



ACORN HOUSE COLLEGE

Teaching and Learning Policy

Acorn House College

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Aims of Teaching and Learning

Links to legislation: ISSR 2015 part 1 paragraphs 2, 3 and 4

Purpose

This policy sets out how Acorn House College has developed and implemented its curriculum, the structure of the school day and the assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. The policy should be read in conjunction with the SEN policy and the PSHE and Prevent Duty policy.

Theoretical framework

The starting point and aspirational goal for the teaching and learning at Acorn House College is that the end of education is character. Thus the College has chosen to make the German concept of Bildung the theoretical basis of all learning activities. This means that all pupils develop "the capability to deal autonomously with the social and cultural construction of knowledge and tradition".¹ In other words, Bildung helps to define the college as a social community where the focus is on the development of the relationship, including rights and obligations, between pupils, staff and parents. The organisation of teaching and learning has therefore been planned to aid pupils in their long-term personal development and help them recognise that they are citizens of the UK. In practical sense the choice of syllabus and learning activities in all subjects therefore help pupils critically reflect on their own progress and at the same time recognise and value relationships with other pupils and staff. This is the reason for teachers and pupils evaluating progress together and all pupils being assigned a tutor who will review their overall progress throughout the year. Also, in doing so the organisation of teaching and learning enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress so that they increase their understanding and develop skills in the subjects they are taught. The teaching and learning also aims to foster in pupils self-motivation, interest in their work and the ability to learn and think for themselves. Finally, making Bildung the starting point for the teaching and learning also helps to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs as well as the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 (see the PSHE and Prevent Duty policy for further details).

Curriculum

The curriculum has been designed to give pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. All subjects emphasise:

- Critical thinking
- Grammar and style
- Numeracy
- Presentation skills
- Basic research skills

¹ Specifically the College uses Theodor Adorno's definition of Bildung as outlined in Rebekka Horlacher's *The Educated Subject and the German Concept of Bildung: A comparative cultural history* p. 107 (Routledge 2017).

- Revision skills
- Building up the confidence for the exams

Linguistic skills are integrated in all subjects and specifically emphasised and assessed in English and language studies (French and Arabic). Mathematical skills are assessed not just in Maths but in all sciences and any other subject when relevant. ICT skills are primarily developed in Computer Science but other subjects also integrate the use of ICT as part of research tasks and completing presentations and assessments on a range of topics. Human and social education is embedded in the PSHE syllabus delivered by Religious Studies, History and English at GCSE. For September 2018 the intention is to develop a PSHE program for sixth form pupils based on the same principles as the GCSE program outlined in the PSHE and Prevent Duty policy.

The PSHE syllabus also includes up-to-date careers guidance presented in an impartial manner that enables the pupils to make informed choices about a broad range of career options. The vast majority of pupils at Acorn House College intend to apply to university after they complete A-levels. The College therefore arranges visits to career fairs and also run a career week when y11 pupils and parents are invited to discuss options for A-level with subject teachers and the principal. The College may also invite guest speakers as part of supporting pupils' preparation. In year 13 all pupils have a UCAS advisor to assist them with their university applications and conduct mock interviews if necessary. Teachers with relevant specialist knowledge provide advice for Oxbridge applicants or those wishing to pursue a specific career, for example a career in medicine. The College runs a medical school programme and offer specific events and support for pupils applying to medicine and dentistry.

Physical education is provided for y10 and y11 once a week through the Games sessions. These sessions include a range of activities appropriate to their needs. Activities such as football also help to foster relationships and promote co-operation as part of teamwork.

Aesthetic and creative experiences are provided through Art and English. Many pupils enrol for Art at GCSE and A-level and their work are often displayed in the college to celebrate their achievements. English provides opportunities through creative writing and pupils are regularly entered for essay competitions and successfully published.

Subjects offered at GCSE

GCSE is offered as a two year course. The curriculum consists of the following subjects:

- English language
- English literature
- Maths
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- History
- Religious Studies
- Art
- Computer Science

In addition to the core subjects pupils are able to choose from the following options, subject to timetable constraints:

- Arabic or French

A one year intensive option (11R) is also available for pupils that wish to retake GCSE.

Subjects offered at A-level

The following subjects are offered at A-level:

- Arabic
- Art
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Economics
- English Literature
- French
- History
- Mathematics
- Further Mathematics
- Physics
- Psychology
- Religious Studies
- Sociology

In principle all pupils will be entered for the two year A-level qualification. There are intensive courses offered for pupils who may wish to retake exams or are unhappy with their progress during y12. The principal, pupils and parents will discuss and together make a decision. This discussion can also cover the suitability of a pupil of being entered for AS-exams.

Linguistic support to speakers of English as a second/foreign language

A number of our pupils speak English as a second language and require specific support in developing their fluency to help them achieve their academic goals. This may take the form of additional help to achieve a grade in a particular exam or to improve their level of proficiency in English.

The English level of any overseas pupils is assessed initially during the application procedure. Following this, the principal will offer appropriate program to support the academic aims of each individual pupil. This may be dedicated one-to-one support or small-group teaching and will focus on improving their use of academic English as well as preparing for a qualification in English language.

