



Birkdale
School

*LOWER SCHOOL
HANDBOOK
2019/2020*



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From the Head ...

Dear Parents

Entry to a new secondary school is an exciting but challenging time for a boy of eleven or twelve. At Birkdale we try to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible, and the purpose of this handbook is to give you information which will help boys to settle down rapidly and securely.

Whilst he is in the Lower School, during the first two years of his career in the Senior School, your son will be under the care of the Senior Master, Mr Howard Parker and his Assistant Mr Dominic Parsons. The Lower School is based in the Johnson building, and the pastoral structures are designed to help boys settle down quickly and to feel confident at school and at home. Please contact your son's Form Tutor or the Senior Master in the first instance if you have any questions about academic or pastoral matters.

Much of this handbook is concerned with the academic curriculum, which is related to, but not dictated by, the National Curriculum. Our policy is to prepare each boy in the best possible way so that he realises his full potential, not least when he comes to external examinations and university entrance.

For school rules and many other points, please refer to the "General Information for Parents" booklet, a copy of which you should already have. In order that your son benefits fully from Birkdale, he should take a full and active part in school activities. The school week runs from Monday to Friday, but a considerable number of activities are arranged on Saturdays and after school each day. We look to parents to support us in ensuring that pupils attend at these times when selected to play in matches, practices and other activities. So much of what makes Birkdale distinctive is dependent on the support of parents for what we do - not least in extra curricular activities, including drama and music.

We look forward to working in partnership with you as we welcome your son to the Lower School. I am sure he will find the Birkdale atmosphere to be a happy one in which he will enjoy great success.



Head

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SENIOR SCHOOL

The Senior School is divided into three sections, each of which has its own individual character. We aim to provide different environments to enable pupils to develop as individuals and gain in confidence.

THE LOWER SCHOOL

Forms 1 and 2, the equivalent in the state sector of years 7 and 8, are housed in the Johnson Building under the pastoral and disciplinary care of the Senior Master of the Lower School, Mr Howard Parker and Assistant Head of Lower School Mr Dominic Parsons.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Forms 3, 4 and 5 are under the pastoral and disciplinary care of the Senior Master of the Middle School, Mr Matthew Morton and Assistant Head of Middle School Mrs Emma Magenty.

THE SIXTH FORM

Mrs Helen Parsons is the Head of Sixth Form, which is based in the Grayson building. She is supported by our two Assistant Heads of Sixth Form Mrs Polly Pickford and Mr Matthew Jones.

Each form has a Form Tutor who is pastorally responsible for the pupils in his/her form and this, together with the structure outlined above, ensures that personal contact between pupils and staff - always given a high priority at Birkdale - is preserved and enhanced.

The School is also organised on a House system, which provides a vertical structure within which pupils can relate together across the age boundaries. The House system gives pupils opportunities to develop leadership potential. The four Houses are Asterley (Green), Griffiths (Blue), Hall (Yellow) and Heeley (Red).

THE LOWER SCHOOL

By creating a Lower School, with its own base and Senior Master, Birkdale has recognised the importance of the first two years in the Senior School as a foundation period, during which academic and social skills (required later for more advanced work) and mature and responsible conduct will be established. Boys of this age are particularly responsive and enthusiastic, so these years are an important, exciting and interesting period in their development. Our aim is to ensure that when they enter the Middle School boys have acquired broad interests and enquiring minds, that they have learned to work effectively on their own, that they have started GCSE preparation in a self-disciplined and mature way and that they feel secure and happy within the Birkdale School community.

The Senior Master of the Lower School, Mr Howard Parker, with the help of Mr Dominic Parsons, Assistant Head of Lower School, is responsible for the pastoral and academic development of the boys. He aims to provide a community in which boys can gain confidence and acquire a sense of belonging. The tutor groups within this section of the school are all based in the Johnson building but boys take lessons in subject areas which are based throughout the school, bringing them into contact with more senior pupils. We try to arrange that each Form Tutor teaches his or her form in the First Form and then continues as the tutor in S2. A similar system exists in the Middle School (S3, S4 and S5).

The Johnson Building and grounds are for the sole use of Lower School students outside lesson times, and this provision of an area separate from older pupils helps younger boys, especially those new to the school, to enjoy a smaller, secure environment.

Lower School have their own Common Room and table tennis area, cloakrooms, toilets and lockers, large tarmac playing area and lawns of around two acres.

Each year group (S1 and S2) is divided into tutor groups. All forms in a year group follow the same curriculum. Mathematics and French are initially taught in mixed groups but boys are then placed into sets for the remainder of the year. There is considerable flexibility for movement between the sets for any boy who is struggling or finding insufficient challenge, if we feel that such a move is in the best interests of the boy.

SCHOOL WORK

Boys are encouraged to develop sound work habits in Lower School which will form the basis of their academic progress through the Senior School. Books should be labelled clearly with name, class, subject and a note of the days upon which lessons take place. Each piece of work should have a title, which is underlined, and be dated. Homework is noted in the School Planner and must be completed on time. Boys are encouraged to take a pride in their work, and parents are asked to initial their son's planner at least weekly to indicate the homework has been properly attempted. Lower School Form Tutors will also check and sign planners on at least a fortnightly basis. To encourage participation and effort there is a system of House Points.

