



Introduction

The curriculum at St Mary's School is designed to develop each pupil's potential for independent thought and the search for truth through a rigorous academic education. It embraces all those activities which help each pupil to develop intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, creatively and spiritually. In a boarding school, much of this development takes place outside of the formal programme of lessons. It is for this reason that it is essential for pupils to achieve a balance within their own programmes. Tutors work with pupils to assist them to achieve this balance and use both the Curriculum and Pastoral Map and the Life Timetable to help pupils develop their skills and manage their time wisely.

Specialist subject teachers or tutors are allocated to all timetabled lessons and are responsible for the design and delivery of curriculum content and for supervising pupils. (See the Teaching and Learning Policy.) In the absence of a teacher or tutor the class undertakes set work and is supervised by a cover supervisor or by another member of the teaching staff. During timetabled study periods, for example where a pupil is taking 9 GCSE subjects instead of 10, pupils undertake private study under the supervision of the librarian or a teacher assigned to this duty. Year 11 and Sixth form pupils may study in the library or in their rooms when they do not have timetabled lessons. All pupils have Sports lessons, Skills for Life lessons and receive careers advice.

Pupils aged 11-14 (Years 7, 8 and 9): In these years pupils follow a broad curriculum consisting of:

English
 French
 Mathematics
 Religious studies
 Science (biology, chemistry and physics)
 Thinking Scientifically in years 7 and 8
 Art (fine art, ceramics, textiles, printing and painting)
 Design and Technology (electronics, graphics and computer science) in year 8
 Drama
 Geography
 History
 Computer Science
 Latin
 Music
 Sport (Winter: hockey, netball, football, creative movement and swimming
 Summer: athletics, cricket and tennis)
 Skills for life
 Modern foreign languages

All year 8 pupils sample German, Italian and Spanish before choosing one of these languages for the remainder of year 8. They are also given the opportunity to attend a course of ten taster sessions in Mandarin Chinese held after school. In year 9 pupils may continue the study of their chosen extra modern language or they may choose to take Mandarin Chinese. Year 9 pupils will study some Classical Greek within their Latin lessons.

Location:	St Mary's School Ascot\School Handbook\Curriculum\Curriculum Policy (305)			Page:	1 of 5
Last Reviewed:	November 2023	Next Review:	November 2025	Author/Lead:	Academic Deputy Head

GCSE Years (Years 10 and 11): Pupils usually take 10 I/GCSE subjects at the end of year 11. Internal examinations take place in the summer term of year 10. Final I/GCSE grades are determined by external terminal examinations at the end of year 11 although some subjects also have non-examined assessment components.

All pupils study the following core subjects:

English language	English literature
A modern foreign language	Mathematics
Religious Studies	Science – double award science, equivalent to two GCSEs which include the study of biology, chemistry and physics. Pupils who select triple award science study each science subject separately.

In addition all pupils usually choose three of the following subjects:

2nd Modern Languages	Humanities	Creative/ Practical	Other Subjects
French	History	Art & design	Classical Greek
German	Geography	Drama	Latin
Italian	Classical Civilisation	Music	Triple award science
Mandarin		Photography	Computer science
Spanish			

With the approval of the Academic Deputy Head, Classical Greek or a bilingual language may also be studied as an additional option.

All pupils at St Mary’s usually take at least one modern foreign language for GCSE. For those pupils planning to take only one language, we advise them to choose French because French is the language which most pupils have studied the longest and at which they are most likely to achieve the best grade. Extra French lessons are available for pupils who do not choose a second modern language in Year 9. For those pupils who wish to study another language, we strongly recommend that they study it in addition to French. Every year, a significant number of our pupils take two languages at GCSE.

For timetabling purposes, the optional subjects are arranged into option blocks designed on the basis of provisional choices made by year 9 pupils early in the Lent term. Every effort is made to accommodate pupil choices in the timetable but there is no guarantee that every combination will be possible and there may need to be some negotiation in a few cases. Once the option blocks have been determined, final choices are submitted after the parent teacher meetings in the Lent term and changes can be made only within the option blocks.

