor group activities and the Pastoral Curriculum – through weekly lessons timetabled throughout the normal weekly timetable, delivered by trained teachers – that PSHE including RSE is taught.

Tutor groups are arranged by year group by House to help ensure appropriate topics are being covered at the right time for each pupil. There are a range of external specialist speakers to support the tutorial programme and days off-timetable allow deeper exploration in topics such as e-Safety, adolescent mental health, developing resilience and the understanding of others, with particular regard to protected characteristics.

The PSHE including RSE policy gives greater details on this topic.

7. Careers

The School's Careers provision, described in more detail in the Careers Education policy, ensures that impartial and broad advice and information is given to all pupils, in order that they have the best possible opportunity to access post-school options; this provision is also available to pupils after they have left the School.



8. Special Additional Educational Needs (SAEN)

The provision for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or Learning Support needs is detailed in both the Inclusion and the Language policies and requires that all pupils are facilitated to access the curriculum and its delivery at all levels.

9. Engendering a culture of curiosity: scholarship and enrichment

The provision for our most able and enthusiastic pupils occurs formally and/or informally across all year groups, as scholarship – the curiosity to ask questions, the insight and inspiration to think broadly and the drive to seek answers - is encouraged for all.

Formally, academic scholars' seminars run throughout the academic year, challenging each year group to consider off-syllabus questions and learn to critically challenge their own ideas, as well as others. This programme is supported by the Senior Academic Mentor who oversees the whole programme, and a Section Academic Mentor, who tailors seminars to pupils in their section of the school (Lower, Middle or Upper), ensuring that the right level of support and challenge is available for each scholar. Scholars also benefit from an annual trip for their section, exploring advanced ideas through the destinations visited.

Informally, there is a wider range of opportunities for pupils who want to enhance their learning and engage with subjects outside of the classroom. These include external competitions and preparation for competitive universities (such as Oxbridge) or competitive courses (such as medicine and related courses, and for engineering).

All pupils benefit from our extensive academic enrichment programme, which ensures every Oakhamian benefits from a weekly opportunity to think more deeply about a subject of their choice, inspiring them through off-syllabus academic challenge and exploration.

10. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The School uses Microsoft Teams as our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) across all year groups, allowing pupils and staff ready access from any device. All homework details are shared via Teams Assignments, helping pupils to manage their workflow effectively. Software packages are used across the School to help pupils access high-quality resources and to develop their academic knowledge and skills, and pupils use Microsoft Office to prepare written documents or presentations.

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to evolve at a rapid pace, it is important that schools stay up-to-date with developments, and are as aware as possible of the risk and opportunities this new technology brings. We have responded in a manner that provides clarity for teachers and pupils; see our AI policy for more details.

We are in the process of rolling out leased devices across the School to support digitally-enhanced learning.



- Form 6 currently benefit from this arrangement, with approximately 50% of teaching in lessons using devices. This helps vital digital skills to develop while retaining handwriting dexterity needed to successfully sit paper-based external exams.
- The roll out expands in September 2026 to Form 3, 4 and 6, with the current Form 6 continuing into Form 7.

We do not plan to introduce devices to the Lower School currently, where we believe foundational handwriting skills and self-management skills need to develop without constant classroom device use, but IT skills are still developed through the curriculum with care.

11. Future Curriculum Development

For pupils to understand how to learn and make the best progress possible, drawing on contemporary educational advances in what works, for instance, understanding and employing cognitive load theory, metacognition and neuroscience to help them learn.

For pupils and staff to continue to make effective use of age-appropriate digital learning software and hardware – aided by our leased device roll out – to aide their learning whilst also developing life-long IT skills, as well as centrally managed learning resources.

For all teachers – novice, developing and established – to be suitably expert in teaching knowledge and skills, including the evolution of the Connected Curriculum (Communication, Social, Self-Management, Research and Thinking). For teachers to be suitably expert in digital teaching, using software and hardware effectively themselves, while facilitating effective digital learning by pupils.

Working to develop a coherent and embraced approach to staff development, linking individuals' Performance Review and Development (PR&D) to effective professional learning and development (CPD).

Deputy Head (Academic)
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