LOWER SCHOOL - PREFECTS AND MONITORS

One aim of the Lower School is to aid the “growing up” of boys in a secure, well-defined environment which allows them to develop their skills as individuals in a community. In the separate environment of the Lower School boys are encouraged to develop as leaders, and to take responsibilities in a wide range of activities.

A number of boys at the top of the Lower School are selected for duties as Prefects and Monitors. There is a Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy of the Lower School. A small number of boys are selected each September and additional appointments may be made throughout the year.

PROPERTY

Lower School boys have individual lockers. Keys are issued at the beginning of every year and spares are kept in school. If your son should lose his key he will be supplied with a spare, which will be charged for at the end of the academic year if the original key remains lost. Books may be kept in lockers, or at home and brought in daily as required. On arrival at school, bags should be placed in the cloakrooms and left there for the duration of the day. There should normally be no need to carry bags round school. Small document cases to carry books between lessons are acceptable.

Sports bags should be brought to school on a Monday only, when there is a timetabled games session. On other PE days a small bag to hold the necessary equipment is sufficient. All property should be named or marked so that it can be returned, if mislaid. All clothing should be named.

Lower school boys are allowed to have mobile phones in school, but a letter requesting this privilege should be sent to Mr Parker in order to ensure that parents are aware of the rules regarding mobile phones in this area of the school. Phones must be kept in lockers throughout the school day and they should be turned off. The phone may only be used for emergency calls during the day, at the permission of the Senior Master. Mobile phones are not to be used during break times, but we do acknowledge their value when boys come to be picked up in the evenings.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

A large variety of Clubs and Societies are available in the Lower School. A full list is provided in the School Calendar. Many Lower School boys become involved in Choir, Sport, Drama and other musical activities which require a degree of commitment, including after school and occasional Saturdays, if boys are to get the greatest pleasure and benefit from participation. All take place during the lunch break or after school and boys in the Lower School are expected to participate in at least two activities per term. They can, of course, change and preferably show a mix of interests. The Form Tutor discusses with each boy the activities he pursues each term and encourages him to follow a balanced programme. The choice is wide and varied and boys are encouraged to become involved.

THE CURRICULUM

The Curriculum which we have developed at Birkdale takes account of the National Curriculum and the requirements of Key Stage 3. We have taken advantage of our independent status to make two further modern languages available in S2 and to retain Latin as a core subject for the first two years.

| S1 | Periods per week |
|---|-------------------------|
| English | 5 |
| Mathematics | 5 |
| Science | 6 |
| French | 4 |
| Latin | 2 |
| Geography | 2 |
| History | 2 |
| Religious Education | 2 |
| Art | 2 |
| Design & Technology | 2 |
| Information & Communications Technology | 2 |
| Music | 2 |
| Physical Education | 1 |
| Games | 3 |

| S2 | Periods per week |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| English | 5 |
| Mathematics | 5 |
| Science | 6 |
| French | 3 |
| German/Spanish | 3 |
| Latin | 2 |
| Geography | 2 |
| History | 2 |
| Religious Education | 2 |
| Art | 2 |
| Design & Technology | 2 |
| Music | 2 |
| Physical Education | 1 |
| Games | 3 |

At this level particular importance is attached to English across the curriculum, and in every subject staff are asked to insist on effective communication and correct use of language. Considerable time is also spent in drama and debating to help boys become fluent and to think rapidly "on their feet". It is also felt that if a boy finds pleasure in reading he gains a permanent interest that is a vital part of education for leisure.

At Birkdale, we feel it important to produce the right blend of the theoretical and the practical. We recognise the increasing role of technology in society and, therefore, the growing need to develop technological awareness and skills through the school curriculum. Thus education in Art, Design and Technology and Information Technology forms an integral part of the school curriculum from the first year in the Senior School.

Birkdale is a community which, although it has no denominational links, nevertheless makes no secret of its claim to be a Christian School. This is reflected not only in the timetabled day but, more significantly, in the "hidden curriculum" in which every boy is assured of his worth as an individual.

By the time he enters the Middle School a boy should know how to listen and respond effectively, how to express himself accurately, and have developed some understanding of the society in which he is to play a part. He should also have learned how to relate effectively to others, with consideration of needs other than his own, and how to behave in a mature, courteous and responsible manner.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Birkdale has always included within its educational philosophy the education of the whole pupil and, in addition to the priority we give to academic development, we seek to provide opportunities for character development and leadership training outside the classroom. Outdoor education (non-games physical activity in an outdoor environment) aims to introduce pupils to a variety of situations in which they can develop qualities of self-reliance, initiative and leadership, in addition to providing a basis for the pursuit of interests throughout their lives.

The programme followed by all pupils will centre on two camps, for which there will be training sessions which take place beforehand. The camps will involve activities which are designed (within carefully planned safety considerations) to be physically and mentally testing: the emphasis is on self-reliance and leadership. The programme will culminate in a two day small group expedition during the 4th form camp.

