

THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL



POLICY DOCUMENT 41

# POLICY ON THE THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Date approved by Board of Trustees	22/03/2023
Next review due:	Academic Year 2025 - 2026
Policy review cycle:	Every 3 years
Policy Owner:	Assistant Headteacher – Curriculum and Assessment

## Vision Statement

***We, the staff and governors, aspire  
to ensure that all our students,  
irrespective of ability  
and regardless of anyone's doubts,  
achieve their potential in full;  
and we aspire in this way to make Thomas Mills High School  
the best in the country.***

## **1. Guidance and Legislation**

- 1.1. This policy reflects the requirements for academies to provide a broad and balanced curriculum as per the Academies Act 2010.
- 1.2. The policy reflects requirements for inclusion and equality as set out in the Equality Policy and SEND Policy.
- 1.3. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.
- 1.4. The School will regularly review provision to ensure that:
  - 1.4.1. A robust framework is in place for setting curriculum priorities and aspirational targets.
  - 1.4.2. Staff and Trustees participate actively in decision-making about the breadth and balance of the curriculum.
  - 1.4.3. The School is complying with its funding agreement and teaching a "broad and balanced curriculum" which includes English, maths, and science, and enough teaching time is provided for pupils to cover the requirements of the funding agreement.
  - 1.4.4. Proper provision is made for pupils with different abilities and needs, including children with special educational needs disability (*See SEND Policy*).
  - 1.4.5. All courses provided for pupils below the age of 19 that lead to qualifications, both academic and vocational, are rigorous and regulated by OfQual.
  - 1.4.6. The School implements the relevant statutory assessment arrangements.
  - 1.4.7. Pupils are provided with independent, impartial careers guidance, and that this is appropriately resourced (*See Careers Guidance and Provider Access Policy*).
  - 1.4.8. All required elements of the curriculum, and those subjects which the School chooses to offer, have aims and objectives which reflect the aims of the School and indicate how the needs of individual pupils will be met.
  - 1.4.9. The amount of time provided for teaching the required elements of the curriculum is adequate and is reviewed by the Trustees.
  - 1.4.10. The School's procedures for assessment meet all legal requirements.
  - 1.4.11. There is sufficient emphasis on Relationships and Sex Education; Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education; and developing pupils appreciation of Fundamental British Values (*See Combatting Extremism Statement, Cultural Education Policy, Drugs Policy, Educational Visits Policy, Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy, Spiritual and Moral Education Policy*).

## 2. Curriculum Intent

At Thomas Mills High School, our core values are at the heart of everything we do. We set high expectations to ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to excel across all aspects of school life. Our intention is to ensure pupils make outstanding progress and that the curriculum removes any potential barriers to learning.

We want our pupils to leave with knowledge and skills which will

- develop a love of learning for its own sake which will last a lifetime
- create excellent life opportunities and prepare them exceptionally well for life beyond the School.
- inspire them to enjoy a wide range of social and cultural experiences both in School and in the future.
- Develop into responsible, respectful and active citizens
- appreciate equality and are respectful of difference including protected characteristics
- develop pupils' **confidence** and **resilience** so that they can keep themselves mentally healthy

In the fulfilment of its intent, the School seeks to

- 2.1 Provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils
- 2.2 Provide a curriculum that's coherently planned and sequenced to enable pupils to develop knowledge, understand concepts and acquire skills, and be able to choose and apply these in relevant situations
- 2.3 Support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and develop pupils' understanding of Fundamental British Values.
- 2.4 Develop pupils' understanding of positive mental health, physical health, relationships and sexuality.
- 2.5 Support pupils' physical development and responsibility for their own health, and enable them to be active
- 2.6 Promote a love of learning for its own sake
- 2.7 Ensure equal access to learning for all pupils, with high expectations for every pupil and appropriate levels of challenge and support
- 2.8 Have a high academic ambition for all pupils
- 2.9 Equip pupils with the knowledge, self-confidence and cultural capital they need to succeed in life
- 2.10 Develop pupils' independent learning skills and resilience so they understand the intrinsic value of persistent hard work in order to equip them for further/higher education and employment
- 2.11 Ensure that all pupils are literate and numerate
- 2.12 Provide increasing degrees of choice as pupils progress through the School;
- 2.13 embrace new approaches and opportunities for curriculum development;
- 2.14 include guidance on future pathways and careers
- 2.15 provide a curriculum that is complemented by an extensive programme of extra-curricular opportunities.

