



MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

FOUNDED BY WILLIAM OF WAYNFLETE, 1480

Curriculum Policy



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Magdalen College School aims to inspire in all its pupils a desire to learn, flourish and serve. This policy is designed to contribute to all three of these, with particular effect over the way pupils learn.

The school has a strong academic tradition which it is committed to maintaining: the curriculum is reviewed regularly to take account of national developments and internal needs. This is achieved through discussion at Heads of Department meetings, Master's Advisory Committee meetings, Policy Committee meetings and the Governors' Education Committee which feeds into the Governing Body. Curriculum review committees have been established periodically, and reviews have taken place in this way in 2009, 2013, and 2016: their recommendations have been approved at the aforementioned meetings and are reflected in this policy.

We aim to provide an outstanding intellectual, cultural, spiritual and physical education, combining the best of both the traditional and the modern, in order to equip our pupils for the future and, in particular, for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society, as also for any other society which they might choose to experience.

Heads of Department and subject co-ordinators draw up schemes of work which actively promote fundamental British values and which enable all pupils to learn and make progress as they move through the school. Through inspirational and interactive teaching, the school fosters a culture of scholarship and seeks to embody the University's vision of "illuminatio": encouraging pupils to develop a passion for learning, a spirit of enquiry and an ability to engage in independent study.

In order to meet these aims, the school provides a range of choices combined with a core curriculum until the end of GCSE studies in the Fifth Form, thus keeping pupils' options open as long as possible. Some subjects present pupils for international GCSEs which are known as IGCSEs.

The school week runs from Monday to Friday with 8 periods each day. We refer to the different year groups as follows:

J1	Year 3	
J2	Year 4	
J3	Year 5	
J4	Year 6	
2 nd Form	Year 7	
3 rd Form	Year 8	
Lower 4 th	Year 9	
Upper 4 th	Year 10	
5 th Form	Year 11	GCSE/IGCSE exams
Lower 6 th	Year 12	
Upper 6 th	Year 13	A Level exams

J1-J4 (Years 3-6)

The Junior School curriculum is designed to provide challenge and balance. Whilst following the broad outline of the National Curriculum, we seek to enrich and extend pupils' interest and achievement in a variety of subject areas, as well as preparing them for the school's own 11+ examination. There is an emphasis on critical thinking skills with pupils studying activities such as problem solving exercises in Mathematics and coding during ICT.

Pupils receive a firm grounding in Mathematics and Numeracy and English and Literacy and specialist teachers (sometimes including input from Senior School teachers) nurture pupils' interests and further their development in other subjects such as Geography, History and Theology. Speaking and Listening is delivered in a number of lessons such as English and History whilst pupils are able to opt for a debating club in the Michaelmas term. Many pupils also opt to attend LAMDA lessons. As pupils progress through the Junior School they are expected to develop their independent learning, and project work is completed in J3 (Year 5) under careful guidance. Design Technology is taught in the specialist lab in the senior school and pupils have the opportunity to use the Senior School facilities in Science. French is studied throughout the Junior School and Latin in J4 (Year 6), with optional clubs currently offered in other modern foreign languages. ICT is taught as a separate subject in each year group with the Junior School having its own ICT room and set of iPads. Physical Education and Games form an integral part of the curriculum and, like Music, are taught by specialists from the age of seven. From September 2017, Thursday afternoon has become the Activities Afternoon, which aims to give the pupils more balance and breadth within the curriculum, whilst encouraging them to learn new skills and areas of expertise. The activities include Drama, Strategy Games, Forest School, Young Enterprise, Martial Arts, Movie Making and Sports Leadership. In addition, there are many opportunities to enrich class work through clubs, competitions, trips and workshops.

2nd Form – Lower Fourth (Years 7-9)

These years provide a broad, common base including a foundation in creative subjects, and Year 9 is the point at which pupils make their first subject choices, thus allowing exposure to a range of subjects before final choices for GCSE exams are made.

In the 2nd and 3rd Form, the subjects studied by all pupils are English, Mathematics, French, Latin, History, Geography, Theology, Art, Music and Design & Technology (DT). The three sciences are taught separately throughout the Senior School to allow specialist teaching to take place. In addition to PE, there are each week two double periods of Games which develop individual skills and teamwork across a range of sports, with the main games being rugby, hockey, cricket and tennis. All boys spend ten weeks in either the 2nd or 3rd Form, on a rotational basis, completing a personal project (Junior Waynflete Studies) under the guidance of a teacher.

