



CURRICULUM POLICY

1. Introduction and Aims

The Laurels School is an independent school with a Catholic ethos for girls aged 11 to 18. The curriculum at The Laurels School provides full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. It has a twofold purpose:

- To impart wisdom – education of intellect.
- To teach to do good – education of will.

The Laurels School curriculum is broad, balanced and academically rigorous. The emphasis is on teaching girls to think and cultivating a spirit of intellectual adventure through exposure to *“the best that has been thought and said,”* Mathew Arnold. While recognising and embracing our responsibility to prepare our pupils to be effective in the workplace, we resist an excessively narrow view of the curriculum that would reduce it to employment training. We believe that fostering the development of the “whole person” and inspiring a profound love of learning are not opposed to preparation for employment; on the contrary, well-rounded, thoughtful, and virtuous young men and women will be well prepared for work - and much else besides.

The broad aims of the school are therefore:

- To commit to a high level of education for all regardless of ability, race and or cultural background.
- To encourage and develop true freedom through our educational philosophy.
- To encourage the development of a critical mind and universal outlook.
- To develop the whole child, in partnership with parents, through a deeply embedded Character Education programme grounded in Catholic principles.
- To provide additional linguistic support for pupils for whom English is not their first language.
- To provide the opportunity to excel by participating in co-curricular activities to stretch pupils, improve their interpersonal skills, leadership and team working.

1.1. Principles

1.1.1. Entitlement

We are committed to the principle that all pupils, regardless of ability, race, cultural background have the right to the highest quality of education we can provide. This means that we seek to ensure breadth and balance for all, appropriate, high levels of expectation and genuine challenge and relevance, continuity, and progression in learning by providing courses of study and teaching methods tailored to the wide range of needs, interests, and aspirations of our pupils. It also means that many features of the curriculum are common to all pupils. Regardless of ability, all pupils are given the opportunity to access the curriculum and are fully supported in their learning journeys.

1.1.2. Coherence

The primary focus of The Laurels School's educational philosophy is the development of true freedom that will enable our pupils to live a more complete life, as opposed to the mere attainment of technical skills or knowledge. An education based on virtue ethics increases one's freedom, understood as the ability to embrace the True and the Good, wherever they are truly recognised. It imparts the desire necessary to join with the great minds of history, rising above one's current situation and culture, to appreciate what is deepest in our human condition. An education in virtue is a life-long process; The Laurels School strives to form life-long learners who have, what Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman, called a "habit of mind" in pursuit of intellectual excellence and the contemplative life. An education at The Laurels School involves the acquisition of excellent study habits which, together with an enquiring mind, form the basis of a life-long love of learning.

1.2. Balance

A consequence of the fundamental conviction of the need for integral development is the concept of balance in the school curriculum. An appropriate mix of subjects offered leads to the well-rounded development of each and every pupil. We are educating the whole child - in all of their intellectual, cultural, spiritual and social potential.

Two fundamental characteristics which The Laurels School curriculum seeks to develop in each pupil are a critical mind and a universal outlook. A critical mind is developed through a philosophically sound curriculum, teaching which helps the pupil form her own reasoned opinions on issues and formation in the virtues of sincerity and intellectual integrity. A universal outlook is largely a consequence of broad cultural exposure and the capacity to see the same principles at work in all forms of genuine cultural expression.

The curriculum is designed to challenge and extend our pupils with a rigorous grounding in academic skills. We have high expectations for our pupils and encourage them not to set limits on their achievements. The curriculum is differentiated, with a combination of teaching skills and resources which recognise and cater for differences in pupils' abilities and skills.

1.3. Ethos

The school seeks to develop the whole child, in partnership with parents, through a deeply embedded Character Education programme grounded in Catholic principles. It aims to foster a sense of community, promote personal qualities of honesty, tolerance and respect for others, and develop in the pupils a sense of moral awareness and an appreciation of the virtues of

loyalty, duty and social responsibility. At its centre, the school is one in which high expectations are the norm in a caring environment.

An essential pillar of The Laurels School ethos is the belief that authentic education involves a forming of the mind and heart so that pupils and teachers embrace a curriculum which is enriching and inspiring. A strong part of the school culture is a recognition that serious study is an important part of a pupil's life project. Indeed, the sense of schoolwork as the beginning of one's professional life, and thus an important means of serving others, informs the way study is viewed in The Laurels School community. Furthermore, the relationship between The Laurels School and the teachings of St Josemaría Escrivá on study and work helps to foster the sense that doing even the most ordinary things, like studying, extraordinarily well for a noble motive enables us to offer our best to God and so draw close to Him.