2.16 to respect all relevant legislation and statutory requirements.

### **3. Curriculum Implementation**

- 3.1. The School believes that a carefully planned and structured curriculum is the foundation upon which excellent learning and development is built. The curriculum is designed and implemented in such a way that it builds on prior knowledge and prepares pupils for the next stage in their education. Leaders and teachers ensure that lessons are engaging and suitably differentiated so that pupils spend an appropriate amount of time in lesson working independently at their level of ability. Development of language and building knowledge are integral to curriculum planning. Subject Leaders, who are experts in their subjects, carefully construct a curriculum that promotes a deep understanding of a wide range of topics. Teachers plan learning that allows pupils to embed and recall knowledge through techniques such as interleaving of topics and spaced practice. This builds firm foundations for progression to the next level and exam success.
- 3.1.1. The School curriculum in Year 7 and 8 is based upon, but not restricted to, the National Curriculum with significant time allocated not only to core subjects but also to the arts and languages.
- 3.1.2. Options choices are made in Year 8 with GCSE courses beginning in year 9. This allows a broadening of the curriculum with a wider range of subjects available, most of which are a “Free Choice” with subjects allocated to blocks to fit with pupil choice. The School is committed to languages for all in Key Stage 4. However, there is a recognition that the aim of languages for all is to develop language skills and cultural awareness. Therefore, pupils will have the choice between the academic rigour of GCSE or a more accessible course. Where a pupil has joined the School after the Key Stage 4 courses have started, a pupil who has not been studying a language previously may not have to fulfil this requirement as long as the Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum) is satisfied that there is appropriate alternative provision available for the pupil.
- 3.1.3 Pupils will rarely be allowed to follow a more restricted curriculum. The circumstances under which this is allowed will have to be approved by Assistant Headteacher (curriculum) but will be restricted to medical reasons (where accompanied by written evidence from a medical professional) and very late entrants to the school who have not previously followed a full curriculum. This will only be allowed if there is suitable supervision available.
- 3.1.4 All pupils will be expected to follow the full GCSE pathway for English and Mathematics. However, this may be supplemented with entry level or level one qualifications where appropriate.
- 3.1.5. In the Sixth Form, all students have a free choice of academic and vocational courses, with the additional option of the Extended Project Qualification also on offer.
- 3.2. All subjects have carefully mapped curricula, that creates opportunities to build on previously learnt skills and develop rich knowledge to deepen pupils’ understanding of key concepts. Their analytical skills should be developed so they can apply their knowledge effectively. There are many opportunities built into lessons to secure the need to recall and retrieve previous learning and apply this knowledge to new ideas and novel situations so that knowledge is fully embedded.