Most subjects are taught in classes rather than sets with the exception of French (from 2nd Form) and Mathematics (from 3rd Form). The Head of Lower School and the Head of Third Form have responsibility, along with Tutors, for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the 2nd and 3rd Forms respectively.

In the Lower Fourth pupils make their first subject choices. They have to choose at least one Modern Foreign Language, and in total choose three subjects from Spanish, German, French, Classical Greek, Latin, Art and Music. Mathematics is taught in sets and some French classes are also taught in sets, depending on the option blocks. The Head of Lower Fourth has the responsibility, along with Tutors, for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the Lower Fourth.

The School's Liliun (PSHCE) programme is designed to develop pupils' personal and social skills and their broader life skills, as well as increasing their awareness of issues relating to health and citizenship. Pupils are taught this as a discrete subject, one lesson a week in Years 7 and 8 (including study skills) and two lessons a week in Lower Fourth (which includes computational thinking, data analysis and an enterprise project). PSHCE topics are further delivered through timetabled subjects and special events, and the teaching of ICT is embedded in the curriculum, with several departments incorporating elements of this teaching in their timetabled lessons. Computing is available as a lunchtime or after school club at a variety of levels several times per week for those interested in the development of more complex programming skills.

Upper 4th and Fifth Form (Years 10 and 11)

When pupils enter the Upper 4th they continue to follow a common curriculum with a degree of choice in their (I)GCSE subjects. The aim is to provide breadth and balance, and the school considers the GCSE years to be not only a test of ability: the seven subjects which form the core GCSE curriculum allow pupils to demonstrate to themselves, universities and future employers an ability to work hard and achieve success in a range of subjects – including those which they find more challenging.

All pupils study seven core subjects and three optional subjects in years 10 and 11 leading to GCSE/IGCSE examinations. Only Mathematics and some (depending on option blocks) French classes are taught in sets. Approximately half of the boys in the 5th Form sit FSMQ (Additional Maths) as well as the IGCSE in Maths at the end of the 5th Form to further stretch their mathematical ability.

The core curriculum comprises:

<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Biology</i>	<i>a Modern Foreign Language (French, German or Spanish)</i>
<i>English Language</i>	<i>Chemistry</i>	
<i>English Literature</i>	<i>Physics</i>	

In addition, pupils choose any three subjects from the list below:

<i>History</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Classical Greek</i>	<i>German</i>
<i>Geography</i>	<i>Art</i>	<i>Computing</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>Theology</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>French</i>	

PE (Upper Fourth only) and Games remain compulsory for all pupils. PSHCE is delivered through one Liliun lesson per week as well as through timetabled subjects and special events and presentations; computing remains available as a specialist club several times per week as well as being an IGCSE option.

Classes are taught by subject specialists, and the Head of Upper 4th and Head of Middle School have responsibility for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the Upper 4th and Fifth Form respectively, in conjunction with Tutors.

Sixth Form (Years 12 and 13)

All pupils study at least four subjects in the Lower Sixth (year 12) and at least three subjects to A Level in the Upper Sixth, with between one third and one half of the year group gaining four or more A Levels by the end of the Upper Sixth. Pupils sit an internal exam in the summer of the Lower Sixth, and do not take an AS Level even if they are dropping the subject. All A Level exams are sat at the end of the Upper Sixth. Games remains compulsory for all pupils throughout the Sixth Form. PSHCE is delivered through special events and presentations; computing remains available as a specialist club four times per week.

The school provides a bespoke Sixth Form curriculum, with the timetable freshly constructed each year in accordance with the academic choices of the pupils. There is considerable emphasis placed on learning

and teaching beyond the syllabus. All pupils are given a rigorous academic induction to sixth form study that covers: close and skim reading; organisation and work/life balance; what to do when stuck; cultural capital; thinking skills; library, digital resources and plagiarism. These skills are reinforced by departments throughout the Sixth Form.

Subjects currently offered in the Sixth Form are listed below.

<i>Art</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Biology</i>	<i>Geography</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Physics</i>
<i>Chemistry</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Further Mathematics</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
<i>Economics</i>	<i>Classical Greek</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Theology</i>
<i>English Literature</i>	<i>History</i>	<i>Philosophy</i>	

Much time was devoted to the consideration of the move to linear A Levels in Head of Department and Senior Team meetings. Heads of Department have appreciated the freedom created by a two year course to teach the syllabus in the order that they feel makes sense for their subject, rather than being constrained by the demarcation of AS and A2. They also recognise the need to retain momentum without the stimulus of modular exams. Pupils are encouraged to see this as a two year process of continuous development, and as such they sit a series of rigorous, centrally administered exams. In the Lower Sixth, they have short exams in each of their subjects in November and March and then full-length internal exams in June. The June exams are moderated and standardised and any substandard performance will be followed up with collection exams in late June and then, if needed, again in early September. Pupils then sit full mock exams in the January of their Upper Sixth before sitting their A Levels in June.

