MAGDALEN
COLLEGE SCHOOL

FOUNDED IN 1480
BY WILLIAM OF WAYNFLETE

Curriculum Policy

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Introduction

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 aims, 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, Senior Leadership Team meetings, Academic Discussion Group meetings and the Governors' Education and Partnerships 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, 2016 and 2023: 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 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 encourages 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. Fundamental British Values are actively promoted throughout the curriculum.

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
Second Form	Year 7
Third Form	Year 8

Lower Fourth	Year 9	
Upper Fourth	Year 10	
Fifth Form	Year 11	GCSE/IGCSE exams
Lower Sixth	Year 12	
Upper Sixth	Year 13	A Level exams

J1-J4 (Years 3-6)

The Junior School curriculum is designed to develop a lifelong love of learning. While following the broad outline of the National Curriculum, we strive for breadth, balance and high academic standards, by embracing challenge and by making each lesson enjoyable.

Pupils receive a firm grounding in basic skills and knowledge before going on to develop their talents, interests and skills in a curriculum that offers specialism and balance. The curriculum is underpinned by strong traditional academic skills with opportunities for pupils to pursue their individual interests, notably via our Activities Afternoon and Clubs initiatives.

There are plenty of opportunities on offer. The Junior School fosters academic excellence through a multitude of extension and enrichment activities, tasks and trips. We also draw on the facilities of the Senior School to offer full and varied schemes of work within each subject.

Pupils are encouraged to take risks and to think critically across the whole of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in our lessons whilst also promoting collaboration and valuing independence. Pupil voice is central to the curricular ethos, and individuals are encouraged to contribute ideas and convey reflections with confidence and enthusiasm. The school prides itself in having a strong network of support and provision, catering for the needs of all pupils. Diversity in all its forms is placed at the heart of the academic community: we embrace and celebrate individual starting points and learning styles, scaffolding success and progress for each pupil.

Pupils receive a firm grounding in Mathematics (Numeracy) and English (Literacy) and specialist teachers (sometimes including input from Senior School teachers) nurture pupils' interests and further their development in other subjects such as Science, Geography, History and Art/DT. Music is likewise taught by specialist teachers, and pupils are given numerous opportunities to perform instrumentally and vocally both within and beyond lessons. Junior School Sport offers a values-based curriculum which is taught by specialist staff through Games and PE lessons in addition to fixtures.

The Thursday 'Activities Afternoon' aims to give pupils even greater balance and breadth within the curriculum, whilst encouraging them to learn new skills and areas of expertise. The activities include Drama, Philosophy for Children, Forest School, Young Enterprise, Martial Arts, Robotics and Sports Leadership. PSHCE is known as Lilium and is delivered through one dedicated lesson per week as well as through assemblies and national events or initiatives.

Design Technology is taught in the specialist workshop of the Senior School. Modern foreign languages are taught by specialist teachers, with German, Spanish and Mandarin being taught in J1-2, J3 and J4 respectively. This exposure to a multiplicity of languages and cultures leaves pupils entering Senior School with a broad linguistic experience. Computing is taught as a separate subject in each year group, with pupils having access to multiple class sets of Microsoft Surfaces both within and beyond Computing lessons.

Speaking and Listening is delivered in a number of lessons such as English and History, and Oracy is taught as part of the Activities Afternoon programme. Every year group likewise has one term of Drama during Activities Afternoon, culminating in a play being put on by these pupils for both Junior School and parental audiences. As pupils progress through the Junior School, they are expected to develop their independent learning: teaching approaches, the administering of homework and utilisation of extended project tasks all progressively build towards the nourishing of independence.

Throughout the Junior School calendar, there are many opportunities to enrich class work and curricular learning through clubs, competitions, trips and workshops. Strong levels of pupil effort, attainment and progress within the curriculum are likewise celebrated routinely via House Points, Commendations, and Friday 'Celebration' assemblies.

Second Form – Lower Fourth (Years 7-9)

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

In the Second and Third Form, the subjects studied by all pupils are English, Mathematics, French, Latin, History, Geography, Theology, Art, Music, Drama & Oracy, Computing and Design & Technology (DT). The three sciences are mostly taught separately throughout the Senior School to allow specialist teaching to take place, but Chemistry and Physics are brought together by one teacher in Physical Sciences in Second and Third Form. 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 Second or Third 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 and Mathematics from Third Form. The Head of Lower School, the Head of Second Form and the Head of Third Form have responsibility, along with tutors, for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the Second and Third Forms.