3rd Form Camp

The aim is to develop group skills and to give experience of small group leadership.

The activities will probably include:

- a. Training in navigation and campcraft
- b. Small group walk into a tented base camp
- c. Local orienteering exercise
- d. Small group command tasks
- e. Cooking own food
- f. Small group walk, out to designated rendezvous
- g. Adventure activity at rendezvous (eg canoeing and rock-climbing)

Timing:

- a. After school sessions in the latter weeks of the Easter Term and the first weeks of the Summer Term
- b. One Games afternoon
- c. Camp on a Friday/Saturday, probably the weekend before Half Term.

Location: Peak District

4th Form Camp

The aim is to develop leadership skills to a level at which pupils can help lead a small group on a two day expedition.

The activity will include:

- a. Pre camp briefing
- b. Safety/briefing exercise on site
- c. Local navigation exercise
- d. One night Camping Expedition
- e. Adventure activity training days

Timing: Five days, during the Summer Term.

In recent years the *Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme* has become a significant part of the pupils' wider education, with a majority of Third Formers taking the Bronze award and an increasing number going on to take the Silver and Gold awards. The work in S3 will provide a good basis for the expedition section of the Bronze award but pupils will need to show the development of skills and interests, together with their willingness to be of service to the community, to fulfil other requirements of the scheme.

ACADEMIC WORK

School work, homework and coursework are all essential elements of the education programme at Birkdale. We monitor progress by assessing homework and class-work and report to parents and boys on grade cards, at Parents' Evenings and in end-of-term Reports. In the first term of S1 boys are tested in class or as a year group as appropriate. Formal testing usually takes place in English (for diagnostic purposes), French (for setting purposes) Science and Mathematics (diagnostic and setting). There are examinations in all subjects at the end of each school year.

GRADE CARDS

Grade Cards are issued once or twice per term on the dates indicated in the school calendar. Grades are given for attainment and effort. High effort grades can be achieved by any pupil; attainment grades relate to achievement.

A summary of the grade criteria is given below:

ATTAINMENT

| Grade | Comment |
|-------|---------|
|-------|---------|

| | |
|---|-----------|
| A | Excellent |
|---|-----------|

| | |
|---|-----------|
| B | Very Good |
|---|-----------|

| | |
|---|------|
| C | Good |
|---|------|

| | |
|---|------|
| D | Weak |
|---|------|

EFFORT

| Grade | Comment |
|-------|---------|
|-------|---------|

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| O | He gives of his best all the time |
|---|-----------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| V | He does all he should and more |
|---|--------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| G | Concentrates and works well most of the time |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| S | Applies sufficient effort to complete work |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| U | He is seriously underachieving |
|---|--------------------------------|

Boys are interviewed by Form Tutors and/or Senior Staff after each set of grades and targets are set for improvement where necessary. U grades for effort are treated seriously and a range of sanctions, which includes a daily report card, are used to focus attention on a pupil's problems.

HOMEWORK

Homework is set as indicated in the homework time-table issued at the start of the school year. Some teachers may set a piece of work to be completed over a period of time. Homework may be written, research or to learn for a test.

All homework should be recorded in the pupil planner. These are issued to all pupils.

If homework is incomplete, late or unsatisfactory then the following sanctions may be employed:

1. Repetition of unsatisfactory work.
2. Repetition of unsatisfactory work on red-lined paper.
Red-lined paper must be signed by a parent and the form tutor before being affixed to a pupil's exercise book.
3. Detention after school on a Tuesday evening.

The importance of homework cannot be exaggerated; boys are learning the patterns of self-discipline which will serve them well in A levels and at university. Parents can help by:

1. Checking the pupil planner. In S1 and S2 boys are asked to obtain a parent's signature each week. This measure is relaxed in later years but parents are encouraged to maintain an interest in the work set; boys who find organisation difficult may be asked to re-adopt the "sign each week" procedure.
2. Supporting the disciplinary procedures applied to boys who fall below the standards expected.

REPORTS AND PARENTS' EVENINGS

There is a written report at the end of each term, unless there has been a Parents' Evening during the course of the term. The current programme of reports and Parents' Evenings is:

| | Christmas | Easter | Summer |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| S1 | Evening | Report | Evening |
| S2 | Report | Evening | Report |
| S3 | Report | Evening | Report |
| S4 | Evening | Report | Evening |
| S5 | Report | Evening | |
| L6 | Evening | Report | Evening |
| U6 | Report | Evening | |

Parents worried about the progress of their son may contact the appropriate Senior Master at any stage. This especially applies after a report from the School.

THE LOWER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

ART AND DESIGN

Boys in the First and Second year work as forms on a variety of projects that follow the National Curriculum. Time is spent developing skills for analysing and recording from direct observation and collecting various source material. This research can then be developed in the various media that are available in the art room. These range from pencil and pastel through to paints, collage and 3D materials, printing, and multi-media.

The boys are encouraged to discuss their work at all stages and make critical judgments. They learn to modify or develop their approaches in response to their own and others' evaluations. In addition to this, they develop a specialist vocabulary, and explore and experiment with materials and images, whilst working towards producing a final piece.