- 3.3 Curriculum maps show where individual subjects cover the knowledge, skills and concepts needed for a broader understanding of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) lessons, Social Moral Spiritual Cultural (SMSC), Fundamental British Values (FBV) and Careers (see 3.4). Departments should, where it fits with their subject curriculum, have tasks which enhance the whole school delivery of these topics.
- 3.4 The school will have a map of the delivery of dedicated Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RSE) lessons, Social Moral Spiritual Cultural (SMSC), Careers and Fundamental British Values (FBV). This will include explicit teaching of protected characteristics and difference in dedicated lessons. These are augmented by an extensive tutorial and assembly programme, regular participation in national events such as mock elections and Remembrance Day, and events unique to the School such as Thomas Mills Day. The Personal Development curriculum and the Core Religious, Spiritual and Moral curriculum are planned in tandem. All pupils have a personal development record which they complete during tutorial time.
- 3.5. The School is committed to promoting pupils' physical and emotional health. The curriculum ensures that, whilst the time dedicated to PE varies in different years, it averages over Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 as over 2 hours.
- 3.6. The subject curriculums are designed to be engaging and to enthuse pupils. These are augmented by an extensive extra-curricular programme and educational visits are encouraged and supported. Visits are often used to promote a wider appreciation of culture and the natural world as well as develop resilience, leadership and broaden horizons.
- 3.7. The curriculum model ensures that no pupil is excluded from a subject or experience by reason of educational need, disability or disadvantage. Whilst there are options which are more accessible for students with specific learning needs, these are optional and the final decision as to which course to follow at both Key Stage 3 and 4 rests with the pupil. Where pupils are at a financial disadvantage, funds are allocated to allow them to participate in the wider curriculum through instrumental lessons and School trips fund. There are bursaries and grants available for students in the Sixth Form. All teachers are expected to use the detailed advice supplied by the SENCo and his team to guide their teaching. Additional support is provided for those pupils who benefit from extra input and help.
- 3.8. The School curriculum is academically demanding, and pupils are set high, aspirational targets. Regular assemblies both from Senior Leaders and Heads of Year re-emphasise these high expectations.
- 3.9. The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects at both Keys Stage 3 and 4. There is also an emphasis on developing the whole child as the School promotes a wide range of cultural experiences. As pupils progress up the School there is increasing opportunity to take a leadership role both through subject specific opportunities such as Language Leaders and Sports Leaders and through the pastoral system including School council, the Prefect System, and the House System. The Head Student Team take an active role in assemblies and School events.
- 3.10. The subject leaders ensure their curricula ensure pupils' start to take an increasing role in their own learning. Teachers are encouraged to set open-ended tasks and give feedback which allows pupils to re-visit their work and develop their understanding further. Time is allocated during the year for the School's extensive Duke of Edinburgh scheme and an Activities Week to further develop independence, resilience and leadership.

- 3.11. The School recognises the importance of literacy and numeracy in creating pathways for lifelong learning and employment. The development of pupil language and oracy is at the forefront of our curriculum as we understand how vital it is for our pupils to build confidence in communication skills not only for their time in School but also to prepare them for working life. We ensure pupils have opportunities in all subjects to discuss, challenge and build on other points of view and to develop their formality of language to ensure they can have the confidence to speak to different audiences. Numeracy skills are embedded across the curriculum. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 follow the accelerated reader programme. Additional literacy help includes a paired reading programme, ACE dictionary training for pupils with a dyslexic diagnosis. For those most in need of support, the Accelerated Reader programme is carried on beyond Year 8. A small number of pupils are offered the opportunity in Year 8 to drop one foreign language. These pupils have a dedicated accelerated reader lesson each week and an expressive arts lesson to improve oracy and self-confidence. The mathematics department have had some specific dyscalculia training to meet the needs of pupils.
- 3.12. At the end of Year 7, a small number of pupils are offered the opportunity to study just one foreign language and have additional literacy support. Many pupils have a clear idea of subjects they like the most and the least by the middle of Year 8 and offering some choice at this stage engages pupils as partners in their learning and leads to improved outcomes. Whilst the School aims to allow significant pupil choice at this stage the options process is mindful of the need for academic rigour. All have to study a language either to GCSE or an FCSE until the end of Year 10. All pupils have to study one of French, Geography, German or History. They also have 3 free choices. Sixth form have a free choice of subjects. At both GCSE and in the Sixth Form, timetable blocks are constructed based upon pupil choice rather than being fixed beforehand.
- 3.13. The curriculum will be reviewed regularly to ensure it stays both rigorous and appropriate in a changing world. The reviews will consider the views of pupils and students well as recent research studies.
- 3.14. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular clubs, activities and visits which broaden and deepen the pupils' academic, cultural and personal development. The School allocates resources to ensure that pupils are not excluded from these opportunities and experiences by the nature of their needs or disadvantage.
- 3.15. The school has been creating a tutorial programme which enhances personal development across a range of areas.
- 3.16. The School will monitor any changes to legislation and statutory requirements to ensure that the curriculum continues to comply.