At The Laurels School we are committed to:

- Ensuring that all pupils are supported to help them access to the curriculum, which we recognise is the School's responsibility, as it is our stated intention to include not exclude
- A discursive approach to all subject areas, encouraging philosophical enquiry in classes
- Providing opportunities for differentiation in academic studies and a programme of Character Education, which is integral to the School's provision of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education, which helps each individual child to achieve the best possible outcome
- Drawing on external practical expertise, wherever possible, to enhance learning experiences
- Valuing children's uniqueness, listening to the views of our pupils, and promoting respect for diverse cultures
- Valuing the spiritual and moral development of each person, as well as their intellectual and physical growth
- Valuing the rights enjoyed by each person in our society and respecting each pupil in our school for who they are, treating them with fairness and honesty
- Meeting the needs of all our children and ensuring that we meet all statutory requirements regarding inclusion
- Ensuring that education is *integral*. This means that all the key learning areas (i.e. linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative), must be catered for with due balance and unity of approach
- Ensuring that the education received by the children is personalised, treating each pupil as an individual who has specific strengths, weaknesses and needs
- Helping pupils to acquire all the human virtues as desired and fostered by their parents
- Ensuring that pupils are given the preparation they will need to contribute effectively and generously to the improvement of society
- Ensuring our pupils are adequately prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life

- Ensuring all pupils are engaged and understand the fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and the effective preparation for the opportunities and experiences of life in British society;
- Ensuring that all members of staff are aware that, as educators, they must not promote partisan political views or attempt to influence pupils in any way towards a political ideology;
- Encouraging respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act(a)

2. Organisation of the Curriculum

2.1. Timetable

The school operates a weekly timetable with 35 forty-five-minute periods. The school day starts at 8.30am and ends at 3.45pm. There are seven periods in the day (five in the morning and two in the afternoon) with registration taking place at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. There is an additional period for Character Education, Enrichment Reading or Mass on rotation every weekday. Supervised private study and co-curricular activities are available each day. Excluding reading time, co-curricular activities, private study and Character Education/Religious Education & Philosophy (REP)/IT/Computing, teaching time is 26.25 hours per week.

2.2. Inclusion

The curriculum in our school is designed to be appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of all pupils, including those with an EHCP. If it is necessary to modify some children's access to the curriculum, in order to meet their needs, then we do this only after the relevant specialist teachers and their parents have been consulted.

If children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or special needs, our school does all it reasonably can to meet these individual needs. See separate SEN policy for further detail.

2.3. Mixed Ability Teaching, Setting and Differentiation

Although pupils have to undertake an entrance assessment to be admitted to the school, there is a wide range of ability within the school. To take account of the range of ability in any class, staff have a responsibility, when planning work, to meet the needs of all pupils. This will involve, at different times, adapting tasks, providing different resources, developing extension work, catering for a variety of learning styles and environments, setting individual goals, giving different levels of support, and offering a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.

Please also refer to the following supporting policy documents that also contribute to curriculum policy and delivery:

- Assessment and Reporting Policy
- Homework Policy
- Most Able Policy
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy
- Parent Handbook
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Policy

3. Curriculum Enrichment

3.1. Arête Programme

Tutorial time is allocated to pupils for one-to-one discussions with their personal Tutor every month. Our Arête programme is integrated into the School's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) provision and underpins our stated aim of promoting learning, personal growth and development and is delivered as part of the PSHCE curriculum. Also included in these lessons is the Relationships and Sexual Education Programme (RSE). An integral part of our curriculum is the fostering of creative and critical thinking skills. All pupils are required to follow a course in REP, which encourages them to explore and develop philosophical enquiry and logical thinking, helping them "learn to learn".

Besides the academic timetable, we do everything we can to help girls settle into school and teenage life. We organise a residential trip for Year 7 pupils with team-building activities. This is designed to foster good habits of community living and to introduce our pupils to new situations and challenges.