Pupils in the Lower Sixth are all expected to engage in a service activity, and there are two main options:

- (i) The Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Sixth Form pupils help to run activities and are placed in command of a company of younger cadets.
- (ii) The Community Service Organisation (CSO) which provides support in the community, for example to care homes and primary schools. Pupils attend these placements for one afternoon per week.

In addition, all pupils in the Lower Sixth choose a topic for their Waynflete Studies project: a piece of personal research completed by the beginning of the Upper Sixth under the guidance of a teacher who acts as internal supervisor. All pupils undertake their research in one of the following faculties:

<i>Mathematics and Computing</i>	<i>Physical Sciences and Engineering</i>	<i>Humanities and Social Sciences</i>
<i>Biological Sciences and Medicine</i>	<i>English literature</i>	<i>Languages and Classics</i>

Tuition initially takes the form of lectures and seminars in school, and most pupils go on to benefit from individual or paired tutorials with experts from Oxford University. The school greatly values this unique provision and considers Waynflete Studies to be a keystone of our educational provision, offering pupils the opportunity to engage in independent study to broaden and deepen their understanding of their chosen topic. The Waynflete Studies programme is overseen by one of the Deputy Heads of Sixth Form.

When Lower Sixth pupils return to school in June after the internal examinations, time is devoted to university preparation.

From September 2016, Lower Sixth pupils are given an introduction to Thinking Skills. Pupils are then able to opt in to an extended Thinking Skills course which is delivered in conjunction with Waynflete Studies.

In the Upper Sixth, Waynflete Studies is replaced by a programme of lectures delivered by a range of high-profile visiting speakers. There is also tutorial support and preparation for university aptitude tests such as BMAT, TSA and LNAT, amongst others, and a programme of interview preparation, particularly

aimed at those applying for Oxbridge courses or medicine. This includes an annual trip to the Perse School each October for Cambridge applicants for mock interviews and discussions with current Cambridge undergraduates. There is a similar trip to Rugby School for Oxford applicants.

The timetable is also suspended on occasions throughout the year to allow certain extra-curricular activities to occur, such as CCF Field Days, House Singing and Drama competitions, subject-specific excursions and Oxford Festival of the Arts events. The Sir Basil Blackwell Library, located at the heart of the school, provides extensive support for learning and teaching whilst also seeking to encourage lifelong habits of reading for pleasure.

Class Size

In general, classes are of 20 pupils or fewer in the Junior School. In 2nd to 5th Forms (Years 7-11), classes are generally of 25 pupils or fewer, but some top sets in Maths or French may be larger. In the Sixth Form, classes are generally of 15 pupils or fewer.

Areas of Experience

The school provides full-time supervised education and seeks to ensure that all areas of experience expected by the Department for Education and Independent Schools Inspectorate are comprehensively provided, as detailed below. Pupils develop their speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills throughout their education at MCS through our core curriculum and through the lively, discursive nature of our lessons.

Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE, known as Liliium at MCS)

The school's Liliium programme is designed to reflect the school's aims and ethos, nurturing confidence and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, toleration and support. It particularly encourages respect for other people, including those for whom the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act are relevant. There is one timetabled lesson per week devoted to Liliium in the Junior School and in Years 7-11 of the Senior School (two lessons per week in Year 9). PSHCE is also delivered (and exclusively so in the 6th Form) through a range of talks and workshops organised throughout the year for particular age groups. These include, for example, anti-social behaviour, safeguarding and internet safety, sex and relationships, economic education, drugs, alcohol and safe driving. In addition, PSHCE education forms a part of teaching across the curriculum (e.g. social issues largely through the teaching of English literature; health through Biology and PE; citizenship through History), and is also integral to other parts of the school's provision, for instance the tutor time programme, talks in Chapel and assembly, and the Careers programme. There is also further information about the school's PSHCE programme available on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC)