Throughout the first two years' boys should be able to demonstrate and show evidence of the ability to evaluate work of other artists, and understand the principal features of our artistic heritage. Methods and approaches of other artists can be used imaginatively in the presentation of their own ideas and feelings.

One of the things we pride ourselves on in the Art department at Birkdale is the use of good, almost professional, quality equipment as well as taking very seriously the meaning and formal qualities that constitute all great Art.

Even at this early stage we introduce the boys to some of the quite difficult concepts and philosophies which underlie Art and find that they rise to the challenge. In the same way, when they are shown something of the professional's way of working they respond, and some quite exciting and sophisticated work can result.

CLASSICS

In the first and second years at Birkdale, all boys study Latin for two periods a week. We use the Cambridge Latin Course. In the early stages we concentrate on the learning of basic Latin grammar and the differences in word order between English and Latin. Also of prime importance in the first two years is the learning of vocabulary. This is mostly done through reading and translating but we also have learning homework fairly frequently. Learning grammar and vocabulary takes place in the context of reading stories in Latin from the course book. Standard activities in class and for homework include reading Latin aloud, oral and written comprehension and translation, discussion of character and analysis of noun and verb endings. Latin classes are held in the I.T. suite on a regular basis in S1 and S2, using the on-line resources linked to the Cambridge Latin Course.

The historical context of Latin is very important. In the first part of the course the story is set in Pompeii. There are sections to be studied on topics as varied as education, gladiators and beliefs about life after death, but much of the historical material arises out of the reading passages themselves. The second and third parts of the course are set in Roman Britain and Roman Egypt. They offer scope for a fairly close examination of how Roman culture affected two very different regions, and how it has directly influenced their culture and society nowadays.

These foundations lead on to GCSE Latin and Classical Civilisation in the Middle School. The course changes its location, moving to Britain - focusing on Bath and Chester, and the City of Rome, but the methodology stays the same. GCSE Latin is based on set books, unseen translation and comprehension, and questions on Roman life and Society.

Classical Civilisation GCSE, which is taught in the fourth and fifth years, offers the chance to study the Greek and Roman worlds, without Latin or Greek. The topics covered are Myth and Religion and War and Warfare.

Ancient Greek is offered as an extra-curricular club in S3.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Definition

Computer Science encompasses the disciplines of Computing and Information and Communications Technology. Computing involves problem solving and writing computer programs. ICT is more concerned with content creation and learning how best to access communications technologies.

Rationale

The first year course aims to produce competent ICT users who are confident in their ability to produce relevant documents (e.g. desktop-published, slideshows, etc.) for use in other subjects. In addition, we are building the foundation problem-solving skills required for Computer Science for GCSE and A Level. We hope that students will finish the course enthusiastic about their ability to build with PCs rather than being passive receivers of content generated by others.

All first year students have two single lessons (or a double lesson) each week. In the first term there is an emphasis on eSafety issues and developing cross-curricular presentation skills. Students make use of the Internet as a research tool and also to submit work via a virtual learning environment or email. They have their own network storage space and this can be accessed from home using the remote access links on the school website. We use Windows PCs in lessons, and try where possible to teach students how to use a mixture of software relevant to current industry standards, but also packages that are free to download and install at home. Lessons in first year are focussed on practical application of skills and knowledge. We make use of opportunities to discuss and embed relevant theory, including extended learning tasks set for homework. A PC is rarely a requirement for homework tasks, but availability of a home computer with Internet access is strongly encouraged. Students can make use of the library or IT labs in school at break or lunchtimes if access at home presents problems.

Programmes of Study

The Christmas term introduces students to network resources and eSafety topics. Students use advanced features of MSWord and PowerPoint to create infographics and interactive presentations. They are introduced to the concept of Object Oriented Programming using Microsoft's Kodu game-making environment. They design and create their own 3D games using a visual 'blocky' language to program object behaviours and world-building tools to create game levels.

In the Easter term students learn how to perform mail merges, followed by an extended project to create their own eCommerce website. The website incorporates the writing of HTML webpages with CSS to control their appearance and JavaScript to make the site interactive. They publish their site online for testing and peer evaluation.

In the Summer term students experience a variety of more hands-on, hardware-focussed tasks, including working with robots, micro-computers and mobile technologies. Students also develop their own modern 3D games using professional quality software, including experimenting with Virtual Reality headsets.

Assessment

Students' performance and progress are assessed throughout a unit of work and at the end of each topic by submitting evidence of practical tasks. Work is graded from O to U for effort and 10 to 1 or a percentage for attainment in line with the school's assessment and marking policy. Progress throughout the term is summed to give a final grade for reports. Students also take part in the Oxford University Bebras competition to assess computational thinking skills.

Extra-Curricular Activities

A lunchtime 'Code Club' is open to those who wish to develop their programming skills. This platform is used by students to extend their classroom work or to investigate new programming challenges. It is also a springboard for participation in a number of programming and code-cracking competitions run by external bodies and our teams have managed many strong performances in recent years.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

“Design is not just about how something looks – it is about how something works. It is vital that we work towards developing projects that work better and last longer. Young people should be encouraged to be creative and make things”. James Dyson.