Our co-curricular activities enhance and support the curriculum. Pupils at The Laurels School are encouraged to show initiative, to make informed judgements and to seize the opportunity of exploring a range of cultural, aesthetic and sporting pursuits. School trips, specialist language exchanges with our partner schools abroad, school clubs, opportunities for public speaking - in assemblies and debating clubs - all provide means of developing collaborative working and leadership skills. Eminent speakers and outside experts are invited from the arts, sciences, and public life in a programme of age-appropriate talks to enhance pupils' experience of life outside school.

Pupils at The Laurels School are taught to show respect for everyone in the community and to develop a sense of self-worth, resilience and compassion, which will inform all aspects of their wider lives. As our pupils' progress through the school, they take part in outreach community schemes in order to help them develop an awareness of the wider community and the joy of service to others.

Year 7, 8 and 9 Curriculum

To commit to a high level of education for all regardless of ability, race, and cultural background.

All pupils are given the opportunity to follow the same curriculum in Year 7. The teaching groups are the same as their Form group so that girls will be able to get to know each other better as they start moving through the school. In some cases, pupils may follow a reduced curriculum after consultation with the parents, teachers, and SENCO.

The following subjects are taught to **all** pupils:

- **Core** – English, Mathematics, Religious Education, Science
- **Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)** – Spanish, French
- **Humanities** – Geography, History, Philosophy
- **Creative** – Art and Design, ICT, Drama, Music, Physical Education
- **Classics** – Latin.

At the end of Year 8, all pupils must choose between French or Spanish for their chosen MFL GCSE. Bi-lingual pupils are encouraged to study the language that is not their mother tongue. In Year 9, bi-lingual pupils can be prepared for language GCSEs.

Options guidance is given in the Autumn term of Year 9 to assist pupils with choosing appropriate subjects at GCSE (or equivalent) level. The option blocks are created by outcome of pupil satisfaction.

Key Stage 4 Curriculum

To commit to a high level of education for all regardless of ability, race and cultural background.

The following subjects are taught to **all** pupils at GCSE level:

- **Core** – Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Physical Education, Religious Studies
- **Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)** – Spanish, French

The following optional subjects at GCSE level:

- **Humanities** – Geography, History
- **Creative** – Art and Design, Drama, Music, Physical Education
- **Classics** – Latin
- **STEM** - Further Mathematics, Computing Science

Philosophy, Religious Education, Character Education (includes Personal, Social, Health & Citizenship Education) are core subjects that are not examined externally.

Key Stages 3 and 4 Arête Programme & REP Curriculum

To encourage and develop true freedom and a critical mind through our educational philosophy.

Pupils in Key Stage 3 study a different virtue every half term - looking at definitions of the virtue, how they can apply it to their own lives and how that virtue applies to society as a whole. This is done through two whole class lessons per week with their form teacher. In Key Stage 4, a similar approach is used but with broader themes rather than specific virtues e.g., 'Women Who Dare'. This knowledge is then built on in tutorials to apply the virtue individually to pupils' own needs and personalities and this forms part of the basis for Parent-Tutor meetings where the tutor discusses with parents how this virtue can be applied in the home and out of school context.

To develop the whole child, in partnership with parents, through a deeply embedded Character Education programme grounded in Catholic principles.

The REP curriculum seeks to help pupils learn what God has revealed of Himself, to know this revelation both by their natural reason and through faith, and thereby to understand that faith and reason complement rather than contradict each other. The REP curriculum also fosters an appreciation of other faiths. Lessons in the RE department seek to foster a personal relationship in our pupils with Jesus Christ and are supported by chaplaincy time and by participation in liturgical events in the school.

The role of Philosophy at The Laurels is to support the study of the Catholic Faith. Philosophy is based on the Philosophy for Children method where the teacher is a facilitator of philosophical enquiry which engages the pupils not in discussion but in philosophical enquiry. The teacher supports the pupils in their thinking, reasoning, and questioning as a group. Pupils use the Socratic Method to learn the philosophical moves of posing philosophical questions, seeking justification, recognising assumptions, and listening to their peers. Pupils at The Laurels are also introduced to the principles of Christian Philosophy

Key Stages 3, 4, EAL Curriculum and SEND Provision, and Most Able Provision

To provide additional linguistic support for pupils for whom English is not their first language.