The school's SMSC provision aims to provide opportunities through which pupils can develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence while learning to distinguish right from wrong, respect the rule of law and accept responsibility for their behaviour. In all aspects of its curricular and extra-curricular programme, the school actively promotes the principles of democracy, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Religious Studies lessons (Theology) form part of the compulsory curriculum throughout years 3-9 and a significant number of pupils opt to continue their studies to GCSE and A Level. Philosophy is an option at A Level in the Sixth Form. In addition, all pupils – except those explicitly excused on religious grounds – attend Chapel (a broadly Christian service) four mornings per week. All pupils are involved in a games programme which promotes the appreciation of teamwork and competition, commitment and respect for others, while learning how to enjoy winning and accept losing or setbacks as part of the learning process. Pupils are also provided with opportunities to show initiative and to understand how they can contribute to community life through involvement in CCF or CSO, for example. During their time at MCS pupils also gain a broad knowledge of public

institutions and services in Britain and are able to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions.

Further information concerning SMSC provision is available on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).

Linguistic

The school aims to develop pupils' communication skills and increase their command of language in English and in a range of other European languages. All pupils study English until GCSE in the Fifth Form. Additionally, all pupils in the Junior School and in the first two years of the Senior School study French. The option to study German, Spanish and/or Ancient Greek becomes available in the Lower 4th (Year 9). Pupils must continue with one modern foreign language for study to GCSE level. Latin is compulsory in J4 and in the 2nd and 3rd Forms, and pupils may choose to continue with one or more of these optional languages to GCSE. There is no compulsion to continue formal study of a language beyond GCSE; but English Literature, French, German, Spanish, Latin and Ancient Greek are offered. Native speakers of other languages can, by mutual agreement, be entered for examinations in these languages, and in the Sixth Form there is some non-examined tuition of languages such as Italian, Japanese and Arabic for those interested in studying *ab initio* courses at university. For a number of pupils, English is not their first language (i.e. not the language normally spoken at home). Most of them are able to cope perfectly well without additional help; some are referred to the EAL Coordinator who is a member of the School's Learning Support Department so that one-to-one help can be arranged, if desired. A number of clubs and societies (e.g. debating, creative writing, language clubs, linguistic Olympiad, Model United Nations) also contribute to the linguistic experience of those pupils who opt to participate in them, and a number of pupils choose a linguistic focus for their Waynflete Studies project in the Lower Sixth.

Mathematical

The school aims to teach pupils how to calculate; to understand and appreciate relationships and patterns in number and space; to think logically and express themselves clearly. All pupils study Mathematics until the end of the Fifth Form and sit IGCSE. Approximately half of the Fifth Form cohort sit FSMQ (Additional Maths) as well as IGCSE Mathematics. Pupils have a free choice at A Level: A Level Mathematics, AS Level Further Mathematics and A Level Further Mathematics are offered. Special arrangements are available for those joining the Sixth Form from a school with less specialist Maths provision. Extra-curricular opportunities are provided through Maths clubs and competitions (e.g. JS Maths Extension Club, Intermediate and Senior Maths Challenge; British Mathematics Olympiad) and a number of pupils choose a mathematical focus for their Waynflete Studies project in the Lower Sixth. In the Junior School all boys take the Primary Maths Challenge in November and some then qualify for the finals in February.

Scientific

The school seeks to develop pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding by ensuring that all pupils study integrated science in the Junior School, and in the Senior School Biology, Chemistry and Physics are taught as separate sciences until pupils sit IGCSE exams in all three sciences in the Fifth Form. Pupils have a free choice in the Sixth Form, and Biology, Chemistry and Physics are offered. A wide range of clubs, societies, competitions and Olympiads are offered for those who wish to pursue scientific interests as extra-curricular activity, and a large number of Lower Sixth pupils choose a scientific, medical or psychological focus for their Waynflete Studies project.

Technological

The school provides a range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their technological skills. There are Design & Technology lessons for pupils in J3 and J4 and in the first two years of the Senior School. ICT lessons are taught throughout the Junior School and aim to develop key

ICT skills and introduce pupils to basic coding. There are also ICT clubs for pupils in J1-4 which extend their skills with coding.

In the Senior School, the teaching of ICT is embedded in the curriculum, with departments incorporating elements of this teaching in their timetabled lessons. Computing is also available as a specialist club for those interested in developing more complex coding/programming skills and is offered as an IGCSE (since September 2017). The popular DT club is aimed more at pupils in the lower year groups of the Senior School while the Engineering club caters for older pupils.