Design and Technology at Birkdale School embraces this philosophy throughout each year and cites ‘Turning ideas into reality’ as its motto, encouraging pupils to apply knowledge and skills to solve practical ‘real world’ problems in a safe and disciplined environment. An emphasis is placed on independent creative thought, both individually and whilst working as a team, in the Design and Technology workshop. Health and Safety is reinforced in all projects and pupils are encouraged to integrate IT into all of their work. Every pupil in S1 and S2 is trained to use ‘Solid Edge’, an industry standard 3D modelling software package, and is able to take this software home to further develop their skills.

S1

The S1 Scheme of Work is designed to build on pupils’ design and make experiences in primary education with three projects, each allowing pupils to experience many different disciplines within the subject area.

- Boys will design, make and test a survival stove and will compare the performance of their outcome against a commercially produced stove. The project finishes with them using their stove to make a hot drink for themselves in the workshops whilst evaluating their work.
- The CNC Puzzle Project introduces pupils to designing an artefact on a PC and then transferring that design to a CNC laser machine which cuts it out for them. They then finish and assemble their product.
- Finally, the Go-Kart project is an exercise where pupils work in pairs, following a technical working drawing to construct a go-kart which they ultimately sit on and race downhill. They learn to measure and mark out accurately and to cut and form softwood using a range of hand tools and machines.

S2

Design and Technology in S2 takes on a more sophisticated approach, with greater attention to detail in the presentation of project work. Again they cycle through three projects experiencing different disciplines within the subject area.

- Pupils will learn to communicate their ideas neatly and more effectively in a CD rack project that examines and applies ergonomics and anthropometrics in design.
- A more in depth study of electronics is introduced in S2 as pupils design and manufacture an innovative steady hand game. Within this they experience printed circuit board production, amplification and utilise an integrated circuit.
- Finally, boys learn the fundamentals to designing techniques in a graphics based project with the final outcome being a design presentation of their own displaying their newfound skills. This is followed by computer aided design training utilising ‘Solid Edge’ software.

ENGLISH

In English students will:

- Enjoy reading a wide variety of texts, both literary and non-fiction, including novels, plays, poetry from 1600s to the present day
- Learn to write for a wide variety of purposes
- Learn to write accurately and with increasing confidence and sophistication
- Engage successfully in group discussions, debates and give presentations
- Build 'cultural capital' as well as enthusiasm for the subject, unhindered by rigid and reductive dependence on GCSE preparation

STAFFING AND TIMETABLING

English in S1 and S2 is taught, for timetabling purposes, in science sets. They are not, however, setted according to ability in English. There are usually four groups of about 12-20 students.

CONTENT AND SKILLS

ATTAINMENT TARGET 1: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

The flexibility of English as a subject means that drama and small group discussion fits easily into the pattern of work. Students are able to give talks and participate in interviews and group exercises.

ATTAINMENT TARGET 2: READING

Much material is covered in class - extracts, articles, short stories, novels, plays and poems are all read and discussed, both for their own sake and as a stimulus to written work. The department has a number of class sets of novels and plays that can be read and studied by the whole group together. All boys are required to do some reading in their own time (a minimum of one book per half term) and to take part in at least two 'Reading Reviews' each year. In these informal class sessions, each boy brings the books he has read and talks about them, sharing ideas and recommendations with others so that overall progress can be monitored. **We expect boys to read a novel of their own choice for thirty minutes a week at home.**

ATTAINMENT TARGET 3: WRITING

Boys write regularly and have their work read, corrected and commented on by their teacher. The types of writing attempted will reflect the range of what is read, both fiction and non-fiction: stories, poems, play scripts, discussions, statements of individual viewpoints and attempts to persuade the reader; factual accounts; basic journalism; autobiographical accounts; letters both formal and informal. There is one 30 minute homework per week for writing; this may take the form of essays, or research/note-making.

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORK

Each boy has a folder, kept in school, in which final drafts of work as well as assessments are stored.

COURSEWORK - These pieces will be started in class and completed at home to a specified deadline or else completed in the IT suite with help from the teacher. These tasks are set and marked by the class teacher. Each piece may be word processed and should be the equivalent of two or more standard homeworks.

ASSESSMENTS – During the course of the year boys are assessed by their teacher on a range of different tasks related to the text or module they have studied.

ATTAINMENT TARGET 4: SPELLING, PUNCTUATION and GRAMMAR

Teaching of SPaG skills is built in to the course as a whole. Students are expected to continue to develop the skills they learned in Y6 and P4.

SUMMER EXAM

This assesses the reading and writing skills that have been developed over the course of the year.