Able linguists within bilingual classes, will take their GCSE examination at the end of year 10 and continue to study the subject at a higher level in year 11. Bi-lingual pupils need not choose their language as one of their option subjects but they may take it at GCSE.

Sixth Form Curriculum

Location:	St Mary’s School Ascot\School Handbook\Curriculum\Curriculum Policy (305)			Page:	2 of 5
Last Reviewed:	November 2023	Next Review:	November 2025	Author/Lead:	Academic Deputy Head

All A Level subjects operate as two-year linear courses. Internal examinations take place in the summer term of lower sixth. Final A level grades are determined by external terminal examinations at the end of the upper sixth year although some subjects also have non-examined assessment components.

Pupils generally study 4 subjects in the lower sixth year until the internal examinations in the summer term. At this stage teaching sets are rationalised to ensure the most productive learning environment for each pupil. Thereafter the pupils usually continue to study 3 subjects. Pupils may in the first instance consider any combination of subjects and they are given advice about the subject combinations which suit their ability and their university aspirations. In guidance about subject choice, there is an emphasis on complementary subjects and specialism. Internal examination results also inform discussions. Every effort is made to accommodate pupil choices in the timetable but there is no guarantee that every combination will be possible and there may need to be some negotiation in a few cases. Once the option blocks have been determined, changes of subject are possible only within the option blocks and some subjects may no longer be available if the set is full, or if there is insufficient take up.

The following subjects are offered at A Level:

Art and Design	French	Mathematics
Biology	Further mathematics	Music
Chemistry	Geography	Physics
Classical civilisation	German	Photography
Classical Greek	Government and politics	Psychology
Computer Science	History	Spanish
Drama and Theatre	History of art	Theology, Philosophy and
Economics	Italian	Ethics
English literature	Latin	

Minimum requirements for all subjects can be found in the Sixth Form Prospectus.

Sixth Form pupils also undertake an academic induction programme for two days in the first half of the Michaelmas term. This introduces them to mindset concepts such as risk-taking, resilience and problem-solving, and helps to prepare them for the transition to A Level work. It also starts off the Sixth Form Perspectives Programme, a multi-purpose course designed to help pupils develop key academic skills, enhance their university application and prepare for university life. Every pupil takes part in a Thinking Skills course in the Michaelmas term of Lower Sixth. The skills taught include researching, project management and interviewing techniques. Thereafter, the Perspectives Programme includes the option of completing an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) as well as directed study and other academy provision. Pupils also have two sports sessions at least each week, a tutor period, and attend weekly Skills for Life lessons which include speakers and activities in the evenings and at weekends.

General Religious Studies

A General Religious Studies programme runs across five terms in the Sixth Form. In their weekly classes pupils address a broad range of religious subjects. There are ample opportunities for small group discussions, seminars, lectures, and independent research as ethical, philosophical, theological and political traditions are explored. There is a particular emphasis on contemporary world views, both Catholic and non-Catholic, as the programme seeks to help pupils to become theologically literate and able to engage in informed conversation beyond St Mary's.

Location:	St Mary's School Ascot\School Handbook\Curriculum\Curriculum Policy (305)			Page:	3 of 5
Last Reviewed:	November 2023	Next Review:	November 2025	Author/Lead:	Academic Deputy Head

The Electives Programme

An Electives Programme for the Lower Sixth offers the pupils the choice of completing two or three short courses, consisting of five 75-minute sessions, during the Michaelmas and Lent terms. These elective courses cover academic subject areas such as Linguistics or Archaeology and Anthropology, explore issues such as Global Citizenship, Science in the Modern World or Entrepreneurship, and develop skills in areas such as Public Speaking or How to Write a Great Short Story. They are designed to complement the existing core curriculum and Skills for Life programme.

Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic Education (PSHCEE)

PSHCEE is delivered throughout the school from year 7 to the upper sixth in Skills for Life lessons and through co-curricular speakers and activities. Details of the content and delivery of the programme, including Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), are found in the relevant section of this Handbook and the schemes of work are available on SMILE.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

The aims of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils are set out in the Vision Statement of St Mary's School Ascot and are rooted in our ethos as a Catholic school. The SMSC policy describes the ways in which we enable pupils to develop as women of conscience, competence and compassionate commitment, ready for the complexities and diversity of life beyond St Mary's. Pupils of all ages undertake a variety of roles and responsibilities in the School which supports their development and which are detailed in Responsibilities, Leadership and Service in the Boarding Life section of the Handbook. The Curriculum and Pastoral Map is also used by tutors and Heads of House to help pupils monitor their personal, moral, social and cultural development within the School.

Careers Education

The formal careers education programme runs from year 7 to the upper sixth and is described in detail in the Careers Education and Guidance section of this Handbook. Careers advice is available to all pupils and great care is taken to ensure that appropriate advice is given at each stage of a pupil's development. Pupils receive guidance in the choice of additional modern foreign languages in year 8 and 9, GCSE subjects in year 9, A level subjects in year 11 and university or other courses during the sixth form. The section on University Guidance refers particularly to the guidance given in the process of choosing and applying to a university. A wide range of careers talks are provided by internal and external speakers arranged by the Careers Coordinator and others. Individual independent careers advice is given to senior pupils in Year 11 and Lower Sixth by an external careers advisor and mentoring from alumnae is offered to Lower Sixth pupils. Pupils undertake psychometric aptitude tests and engage in work experience.

Special Educational Needs

Appropriate provision is made for all pupils to have the opportunity to learn and make progress. Pupils are taught in mixed ability classes or set according to ability for different subjects, as described in the Teaching and Learning Policy, to ensure that all pupils are able to reach their potential.

Provisions for identifying and supporting pupils with learning difficulties are detailed in the Special Educational Needs policy. The School employs a qualified Specialist Assessor and special needs teachers who work with the SENDCo to provide individual support to pupils and INSET to teachers.

Location:	St Mary's School Ascot\School Handbook\Curriculum\Curriculum Policy (305)			Page:	4 of 5
Last Reviewed:	November 2023	Next Review:	November 2025	Author/Lead:	Academic Deputy Head

The policy for the Able, Gifted and Talented pupils describes the ways in which such pupils are identified and stretched both in lessons and in additional activities. The Academy programme, managed by the Director of Sixth Form, helps to stretch and challenge those pupils in years 10, 11 and sixth form who have already achieved a high level of examination performance and therefore have the time to dedicate to this additional programme.

English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Provisions for identifying and supporting pupils for whom English is an additional language are described in the EAL policy.

Co-Curricular Activities

A wide range of co-curricular activities are provided for and by pupils to stimulate, stretch, inspire and develop pupils during their free time. The Co-Curricular Activities section of the Handbook details the range of activities available for different year groups and is coordinated by the Co-Curricular Deputy Head.

Holiday Work

During holidays, all pupils are encouraged to organise their books and files in readiness for the term ahead and to catch up on any missed work. Additional holiday work is not usually set for pupils in years 7 to 9. Pupils in years 10 to upper sixth will be expected to complete non-examined assessments, study assignments or revision for examinations during the Michaelmas half term and the longer holidays. The Academic Deputy Head provides guidance to departments on the volume of set holiday work to ensure a proportionate amount of work is set to each year group. During the summer holidays, the incoming Lower Sixth are set holiday work to help them bridge the gap between GCSE and A Level. The existing Lower Sixth are set work to facilitate the consolidation of their knowledge and understanding in advance of their final year of A Level study. The existing Lower Sixth also undertake research to support their Extended Project Qualifications (EPQ) and Oxbridge preparation. The Director of Sixth Form provides guidance to departments on the set work required for EPQ and Oxbridge.

Location:	St Mary's School Ascot\School Handbook\Curriculum\Curriculum Policy (305)			Page:	5 of 5
Last Reviewed:	November 2023	Next Review:	November 2025	Author/Lead:	Academic Deputy Head