EAL lessons are timetabled by outcome of pupils who have been identified as requiring additional lessons to improve and support their English. The timing of these lessons is therefore flexible. Typically, there can be one or two lessons a week with a maximum of four pupils. PACT international pupils are automatically offered EAL lessons.

A small number of pupils who struggle to access the full curriculum successfully may follow a reduced programme which is determined in consultation with their families, the SENCo and Senior Management Team. Close monitoring of the progress of such pupils can allow for

adjustment at any point during an academic year. Should any pupils have a statement, their needs are suitably accommodated.

The Laurels School aims to stretch and challenge our pupils and we have a clear understanding of all pupils' needs. Our aim for our Most Able (MA) pupils is to set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge these individuals to be the best they can be. We have an individualised approach and a Most Able Coordinator works with teachers to find the 'best fit' for each pupil, using the NACE framework. We aim to give our MA pupils:

- A differentiated curriculum.
- Opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding in areas away from the curriculum.
- Increase independence and confidence in their learning.
- Development and encouragement of different talents.

Identification of MA Pupils:

- Staff follow MA Criteria when selecting pupils (see Most Able Policy).
- Staff evaluate their progress termly in the Academic Cycle.

Staff Support for MA pupils:

- Differentiated classwork and homework tasks.
- Additional tasks set and completed away from the classroom.
- Project work allowing pupils to present their work in different formats, for example talks, plays, videos.
- EPQ.
- Enriching lectures led by invited guests and staff.
- Educational off site trips and visits.
- Internal competitions - House events, etc.
- External competitions - ISA, etc.
- Performances, sports events, etc.
- School initiative such as clubs and service projects.

The Sixth Form

To commit to a high level of education for all regardless of ability, race and cultural background.

In our school the following subjects are offered to **all** students:

- **Mathematics and Science** – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Business Studies
- **Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)** – Spanish, French
- **Humanities** – English Literature, Geography, History, Religious Studies
- **Creative** – Art and Design, Drama, Music, Physical Education
- **Classics** – Latin.

Students in Lower VI & Upper VI have the opportunity to follow three or four A Level courses, the Extended Project Qualification and a core course in REP and Character Education.

Sixth Form Personal Development Programme

To encourage and develop true freedom and a critical mind through our educational philosophy.

Students continue to be supported by their personal tutors who meet with their tutees once a month to discuss different aspects of school life and beyond. These sessions help students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement and to guide them to make the right choices with regard to a wide spectrum of challenges in different areas of their lives.

They also follow a programme which covers Character Education, preparation for life after school, UCAS preparation, Careers Advice, REP.

They have the opportunity to meet people from a variety of professions who are invited to the school to address the students to help them in their career choices.

Whole School Co-Curricular and Careers Curriculum

To excel by participating in co-curricular activities to stretch pupils, improve their interpersonal skills, leadership and team working.

Refer to Clubs list which is updated termly and available to view on the school website.

In Key Stage 3 pupils attend talks by various visitors representing a range of professions.

In Year 10 the focus is on matching skills to practical experiences. Pupils in particular struggle with the concept of listing their talents and things they are 'good at' and worry about how to talk about themselves. Therefore, in preparation for their work experience pupils are tasked with linking their skills to their experiences and writing a covering letter. A questionnaire in Google Classroom is a crucial part of this process. In Year 11 the focus is on helping the pupils to think about their plans for post-18 education opportunities. All pupils are given the opportunity to access a variety of prospectuses for universities and apprenticeship schemes. This is closely tied to thinking about their A Level options. When considering possible future careers, pupils discuss these options in class, and have completed various tasks in order to try and match their skills to future jobs. Pupils in both year groups attend talks by various visitors representing a range of professions.

The focus in LVI for students is on choosing universities or other pathways such as Apprenticeships with a view to future careers options and pathways. They are also tasked with writing a covering letter and CV in order to apply for work experience. UVI students, applying to

university, are encouraged to find work experience or paid jobs over the summer break which links with their chosen university subject choice or possible career path, developing skills for the professional world.

The Key Stage 5 provision also prepares our students for life beyond the school, be that university, work or a gap year. Students are helped in their UCAS applications and through our links with international organisations to find appropriate but challenging gap year experiences. Students are invited to explore the different avenues open to them, such as apprenticeships, work opportunities and experiences which will provide chances for their own growth and leadership.

This policy is reviewed biannually.

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