SKILLS

Students will:

- gain in confidence as fluent speakers of English;
- use spoken language appropriate to audience, task and situation;
- demonstrate empathy, both as listener and speaker, in a variety of social contexts - working in groups to share ideas, for example.
 - enjoy reading in a variety of genres - prose, poetry and drama; and styles - fiction and non-fiction;
 - recognise both the meaning and implications of what is read;
 - appreciate the literary quality of texts;
 - read aloud with confidence and fluency.
 - maintain a fluent, legible and mature style of handwriting;
 - write accurate English, and to understand how the language works;
 - develop breadth of approach and organisational skills;
 - use the school's ICT resources;
 - be able to produce material both under time constraints in examination, and over a longer period where redrafting is possible;
 - appreciate the range of written styles available (persuasive, reflective, discursive, fictional narrative etc) and use written language appropriate to the task in hand and for the intended audience.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Drama, creative writing and debating are the department's main extra-curricular activities. We also encourage boys to join school theatre trips in Sheffield and further afield when relevant.

Opportunities exist for boys to take part in national and local competitions for essay and letter writing, poetry and journalism. They can be on the editorial team of the department's in-house magazine (*In Between the Lines*) or contribute as many articles as they wish.

GEOGRAPHY

The first two years of Senior School Geography are part of the wider course of the National Curriculum. The course spans the wide spectrum from the Pre Prep to GCSE and has been specifically designed to provide a continuum for boys moving from one school department to another and for those boys who come to the Senior School from other schools.

The first two years of the Key Stage 3 course at Birkdale are structured to satisfy the following aims:

- to continue to build upon the firm base of geographical knowledge, skills and ideas gained in Key Stage 2.
- to provide a sound platform from which more advanced studies (i.e. to GCSE) may be launched.

| S1 (Y7) Geography Curriculum | S2 (Y8) Geography Curriculum |
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| <p>Christmas Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passport to Geography - Our Planet • Passport to Geography – Maps & Mapping • Passport to Geography – The UK <p>Easter Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fantastic Features 1 – Rocks • Fantastic Features 1 – Glaciation • Fantastic Features 1 – Rivers • Fantastic Features 1 - Flooding <p>Summer Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork – Burbage Brook Rivers study • Into Africa – The Horn of Africa • Into Africa – Country investigation | <p>Christmas Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Into the City – <i>Urbanisation</i> • Fieldwork – <i>Sheffield City study</i> • How many people live on planet Earth? - <i>Population</i> <p>Easter Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fantastic Features 2 – <i>Coasts</i> • Weather and Climate • Is our planet getting warmer? – <i>Global Warming</i> <p>Summer Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superpower Geography 1 – <i>China & India</i> |

SKILLS:

An enquiring, questioning approach to geographical studies is adopted so that both study and social skills are developed. Boys are encouraged to form their own opinions and develop values and attitudes towards issues and the people involved in them. The use of ICT in Geography is introduced at many points throughout both years so that pupils are actively engaged in ICT exercises, problem solving, numerical skills, data analysis, PowerPoint presentations and even the use of some Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

FIELDWORK:

This is an integral and important part of Geography. In order to enhance their study of the local area and incorporate their knowledge and to observe processes at work, S1 will have a day visit to Burbage Brook, South West of Sheffield, when they will be introduced to river fieldwork techniques. Both year groups will also participate in small scale fieldwork during lesson time around the school grounds identifying microclimate and environmental quality.

The Department is well equipped with up-to-date resources and these are used selectively throughout, so that up-to-date case studies may be used and the relevance of the work studied may be clearly appreciated.

HISTORY

"What is History?" is a question that has been asked many times. The answers have been equally varied: "a list of dates"; "Henry VIII"; "the Battle of Waterloo"; "Robin Hood". Whilst monarchs, wars and legends are all important parts of History they need to be linked together to form a coherent body of knowledge so that questions can be answered, such as:

"Why did Henry VIII have six wives?"
"What were the consequences of the Battle of Waterloo?"
"Who was Robin Hood?"

Understanding the facts is far more important than the facts themselves, so that the emphasis in our History teaching is no longer on simply learning strings of dates.

From a sound chronological base, the History Department aims to explore the past to uncover what really happened. Boys will investigate historical evidence, discover the opinions of others, develop their own views about events and learn to support them from the facts. Through their evaluation of evidence they will learn to detect bias and see through propaganda. These skills provide the foundation for the study of the subject throughout the school to GCSE level and reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum.

The course content for the first form covers British History from 1066 to 1485 exploring such themes as:

"What were the effects of the Norman Conquest?"
"Was King John really a bad king?"
"What was at stake in the Wars of the Roses?"

An exciting contrast is provided in the Summer Term with a study of the Plains Indians of North America. This section of the course examines the culture of a non-European society and the clashes which occurred when the "white man" moved into the Indians' homeland in the form of cowboy, mining prospector and homesteader.

In the summer term there is also a visit to Warwick Castle and Bosworth Battlefield.

In the second form boys pick up the chronology of British History with the advent of the Tudors in 1485 and follow events through the English Civil War to 1745. The causes of the Civil War are investigated in some depth culminating in the question of:

"Why did parliament execute the king in 1649?" An interesting parallel is provided with a study of the French Revolution and boys are encouraged to compare and contrast the consequences of such significant events which undoubtedly shaped the political future of Britain and France.

We finish S2 by studying the creation of the United Kingdom and how its Jacobite opponents - like Bonnie Prince Charlie - were defeated.