In the Lower Fourth pupils make their first subject choices. All pupils continue to study the three sciences, Maths, English, History, Geography, Theology, Drama & Oracy, Computing, PE, and Games; in addition they have to choose at least one Modern Foreign Language, and in total choose three subjects from Spanish, German, French, Mandarin, Classical Greek, Latin, Art and Music. Some pupils can take four subjects by choosing to take Latin as an after school option for one hour per week. Mathematics is taught in sets and some French classes may also be taught in sets, depending on the option blocks. The Head of Middle School and Head of Lower Fourth have the responsibility, along with tutors, for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the Lower Fourth.

The School's Lilium (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 per week in Second, Third and Lower Fourth Forms (including study skills and enterprise). PSHCE topics are further delivered through timetabled subjects and special events. All pupils follow a course in Computing which focuses on group project work, and the teaching of other ICT skills is embedded in the curriculum, with several departments incorporating elements of this teaching in their timetabled lessons.

Upper Fourth and Fifth Form (Years 10 and 11)

When pupils enter the Upper Fourth 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 (I)GCSE years to be not only a test of ability: the seven subjects which form the core (I)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 Upper Fourth and Fifth Form leading to (I)GCSE examinations. Only Mathematics and some (depending on option blocks) French classes are taught in sets. Approximately half of the boys in the Fifth Form sit FSMQ

(Additional Maths) as well as the IGCSE in Maths at the end of the Fifth Form to further stretch their mathematical ability.

The core curriculum comprises:

Mathematics	*Biology*	*a Modern Foreign Language (French, German, Mandarin or Spanish)*
English Language	*Chemistry*	
English Literature	*Physics*	

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

History	*Music*	*Classical Greek*	*German*
Geography	*Art*	*Computer Science*	*Spanish*
Theology	*Latin*	*French*	*Mandarin*
Physical Education			

PE and Games remain compulsory for all pupils, but are delivered together. PSHCE is delivered through one Lilium lesson per week as well as through timetabled subjects and special events and presentations; Computing remains available as a specialist club as well as being a GCSE option.

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

Sixth Form (Years 12 and 13)

All pupils begin Lower Sixth by studying at least four subjects and take 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 internal exams in the summer of the Lower Sixth, and do not take AS Levels even if they are dropping a 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 during tutor time and through special events and presentations. Computer Science remains available as an A Level or through clubs.

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, and the skills covered are reinforced by departments throughout the Sixth Form.

Subjects currently offered in the Sixth Form are listed below.

Art	*English Literature*	*History*	*Philosophy*
Biology	*French*	*Latin*	*Politics*
Chemistry	*Geography*	*Mathematics*	*Physics*
Computer Science	*German*	*Further Mathematics*	*Spanish*
Economics	*Classical Greek*	*Music*	*Theology*
Mandarin is also offered as an 'off-timetable' option for pupils who meet the required standard.			

Pupils are encouraged to see the Sixth Form 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 February and then full-length internal exams in May. The May exams are moderated and standardised and any substandard performance will be followed up with collection exams in June and/or September. Pupils then sit full mock exams in January of their Upper Sixth and further Practice Tests in April before sitting their A Levels in May/June.

Pupils in the Lower Sixth are all expected to engage in a service activity; the Community Service Organisation (CSO) 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:

Mathematics and Computing	*Physical Sciences and Engineering*	*Humanities and Social Sciences*
Biological Sciences and Medicine	*English Literature*	*Languages and Classics*
Practical Scientific Research	*Enterprise*	

Tuition initially takes the form of lectures and seminars in school. Pupils are assigned a teacher to mentor them through their project, and in the latter stages of the project many pupils go on

to benefit from individual or paired tutorials with experts from the local community, for example academics from Oxford University. The school greatly values this unique provision and considers Waynflete Studies to be a keystone of its 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 the Director of Waynflete Studies.

When Lower Sixth pupils return to school in May after the internal examinations, time outside of lessons is devoted to university preparation.

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, and a programme of interview preparation, particularly aimed at those applying for interviewing universities or courses (for example, Oxbridge and Medicine).

The Head of Sixth Form, Heads of Upper Sixth and Heads of Lower Sixth have responsibility for tracking the academic progress of pupils in the Sixth Form, in conjunction with tutors.