Human and social

Throughout their career at the school, pupils are taught about people and their environment and how human action has influenced events and conditions. Much of this is taught through History and Geography lessons which are compulsory until the end of Year 9 and become optional thereafter. Other subjects such as Theology, Philosophy, classical and modern languages, English and Liliun (PSHCE) also make a major contribution to this area of experience, as do many of the extra-curricular clubs and societies which are offered. The opportunities afforded by involvement in the CSO (Community Service) programme, the Upper 4th “in the community” day and other activities such as sponsored walks also develop this area of experience. Pupils may also choose a human or social focus for their Waynflete Studies project in the Lower Sixth.

Physical

The school is committed to helping pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of fitness and health and seeks to develop their physical control, co-ordination and tactical skills. Pupils are also helped to evaluate and improve their performance to the best of their ability. PE lessons are, therefore, compulsory until the end of the Upper Fourth, becoming part of the Games provision in the Fifth Form. PE is not offered as an examined subject at any level. All pupils have two Games sessions per week, and a large number of pupils are regularly involved in additional midweek training sessions and fixtures on Saturdays and midweek. Extra-curricular opportunities for sport and physical exercise are widespread.

Aesthetic and creative

The school seeks to provide a range of opportunities to introduce pupils to the processes of making, composing, performing and inventing. There are, of course, aesthetic and creative aspects of all subjects; but specifically all pupils study Art and Music until the end of Year 8 (with these subjects becoming optional from Year 9) and English literature is studied by all pupils until GCSE. In the Junior School, Thursday afternoons are dedicated to Activities, which often have a creative element to them and include Drama. There are a large number of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their aesthetic and creative skills: instrumental lessons, art and photography clubs, LAMDA (London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art), Theatre Academy, school plays (including opportunities with the Oxford Playhouse), orchestras, choirs and ensembles, for instance. The annual Festival of the Arts in June also provides pupils with a range of opportunities to be involved in and to attend concerts, workshops and dramatic performances.

Special educational needs

MCS is a highly selective school, and admits pupils with strong academic potential and the capability to fulfil our high expectations, regardless of any special educational need. Pupils are screened on arrival (but in J3 for Junior School pupils) and those on the school’s learning support roll are overseen by the Learning Support department on an ongoing basis. Pupils on the roll have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or Student Support Plans (SSPs) which are updated on an annual basis. For pupils with a statement/EHC plan, an annual review takes place with the participation of the school, the parents and the local authority.

Full details can be found in the school's learning support policy which is available on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).

University advice and careers guidance

The school aims to provide pupils and their parents with appropriate university advice and careers guidance so that they can make informed choices about applications to the world's leading universities and can consider the direction that they may take after university. Information about subjects recommended for particular university courses is included in our A Level choices evening and the accompanying booklet, and pupils discuss their GCSE choices with their tutors, teachers and Heads of Department. This helps to inform pupils at appropriate ages and stages when making decisions about which subjects to choose for public examinations.

When they leave MCS, almost all pupils continue to university or equivalent. The Director of Higher Education offers advice about universities – including those located overseas - and he, along with Housemasters, Room 1 tutors and other members of the Sixth Form team, deal with the practicalities of university entry. In the Lower Sixth, each pupil has an individual interview with the Head of Sixth Form or one of the Sixth Form Team and these interviews, along with the Higher Education Evening in the Hilary Term, initiate the process whereby pupils select a university course.

Potential Oxbridge candidates are identified early in the process so that Heads of Department can offer advice about course choice and provide appropriate guidance and assistance. Pupils are given preparation for University entrance tests and, where required, interview practice.

The Head of Careers organises talks and careers-related events (such as the annual Careers Fair with Headington School and the programme of Careers workshops in the Michaelmas and Hilary terms) and maintains oversight of the work experience programme: all boys in the Fifth Form are encouraged to undertake work experience – usually in the period between the end of their GCSE exams and the start of the Lower Sixth (Year 12). All potential medics, dentists and vets are encouraged to undertake work experience during their vacations in the Lower 6th, and specialist preparation programmes for such applicants begin in the Hilary Term of that year. A vocational degree course conference is organised annually in October, also.

The school's careers guidance aims to provide pupils with accurate, wide-ranging and up-to-date information which enables them to fulfil their potential and develop an understanding of themselves and how their strengths, weaknesses and interests relate to their choice of subjects for GCSE and A-Level, further education and future careers.

Careers guidance begins in the Lower School and becomes more prominent in the Middle School and beyond as pupils start to make informed choices vis-à-vis subject options and preparation for university. Full details of the range of activities and opportunities which are planned can be obtained on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).

Updated: October 2017
By: Deputy Head (Academic)
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