In their investigations pupils will experience a variety of teaching methods. Learning to analyse and evaluate evidence will increase their ability to process information, skills which form a part of many types of employment. In addition, class discussion, small group work, formal debates and historical role-play will encourage boys to develop the confidence required to speak in public and present their own arguments, as well as learning to listen to the views of others and balance these against their own; skills which will be of great value throughout their school career and in later life.

Fieldwork visits to historical sites form an important part of the course. In S1 boys study Norman defence systems at Warwick Castle and question whether the Battle of Bosworth was really fought where the historians say it was. At the end of S2 a visit to Quarry Bank Mill helps to prepare the boys for studying the Industrial Revolution in S3.

In both S1 and S2 there is a coursework element based on personal research which constitutes 20% of the summer exam. The use of IT in History is explored through a simulation programme on "The French Revolution" where boys are encouraged to solve the problems of 18th century France more effectively than Louis XVI. To conclude, our overall aim is that History should "come alive" in the classroom so that boys can enjoy gaining a sense of the past and its relevance for them today.

MATHEMATICS

For the first half term in S1, there will be some mixed ability teaching. There will then be an assessment before the October half term break. Thereafter boys will be placed into one of four ability sets based on their performance in the assessment, baseline tests and teacher judgement. All boys follow the same core material in S1, the main resource being Essential Mathematics book 7H.

Our aim is to make mathematics challenging and exciting for all our pupils. There are many opportunities for group/pair work and the resources are colourful and well presented. Our schemes of work are arranged to avoid repetition. However, we aim to bring everyone up to the same standard in S1 so there will inevitably be a few topics which some boys may have met in their previous schools.

By assessing all the boys each half term we are able to accurately monitor their progress against the rest of the year group. This allows movement between sets where necessary.

Developing pupils' ability at mental and written arithmetic is something we consider to be very important, so much of the work covered in S1 will not require the use of a calculator. Sometimes, however it is desirable to speed up repetitive calculations and to this end we buy in a supply of calculators which are then sold on to the boys.

The work covered in S1 is formally assessed at the end of the year by two examinations. The result of these, together with half termly test results and teacher opinion, determines into which sets the boys are placed in S2.

In S2 we use the Essential Mathematics series of text books. Boys in sets 1 & 2 follow book 8H and those in sets 3 & 4 follow book 8C. The core is common to both although there are more extension topics in book 8H to stretch the more able boys. Progress is again monitored every half term by way of common tests.

It is still very much our aim to give pupils an enjoyable experience of mathematics by using a variety of teaching methods and a combination of investigative and more traditional learning strategies for the boys. To this end we subscribe to the web based resource MyMaths which allows the boys to access revision lessons and attempt questions which then receive instant feedback.

In addition we run a twice weekly lunch time clinic where boys are encouraged to come and clarify any areas of misunderstanding they have.

MODERN LANGUAGES

Three modern languages are offered to all boys in the Senior School, namely French, German and Spanish. All boys will take French in S1 and also in S2 where they will additionally study half a year each of German and Spanish. Boys may choose to study one or two languages to GCSE. If they choose to study 2 languages, one must be French.

FRENCH

The French course in S2 builds on the work undertaken in S1 and boys' understanding and use of spoken and written French will continue to be developed.

A wide range of enjoyable and stimulating resources are used, with four of the six specialist language-teaching rooms equipped with interactive whiteboards with high quality sound systems. Most classes will have the opportunity to use the facilities of the multi-media digital language lab which enables pupils to use the latest on-line resources as well as to access the department's own substantial range of digitised audio and video resources.

In S1 and S2 boys are taught in sets. By organising them like this it is hoped that each boy will be able to work at the pace which suits him best and will be encouraged to produce his personal best.

GERMAN and SPANISH

All boys will be introduced to German and Spanish in the second form and be taught for half a year in forms. Boys will gain a good initial understanding of the two languages to form the basis upon which they can build their knowledge for the purposes of GCSE.

The four skills of listening, writing, reading and speaking are developed in a number of topic areas. By the end of these initial courses boys should be able to talk and write about simple personal topics, for example themselves, their families, pets and hobbies, as well as cope with transactional language, such as in shopping. All activities will provide a useful basis for understanding. Information technology forms part of the courses.

At the same time as being presented with new language in lively and fun contexts, boys will gain valuable insights into the German and Spanish speaking worlds.

There is a taster visit each year to either France, Germany or Spain to give the boys a chance to try out one of these new languages in the country.

MUSIC

The Lower School course focuses primarily on creative practical keyboard skills and boys will also learn how to use a sophisticated computer programme, Cubase, to record their work. We aim to enable all pupils to play a keyboard competently and confidently within two years.

Keyboard playing and composition go hand in hand. In S1 boys will learn how chords and melody link together, and how to use them within a structure. In S2, a wide variety of different musical styles will be covered, with a focus on the compositional techniques that go with these styles.

Topics covered include Ternary Form (a simple musical structure), Blues Music, Indian Raga, Ragtime and Reggae. As an aid to composition, we also listen to a range of pieces of music which fit into these categories.