Timetable Suspensions

The timetable is suspended on occasions throughout the year to allow certain extra-curricular activities to occur, such as community and partnerships events, house competitions, and subject-specific excursions.

The Library

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 22 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 pupils experience all the areas of learning required by the Independent School Standards, 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 Lilium at MCS)

The school's Lilium 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 Equality Act are relevant. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education are delivered through the Lilium (PSHCE) programme, with relevant content also taught through other compulsory subjects such as Biology. There is one timetabled lesson per week devoted to Lilium in the Junior School and in Years 7-11 of the Senior School. In the Sixth Form, PSHCE is delivered through tutor time. PSHCE is also delivered 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. Further information about the school's PSHCE programme is 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 IGCSE 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 (sometimes broadcast remotely to houserooms) 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, for example through the CSO. 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 languages. All pupils study English until (I)GCSE in the Fifth Form. Additionally, all pupils in the Junior School study modern foreign languages (German, Spanish and Mandarin), and in the first two years of the Senior School all pupils study French and Latin. The option to study German, Spanish, Mandarin and/or Classical Greek (and continue with French and Latin) becomes available in the Lower Fourth (Year 9). Pupils are expected to continue with one modern foreign language for study to (I)GCSE level. There is no compulsion to continue formal study of a language beyond GCSE; but English Literature, French, German, Spanish, Latin and Classical Greek are offered. Native speakers of other languages can, by mutual agreement, be entered for examinations in these languages (where MCS staff have the required spoken language skills to conduct oral examinations), and in the Sixth Form there can be some non-examined tuition of languages 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); some of these pupils are referred to the Head of Learning Support so that additional help can be arranged, if appropriate. A number of clubs and societies (e.g. debating, creative writing, language clubs, Linguistics 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 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 so that they can access any of the Sixth Form maths programmes. Extra-curricular opportunities are provided through Maths clubs and competitions (e.g. JS Maths Extension Club, Primary, Junior, 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.

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 (Physics and Chemistry are taught by one teacher as Physical Sciences in the Lower School) 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 taught to all pupils across Second to Lower Fourth forms and also available as a specialist club for those interested in developing more complex coding/programming skills. Computer Science is offered as a GCSE and A Level. The popular DT club is aimed more at pupils in the lower year groups of the Senior School while the STEM 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 Lower Fourth and become optional thereafter. Other subjects such as Theology, Philosophy, classical and modern languages, English and Lilium (PSHCE) also make a significant 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, and other activities such as community and partnerships days 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 Lower Fourth, becoming part of the Games provision in the Upper Fourth Form. PE is also offered as a GCSE subject. 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. The Drama & Oracy and Computing courses in Years 7-9 focus on creative project work. In the Junior School, Thursday afternoons are dedicated to Activities, which often have a creative element to them and include Drama and public speaking. There are a large number of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their aesthetic and creative skills: instrumental lessons, art and photography clubs, Theatre Academy, school plays (including opportunities with the Oxford Playhouse), orchestras, choirs and ensembles, for instance.

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. In the Senior School, pupils are screened on arrival to the Second Form, as well as new entrants to the

Third Form, Lower Fourth and Upper Fourth. SEN information for new entrants to the Sixth Form (for example from their previous school's reference and/or parent registration form) is provided to the Head of Learning Support. How the School records and reviews progress of pupils with SEND is outlined in the Learning Support (SEND) Policy, which is available on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).

In the Junior School, standardised CPI data (obtained during the first half of Michaelmas) in spelling, reading and Maths is examined in J1-J4 in relation to potential need or Learning Support issues. Throughout the academic year, the Junior School Learning Support Coordinator offers individualised screenings (such as RAN/RAS, YARC and PhAB assessments) for pupils identified as requiring these. Pupils on the school's learning support roll are overseen by the Learning Support department on an ongoing basis.

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 Sixth Form Options Evening and the accompanying booklet, and staff discuss this with pupils in school or in their 16+ admissions interview. Pupils discuss their Lower Fourth and (I)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 Sixth Form 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 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 biennial Careers Fair and the programme of careers workshops) 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 (I)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 Sixth, and specialist preparation programmes for such applicants begin in the Hilary Term of that year.

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 (I)GCSE and A Level, higher 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. The Careers Policy and full details of the range of activities and opportunities which are planned can be obtained on request from the Deputy Head (Education Development).