In some cases, international pupils and those from the UK may need to take or retake GCSE English alongside their A-levels. A 'pass' in English GCSE is required by most UK universities and some may require a grade 6 or above.

To support 11R GCSE English Language pupils, one lesson per week is reserved for the improvement of spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as the development of speaking and listening skills. Pupils are given individual attention and the language exercises are tailored to their specific needs.

Pupils who do not have English as a first language and do not have English GCSE have the option to demonstrate their proficiency in English through the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Acorn House College can tailor a program of IELTS preparation that is designed to support a pass at the required level for the course the pupil applies for at university. UK universities will usually require a score of 6.0 or higher as a minimum requirement, but many courses will have a higher requirement.

Structure of the school day

8.40am - 8.55am	Registration & Form Time
9.00am – 9.45am	Period 1
9.45am – 10.30am	Period 2
10.30am – 11.00am	Morning Break
11.00m – 11.45am	Period 3
11.45am – 12.30pm	Period 4
12.30pm – 1.15pm	Lunch
1.15pm – 2.00pm	Period 5
2.00pm – 2.45pm	Period 6
2.45pm – 3.30pm	Period 7 (senior school ends)
3.30pm – 3.45pm	Afternoon Break
3.45pm – 4.30	Period 8 (or extra revision classes for senior school students)

Extra-curricular activities

Pupils have run a number of clubs and events such as a chess club, a debate club and a football team. A key area of development is to ensure that such pupil initiative can become more regular and permanent as part of encouraging pupils to take opportunities and responsibilities.

The College has a series of well-established trips that run on a regular basis. These include trips to the Globe Theatre for English students, visits to the Tower of London and the Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum for History and RS students and trips to the Science Museum for science students. All trips are planned with the curriculum in mind in order to enhance the pupil's experiences.

Assessment of learning

The college uses two types of main assessments throughout the academic year:

- Progress tests
- Mock exams

Progress tests are meant to indicate the pupils' progress and are therefore formative assessments. The data will be reviewed by all subject teachers to identify trends and gaps and consider appropriate interventions to close gaps. Pupils complete at least two progress tests each half-term.

Mock-exams take place during January for all years. Y11, 11R, Y13 and y14 sit mock-exams in April. Y10 and Y12 complete end of year tests. These are summative assessments that give pupils an idea of their understanding of the curriculum for that year. They also provide opportunities for teachers to decide appropriate interventions for the next year to ensure that all pupils can close their gaps in their knowledge.

The subject teacher is responsible for developing a good understanding of all pupils' aptitudes, prior attainment and needs and takes this into account in the planning of lessons. The subject teacher uses this understanding to select appropriate classroom resources of a good quality and range, decide on the most effective teaching methods suitable for the pupils and activities in lessons. Therefore the subject teacher decides on the topic to be assessed for the progress tests and the appropriate units to be done for the mock exams in January and April every academic year. The teacher uses his/her subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' aptitudes to determine the appropriate assessment for the progress tests and ensures that the formative assessments help pupils develop skills and understanding that will help them prepare for the exam.

Marks are recorded and entered electronically into a central record system. Subject teachers should also take marks from homework and other assignments into account when evaluating the extent a pupil has made progress. Teachers maintain a record of pupils' grades for progress tests, mock exams, homework and other relevant assignments. Marks will be submitted centrally through an Edexcel spreadsheet distributed through Google Drive for now. Pupils are expected to respond to the teacher's advice and together they will identify clear steps to make improvements. All subject teachers are able to access marks and comments from other subject teachers through the central record system.

From September 2018 all pupils will be assigned a tutor. The tutor's primary responsibility will be to review pupil progress in all subjects on a weekly basis and if necessary report any concerns to the principal. The principal will contact parents if concerns are continuing or getting worse.

Review of the quality of learning

Pupils' attainment is always compared to results from previous years and national averages for relevant subjects. Parents/carers are informed at least once each term, or more if required, of their child's progress. This is done through the reports and the parents' evening. Classroom teachers will provide information on attainment as well as effort. The college uses effort grades from 4 (excellent) to 1 (unsatisfactory) to indicate the pupil's self-motivation.

If a pupil exceeds expected levels of progress the principal will contact home and inform the parents. In the case a pupil is not making progress the classroom teacher must notify the principal and vice-principal. If the pupil has failed consecutive tests the principal will contact the person and discuss reasons for the lack of progress. If the lack of progress is due to a potential broad area of need as defined by the SEN Code of Practice 0-25 years 2014 the steps outlined in the SEN policy will be followed.

Subject teachers should help pupils identify their strengths and weaknesses by giving clear verbal and written advice on what the pupils can do to improve. Subject teachers ask pupils to complete a self-evaluation in the lesson following the assessment or test. The teacher should spend a maximum of 3 minutes per pupil in order to help them decide on practical tasks they can do to improve their understanding and knowledge. Teachers can also set assignments to give the pupil an opportunity to practice on an area of improvement. Self-evaluations will be sent home in the student diary and parents will be expected to sign the evaluation.

Development plan 2018/2019

- Investigate the possibility to extend the subjects offered to include vocational subjects
- Develop more links with other local colleges in the area that offer vocational qualifications
- Develop more student led extra-curricular activities