There are many extra-curricular activities aimed primarily at Lower School, including Ensemble 123, Lower School Choir and Music Technology Club. Lower School boys are encouraged to participate fully in joint drama and music productions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND GAMES

Physical Education and Games in the Lower School provides a firm grounding in all major concepts of Physical Education and a natural course of progression in later years. We seek to establish the necessary skills, allied with self-expression and enthusiasm, irrespective of ability, to enhance future development.

Boys will be given the opportunity to participate in a variety of team games including Rugby, Football, Cricket, Hockey and Basketball. There is also a full programme of Badminton, Table Tennis, Swimming and Tennis available throughout the first and second years. All boys study Health Related Exercise (HRE) in PE lessons, in which they are introduced to the principles of training, the components of fitness, the value of exercise and how to incorporate this in their everyday lives. The boys will also be taught Volleyball and Softball. In addition to timetabled lessons, there is a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities, which are viewed as an important extension of the department's curricular programme. School teams compete against both independent and state schools in regular fixtures and competitions on both Saturday's and midweek at Rugby, Rugby 7s, Football, Cricket, Cross-Country, Basketball, Hockey. Teams are also entered into local and national competitions in Badminton, Golf and Tennis.

Physical Education is taught in forms in Years 1 and 2, whereas Games is taught appropriate to the boy's level of development in Rugby, Football and Cricket. Flexibility therefore exists within the groups to allow for development between different sports. All boys are encouraged to take a full and active part in the various Inter-House competitions that take place throughout the year. House teams are presently selected for Rugby, Basketball, Football, Badminton, Cricket, Athletics, Swimming, Table Tennis, Hockey and Cross-Country.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The aim of RE in S1 and S2 is to introduce pupils to some fundamental questions about God and about morality and to help pupils formulate their own responses to these questions. In this, concepts of Christian theology will be the main focus, but pupils will also study both Judaism (S1) and Islam (S2). A significant objective in RE will be the personal development of pupils. It's hoped that pupils will **learn from** the study of religion by exploring and developing their own belief commitments and values.

Content and Skills

S1: Term 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

This introduction enables pupils to understand the power of religious faith and thus its importance for individuals. They explore and evaluate a biblical view of the human condition.

Term 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS ETHICS

This section helps pupils understand how religion is linked to morality. We explore the basis of Christian ethics: if God is Love and loves all people unconditionally, so Christians, who try to be 'like God' morally, should be loving.

Term 3

JUDAISM

Pupils are introduced to the key concepts which form the characteristics of Jewish identity.

S2: Term 1

FIGHTING PREJUDICE: A KEY THEME IN CHRISTIAN MORALITY

This course aims to show pupils the importance of moral parameters in society by looking at the suffering caused by prejudice. It also explores the theological rationale Christians would use to support a fight against different types of prejudice.

Term 2

JESUS AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF

This section helps pupils understand the significance of Jesus for Christian theology. Pupils are asked to assess Christian beliefs about Jesus from their own belief perspective.

Term 3

ISLAM – FIVE PILLARS OF BELIEF AND ACTION

The aim here is to understand the main concepts of Muslim identity and begin to understand an Islamic world-view. We also aim to question the negative perceptions of Islam in the Western world.

Assessment

Pupils will be assessed on their responses to a variety of creative tasks set for homework. Their contribution to class discussion will also be important. The creative skill of empathising with others will often be a key focus of this. In June, pupils will sit a one hour exam designed to test their understanding of the key content covered during the year.

SCIENCE

In the Lower School, the science course consists of three double periods of 70 minutes. Each group will normally be taught by a single member of the Science department for all three lessons. The aim is to enable continuity of lessons and the rapid establishment of personal relations between staff and pupils so that the 'settling in' period is kept to a minimum.

The course has been arranged on a topic basis and the topics covered have been chosen to give the boys an overall solid grounding in the major aspects of science, both academically and on a practical level. S1 this year will be embarking upon our new science syllabus that aims to match the recent national changes made to the science GCSEs.

The course will focus on investigative skills and processes with the clear aim to improve the ability of the boys to think about problems in a scientific way. Many of the lessons are practically based, during which the boys will be taught the basic skills to enable them to carry out scientific investigations and studies with accuracy, precision and safety. The processes involved in the planning of practical work, the presentation of data obtained, and its subsequent analysis and interpretation also feature highly throughout the entire course.

Whilst emphasis is placed upon practical work, the academic component is also rigorous. The topics taught over the two years cover a wide range of subject areas and include:

S1

- Cells
- Structure and function of body systems
- Reproduction
- Particles
- Elements, Atoms and Compounds
- Reactions
- Acids and Alkalis
- Forces
- Sound
- Light
- Space

S2

- Health and Lifestyle
- Ecosystems
- Adaptations and Inheritance
- Periodic Tables
- Separation Techniques
- Metals and Acids
- Earth
- Electricity and Magnetism
- Energy
- Motion and Pressure

At the end of each of the topics the boys will sit an 'end of topic test' designed to allow both teacher and pupil to monitor and reflect on the progress being made. There will be, in addition, end of year examinations for both S1 and S2 in June. The boys will be taught in mixed ability sets for the S1 year, and then placed in sets by ability for S2 based upon the results of topic tests and the S1 exam.