#### 4. Curriculum Impact

At Thomas Mills High School, our curriculum will:

- 4.1. ensure that the sequence of learning builds on previous knowledge whilst supporting future progression.
- 4.2. lead to qualifications that are of worth for employers and for entry to further and higher education.
- 4.3. enable all pupils to fulfil their academic potential
- 4.4. meet the needs of pupils of all abilities at the School.
- 4.5. allow pupils to acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures.
- 4.6. ensure pupils have a clear understanding of protected characteristics, Fundamental British Values and recognise the importance of tolerance and acceptance of difference.
- 4.7. encourage pupils to take a leadership role within the school and the wider community
- 4.8. prepare pupils to compete in the global economy.
- 4.9. prepare pupils to make informed choices at the end of KS3, KS4 and beyond.
- 4.10. help pupils develop lively, enquiring minds and the ability to question and argue rationally.
- 4.11. develop an appreciation, understanding and belief in our Charter of Values:
  1. *A love of learning for its own sake*
  2. *Vigour and optimism in embracing the future*
  3. *The intrinsic virtue of persistent hard work*
  4. *Acceptance of personal responsibility*
  5. *Equal value accorded to all persons*
  6. *Courtesy, self-discipline and respect for others*
  7. *A determination to achieve excellence in all we do*
  8. *Honesty, moral courage and integrity*
  9. *Good fellowship*
  10. *Service to others*
  11. *Leadership and enterprise*
  12. *Respect for the traditions and the achievements of the school*

## Appendix 1: Key Stage 3 and 4 Curriculum 2021 - 2022

### Key Stage 3

Year 7		Year 8	
Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
Art	2	Art	2
Drama	1	Drama	1
DT/IT Rotation	2	DT Rotation	2
English	4	English	3
French	2	French	2
Geography	2	Geography	2
German	2	German	2
History	2	History	2
Mathematics	4	Mathematics	4
Music	2	Music	1
Physical Education	3	Physical Education	3
Religious Spiritual and Moral Education	1	Religious Spiritual and Moral Education	1
Science	3	Latin/Literacy	1
		Science	4

In Year 8, a small number of pupils can opt to study just one language. These pupils have 3 lessons per week of their chosen Foreign Language and 1 lesson of additional Literacy.

### Key Stage 4

Year 9		Year 10		Year 11	
Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods	Subject	Periods
English	5	English	5	English	5
Mathematics	4	Mathematics	4	Mathematics	4
Science	6	Science	6	Science	6
Core PE	2	Core PE	3	Core PE	2
PE RSHE Rotation	1	PE RSHE Rotation	1	Core RSME	1
Core RSME	1	Core RSME	1	Option 1	3
Core IT	1	Core MFL	2	Option 2	3
Core MFL	2	Option 1	2	Option 3	3
Option 1	2	Option 2	2	Option 4	3
Option 2	2	Option 3	2		
Option 3	2	Option 4	2		

Option 4	2				
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**Key Stage 4 Optional Subjects**

Art	Food and Nutrition	Latin
Business Studies	French	Music
Computer Science	Geography	Physical Education (GCSE)
Drama	German	Religious Studies (GCSE)
DT: Resistant Materials	History	Spanish
DT: Textiles	Vocational IT	

**Appendix 2: Sixth Form Subjects**

Art	Drama	German	Physical Education
Biology	English Language	Government and Politics	Physics
Business Studies	English Literature	History	Product Design
Chemistry	French	Mathematics	Psychology
Classical Civilisation	Further Mathematics	Music	Religious Studies
Computer Science	Geography	Photography	Sociology

**Subjects available as Level 3 Technical Qualifications**

Health and Social Care
ICT
Business Studies

**Other Level 3 Qualifications**

Extended Project Qualification
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